

# **THE 'B' WORD**

**A new comedy**

**By D.W. Gregory**

**Sometimes all you have to do  
is find the right word.**

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**Contact:  
2519 Mason St.  
Silver Spring, MD 20902  
301-946-3352**

## Characters

Edna Mack, a high-strung but efficient editor

The time: a very bad day in the life of Edna Mack

The place: a modern office building: grey, oppressive, lacking in air quality.

AT RISE: A modern office -- hellish,  
airless, generic,

Enter EDNA,  
A 30-something woman,  
Well dressed for work.

EDNA

I know, I know. I'm late. I won't make excuses. But I do have a reason. If you want to hear it. (beat) See, it happened again. This morning. Some guy in traffic cuts me off -- and takes offense that I take offense. I give him this. (Shakes her fist) and he gives me this (obscene gesture). Then he yells at me.

You know: That word. The B word?

Okay. You've heard it before, I've heard it before. We've both used it before. It's not like I'm an innocent, burning ears, all that. It's just that, when it's aimed at YOU ... with the force of a howitzer -- it takes on a new kind of meaning.

She goes to the table and seizes the dictionary

Look: Right here: The B word means, and I quote: "a female dog. A female of canines generally." Chihuahua. Pekinese? Wolfhound? Fox. Okay. Fine. B-word, dog, dog, b-word. Rather clinical, fine. But I read on: "slang. A malicious, unpleasant, selfish woman, especially one who stops at NOTHING to reach her goal." AH HA! There it is! Ambition. AMBITION is what distinguishes the sweet-natured paragon of goodness otherwise known as woman from the harpy we call a BITCH!

(Slaps her hand over her mouth)

There, I said it. Bitch. Root word of AMBITION. Am—bitch—on. Am—BITCH—on. I want, therefore I do. And get the hell out of my way.

I know, I know. 'Bitch' is just a word. Say it enough times, it loses its power. Like Rutabaga. Rooooooot-a- bay-ga. (Quickly, like a cheerleader:) Rutabaga, rutabaga, rutabaga, rutabaga, rutabaga, rutabaga, ROO! -- it stops being a strange vegetable and becomes... a mere collection of sounds. Just noise. Like the B word — and all its variants... A nasty woman, a female dog, a complaint, or, the verb form -- to complain: (rapidly) Bitch, bitch, bitch, bitch, bitch — or even more confusing -- try this one: an adjective -- BITCHIN', Man — those boots, they are BITCHIN'!

In the right mouth, it's a compliment. But not in his mouth. That guy -- a guy in a Volvo, for god's sakes--- balding, pink in the face, glasses slipping down his nose, fist in the air, yelling, 'BITCH!' I mean, what is that? I just wanted to take a left turn. Simple. Okay, I'm turning against traffic, but it's legal. Right? I have an aim, a desire, a wish--a goal! An *ambition*. Turn left. And the guy coming towards me. He has a simple need as well.

Turn right. Left, right, left. BANG! I mean he saw me, I signaled--in fact, I was right there, ready to turn before he had reached the intersection and what does he do? He *hits the gas*. Like turning fast is the answer to this problem? Get there before she does? JUST WHO IS AMBITIOUS HERE?

Now maybe---if I had some testosterone in my system, I'd have done the same thing--speed up, get yours before the other guy gets his, right? Isn't that the way things are done in this MAN'S WORLD! Huh? Whoever dies with the most toys wins. Right? That's the way to the top of the slag heap we call corporate America. Right, left, right – I'm wearing a pin-striped suit! I carry a briefcase stuffed with reports I don't understand – I can bullshit my way through a board meeting – I can plow my way through an intersection without causing a collision because – I'M A GUY!

So of course. I hit the brakes. BUT – what happens is: He can't quite. Make it. So there we are, both in the middle of the intersection – and whose fault is it? Mine. Because of my ambition. To turn left. And up goes my fist. And up comes his finger – and that word flies out of his mouth.

And off he goes. And there I am. In the middle of the intersection. Too stunned to move. Then, of course, horns start honking. So, I pull out and I as I go, as I head up the ramp to the Interstate---I realize---I'm right behind the guy. Following him. And suddenly it occurs to me: I have an opportunity here. I -- can press a point. Because, it is a given---in the hallowed halls of the corporation, she who walks behind THE MAN has no power, but on the freeway---she who drives BEHIND the JERK can scare the SHIT out of him.

So. I just press down on that gas pedal ... and ZIP! I'm on his tail at 85 miles an hour. You think THAT was bitchy, pal? I'll show you BITCHY! I pull up, right behind him---close enough to see the whites of his terrified eyes in his rearview mirror. My knuckles are white as I grip the wheel. My teeth are bared and clenched---like a samurai without the sword---I'm not going to let this one go! This isn't just about me---this is one for the SISTERHOOD! He hits the gas---I hit the gas. He takes his foot off the pedal, I take my foot off the pedal. He switches lanes---I SWITCH lanes!

Up ahead, he turns back to look at me. His mouth is open, his eyes are popping, and ---and I swear, there's a little bead of sweat trickling down his fat *pink* cheek. (with satisfaction) Now, what's the most frightening thing in the world to a man like that? An *ambitious* woman! Who knows how far she'll go to get what she wants?

But then. Something else catches my eye. In *my* rear-view mirror. A face I've never seen before. Eyes like slits. Teeth like fangs. Lips curled and quivering. And it looks awful.

My foot slips off the gas pedal. Other drivers going by flash me glances of irritation. How crazed I must seem to them? How foolish. Trying to avenge myself on a total stranger? For what? A mere insult? It's *just* a word.

And then: I hear it. That sound that makes your blood run cold. The siren. Okay, I'm thinking. Just pull over. Tell the cop what happened. This guy -- you wouldn't believe what he did! No -- that's no good. Don't confess to road rage. All right. CRY! Cry if you have to! I've done it before -- I admit it -- I have cried to a traffic cop. He tore up the ticket! It's true. I've traded on my sexuality---on my femininity---to get something most guys couldn't get in a heartbeat. Unless the cop is gay. Which he wouldn't admit to anyway. But come on -- there's got to be some compensation in life!

So I tap the brakes. The speedometer ticks down. Sixty-five, sixty---Fifty-five, forty---I glance in the mirror----thirty-five, twenty---I pull off on the shoulder and as I come to a stop, I reach for my purse---and I grab ... my lip gloss. Pink Passion. One application leaves your lips kissingly moist and ready for more. One application is all any woman needs to get through the day. I sit back, close my eyes, and wait. On the gravel behind me, I hear the footsteps. A light tread. Good sign. I open my eyes, roll down the window, and there---looking down upon me----is the stern, unblinking countenance of officer Michaelson. Officer *Judy* Michaelson. And Officer Judy Michaelson is not a happy camper. Not this morning. Officer Michaelson is looking at me with an expression that can only mean: "You total idiot. I am going to shred you now."

Well you know the drill -- the forced politeness of the state trooper to the moron behind the wheel. That sinking feeling of despair. Nothing you say or do will sway this one. And we know why, don't we? Officer Judy Michaelson is tough as nails. Officer Judy Michaelson cuts slack to no one. Officer Judy Michaelson doesn't dare. Not if she cares about her career. Not if she's *ambitious*.

She writes the ticket. Her expression hasn't changed the whole time. That look of contempt. Officer Judy Michaelson doesn't care for pink lip gloss. Officer Judy Michaelson knows what that lip gloss is for. She has seen what lip gloss can do to her colleagues -- the men. The ones who can tear up traffic tickets without fear of being called 'soft.' She hands me the ticket. And then, for the first time, a little smirk works its way across her plastic face and she says, "take it easy."

(a beat as Edna sinks into self-pity)

The bitch!