

She's a Maniac

by Valeria Godines

New Year's Eve 1984:

I was a hit with my outfit. When I walked into the house, a teenage girl looked me up and down and said, "Nice knickerbockers."

My cousins dragged me to the living room floor which was crowded with my family dancing and I started furiously scissoring my legs just like the actress in "Flash Dance." I wanted to show my many relatives I was not only the best dressed, but I could move like a maniac at my aunt's New Year's Eve Party.

I was 11.

I danced about 30 minutes when my legs suddenly felt cold. My breathing became shallow. The lights softened and swayed and I felt myself falling gently into a sideways sitting position on the floor.

"I can't feel my legs," I said meekly.

"She's fainted," an uncle shouted as they rushed me to the couch. When I looked up, a dozen faces peered at me from a few inches away. Everybody shouted if I was ok. My family likes to shout. And my mom, no doubt already worrying about amputation, looked terrified.

One of my aunts began pressing my legs and then noticed the rubber bands around my knees. "What the hell is this?" she asked.

"I wanted to wear knickerbockers," I said, tilting up my chin. "So I put the rubber bands around my black pants at the knees."

During the brief silence that followed, someone cut the bands off. Instant relief. The teenage girl who had complimented me shook her head sadly. I thought about how my family couldn't afford 80s fashion trends.

Then the room erupted into laughter.

"We are Family" came on the stereo and we all jumped up and moved to the dance floor. My family clapped to the music as they formed a circle around me. I twirled with my long wrinkled pants.

