

## **Gorilla Arms**

**By David A. Romero**

It was Sunday morning  
My father  
Had just gotten off of work  
Overtime shift  
Family room  
Pink box of donuts  
My father's blue work shirt  
That put them on the table  
Exhausted  
But happy  
Spending time with the family  
His arms on the table  
Muscular  
Sweaty  
Heavy  
Hairy  
Arms  
A bratty  
Snotty-nosed child  
I looked across the table  
And told him,  
"You look like a gorilla"  
It wasn't just the words  
It was the cock of the head  
The wrinkling of the nose  
The arch of the eyebrow  
It wasn't just the words  
It was the sneer  
Tucked inside of them  
"You look like a gorilla"  
Who was this stranger  
Who lived in my house?  
Spent hours tinkering in the garage  
Or in the yard  
Yelled to rake up the leaves  
Left before I went to school  
Sometimes left in the middle of the night  
Sometimes came back in the middle of the night  
Always wearing that uniform  
Always tired

On those days  
Prone to anger  
Big  
Heavy  
Work boots  
Clonking and clomping  
Throughout the house  
Sometimes he was covered in dirt  
His hair uncombed and wild  
Work shirt unbuttoned  
Chest hair out  
Hairy arms  
Like gorilla sleeves...  
Who was this stranger?  
He was my dad  
My father  
“You look like a gorilla”  
It wasn't just the words  
It was the inflection  
It was my reflection  
It was the teachers  
The guest lecturers  
The people on television  
The parents of my friends  
No one had ever told me  
That I should  
Want to be like my father  
Blue-collar  
Work with your hands  
Muscular  
Sweaty  
Heavy  
Hairy  
Arms  
He used them  
To clean ditches  
Build pipe systems  
To cut down trees  
To clear fields  
And embankments  
Every day  
For us  
“You look like a gorilla”  
There was hate there  
Disgust there  
Dehumanization

Like how Creationists can find nothing more filthy  
Than to say that humans  
Are descended from monkeys  
Chimpanzees  
Like how racists call Latinos “cockroaches”  
Cackle when they hear “La Cucaracha”  
The Nazis called the Jews “rats”  
Blacks were depicted for decades  
As more ape  
Than homo sapient  
My brother  
Commented on how they treated him at work,  
“They treat me like their workhorse”  
A beast of burden  
How he followed this  
With his first admission  
He faced racism  
They treated him like a Mexican  
My father  
Was as stubborn as a bull  
As strong as an ox  
Muscular  
Sweaty  
Heavy  
Hairy  
Arms  
Gorilla arms  
The arms that built our house  
The arms  
That hugged my mother  
That carried me as a child  
I looked at those arms  
That Sunday morning  
And told him,  
“You look like a gorilla”  
Everything stopped  
Everyone was shocked  
Soon, there was shouting  
Screaming  
I ran out of the house  
And into the backyard  
“You look like a gorilla”  
I will regret saying that  
For the rest of my life.