

# Bloody Contender

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*By Rusty Nail*

Once upon a time, there was a little boy, Guiseppe, who lived in the basement apartment of a Chicago tenement. Everyone called him Joey. That embarrassed him a little, especially when his mom yelled down the street for him to come home for dinner. Joe sounded so much more mature to him than Joey.

He was one of the fat, klutzy kids everyone made fun of, because he couldn't run the bases at a stickball game. But he had dreams – big dreams.

Joey looked up to the gangsters in his neighborhood. They wore fancy clothes, jewelry, and flashed the cash faster than lightning. They had swagger. He thought they were way cool – much cooler than the fools who worked long hours selling groceries or butchering meat. Butchering meat might be fun, but he couldn't see himself keeping regular hours in a store. Besides, he had to finish school first.

Every night, before he went to sleep, he knelt beside his bed and prayed to god to give him superpowers. Batman lived in a mansion above a cave and had a sidekick, which was appealing, but that name was already taken. Caveman sounded a little too Neanderthal, although it had possibilities. Joe didn't ask much – nothing for any of his family members – just a little something for himself. He wanted superpowers, so that he could overcome the bullies on the street who teased him.

One night, god spoke to him, and asked what superpowers he wanted. Shocked, he sat up in bed and stammered “a-a-any-th-thing you want to give me, but make it good enough to get back at my enemies. I want to kick them in the balls.”

For the next week, Joey slept peacefully. Then, he began his habit of eating an entire pizza for dinner. Sometimes, it had pepperoni on it, but, usually it was mushroom with extra cheese. His mother wasn't too pleased, since the nightly pizza was meant for both of them. Uncle Vittorio made it special, spicy, and sent it over, for free.

On his 17<sup>th</sup> birthday, Joey moved out of the house to another state. He had made it through high school, so he was free to do what he wanted. After working a few jobs that paid minimum wage, he decided that he was going to chuck it all, and follow his dreams. He talked to god again, and asked for superpowers.

His wishes were granted. He became “The Great Porcini.”

He screamed “But I wanted to be a bloody contender, not a FUCKING MUSHROOM!”