



Proudly Presents

# THE F-WORD

**WRITTEN BY MATTHEW YASUOKA**

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## IMPORTANT: PLEASE READ

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Do you want to play with me? You look like you'd be a great friend. I mean, I have a lot of friends already, but I just love friends. Don't you? Do you want to be my friend? Oh no, I forgot to tell you my name! My name is Bradley Marcus Detamble III. I'm nine years old, and my favorite colors are pink and purple. My Dad's name is Bradley and so is Grandpa's. Dad tells me that one day my son will be named Bradley, too. I don't want kids though. I've thought about it a lot, and I don't even know where they come from. All I know is that wherever they come from, I don't want them. This is largely because babies are stupid. Now that may sound cruel, but they don't really do anything. They can't talk or read or argue, so really—what are they good for?

My mom tells me that I was a precocious child. By the age of one, I was talking in complete sentences. By the time I started preschool—I knew lots of cool words that I could use to impress my new friends. I'd say, "Let's make a rumpus!" They'd say, "What? That's not a real word." I'd say, "Yes, it is!" Then, they'd call me a big, dumb liar. I think it was endearing. I mean, I ate lunch alone, but I knew that deep down inside they all really liked me. They just didn't know how to express their emotions. At least that's what my mom told me. She said that I was the most wonderful little boy ever born. She tells me that people don't know how to react to wonderful little boys, because they're so used to boring or mean people. Nobody ever expects wonderful. So when something wonderful appears, they don't know how to react.

Do you have any secrets? I've told lots of secrets to my mom. Actually, people tell me secrets all the time. They just don't know it. I guess you could call it 'eavesdropping,' but I like to call it 'secret sharing' because they're my friends. Friends tell each other secrets. For instance, the other day I learned that Katy has a crush on Tony, but last week I heard that Tony likes Nikki. Nikki is Katy's best friend. I know! It's so interesting! Who would have thought the lives of nine-year olds were so complicated, right? Then again, isn't love always complicated? I mean, at least that's what Dad told me on the day he left. He sat me down and said,

“Son, love is always complicated.” And just like that—Dad walked out of the door, leaving me with only his name. It makes sense though. Math is complicated. Girls are complicated. So shouldn’t love be complicated, too? It just makes sense, right?

Now, the opposite of love is P.E. Unlike love, P.E. is not complicated. There are kids who can do athletic things, and then there are kids who can’t—like me. No matter how hard I try I cannot convince my limbs to cooperate during all of these physical activities. My arms refuse to throw things. My hands refuse to catch things. This means that I am picked last for all the games in P.E. I asked my Mom about this, and she told me, “They’re saving the best for last.” I agree! I mean, even though I’m not the best one in P.E., all of the other kids are still my friends. They even have nicknames for me—like ‘Badly.’ See what they did there? They dropped the “R” in “Bradley,” so it’s a play on words. My friends are so clever! They are my friends though. They just don’t know it yet. Here’s another secret. P.E. is the only time I ever begin to doubt their friendship. But P.E. only happens once a week and other than that, we can be friends.

During Math, people are always asking if they can copy off of my tests. That means that they think I’m smart. I think that’s a very friendly thing to do—to call someone smart. No one ever just comes right out and says, “Bradley you’re the smartest,” but that’s what they’re really saying when they ask to copy off of my tests. Maybe they’re shy, or like my mom says—they have a difficult time expressing their emotions.

In English, whenever Mr. Roosevelt asks for someone to read out-loud, the kids always say, “Pick Bradley! Pick Bradley!” Sometimes they laugh, too. According to Mom, they probably laugh because I’m a very expressive reader, and I do a good job of creating characters with my voice. This causes them to laugh, because I can bring out the humor in the story. They aren’t laughing at me. Well, they are, but they aren’t laughing *at me* at me. They’re laughing *because* of me—because I’m funny.