



Baby Bug by Amy Cizolla Barnes

A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Laundry Room



I have always admired Martha Stewart with her craftiness, creativeness, and downright domestic goddess status. I am not Martha Stewart.

When I follow her recipes, the end result is never magazine-worthy. My craft attempts will never be sold even at church bazaars, being instead just bizarre. There is something oddly soothing in Martha's voice as she walks her viewer through ninety-seven steps to folding napkins or where to find a linen press and how to design a room to house said napkins and linen press. Even when she went to prison, I waited for her shows to return.

There are many things within her show that I have found useful in a practical way. I find beauty in her creations. The past weekend was one in which I wish her soothing presence was on television. The stomach flu hit us with full force beginning with Emily. In the space of six hours, I changed linens, clothes, and the towels under her six times. There was no sleep. In between visits to the laundry room, I crossed my fingers that she had just eaten something and that it was not a true stomach virus.

I was wrong. Joel followed in her steps the next night and Emily stayed sick through the weekend. My crossed fingers didn't protect me either. The virus hit me full force on Sunday. I haven't thrown up that much since I was pregnant with Emily. I somehow doubt that Martha Stewart has ever thrown up in her life. If she did throw up, she would probably use some proper term and an immaculately labeled, toile-covered regurgitation receptacle.

Apparently, Martha herself realized she was a bit out-of-touch for the masses... As I was awakened for the millionth time, I turned on the television. I discovered my reward for being up in the wee hours. Martha is sanctioning and producing a show where she releases clips of her shows with full carte blanche for comments to her daughter and a friend.

The daughter and friend then watch the shows while seated and make witty and somewhat caustic comments about Martha, the shows, and Alexis' life growing up, current life, and anything else that fits the episodes. The comments were not only funny in the midst of the puke fest, they definitely seemed to be the voice of those confused people who feel blessed to have fitted sheets that they can actually get on the mattress (who actually irons sheets?!)

The first episode I saw was especially fitting. As I watched Martha not only organizing her linen closet but making little framed labels for the different types of the only ironed linens in the free world. My own sheets were covered with vomit and rotating for the third time in my dying washer. Another batch of sheets and towels were wet and stinking in the dying dryer.

I didn't realize at the time that neither appliance was going to make it. I also don't even put matching sheets on the bed anymore.

When I got up the next day, I discovered two sets of stinking, vomit soaked clothes. I also found our washer and dryer to be basically dead. These were the \$200 appliances we bought we purchased when we got married so eight and a half years is a pretty good run. I know Martha would have an extra laundry room set up with the perfect German washer and dryer and someone to make homemade laundry detergent.

I found out washers and dryers don't cost \$200 anymore. I also had to take with me kids that were fixated on opening and shutting all of the appliance doors stopping short only of climbing into the actual appliances. I called; Internet searched, and did energy consumption comparisons. It turned out that I walked into a few stores that were doing a reset. I found a fantastic set with great features for less than the price of a moderate set. It was not a purchase I savored or wanted to make. I couldn't even get it delivered the next day because of activities and the famous five-hour delivery window.

The fantastic deal I got was due to the fact that the washer and dryer are a brownish-red color. My husband thinks it will be retro like avocado or harvest gold. The sales lady made a face when I asked her if she liked the color. I personally am happy with it because it is brown. Brown is the color of dirt. How perfect is that for a laundry room? Of course, Whirlpool called it Tuscan Chestnut to make it sound fancy.

Apparently, consumers were not fooled. It is now a discontinued color. This translates to half-off for me. No one will see the laundry room except for me, as it is upstairs behind closed doors. Yet, the room is becoming a bit of a decorator's plan. Last year, Brian installed a laundry sink for me for a holiday gift. It was a gift worth more than any diamond jewelry.

It is coming three days later. I have loads of gross-smelling clothes that I hope it will wash and dry quickly and remove the remnants of the weekend. In the midst of it all with no sleep, I did lose three pounds. Fortunately, no one has puked in three days. Brian was spared the hideous virus. I have towels from the guest room that don't remind anyone of the weekend. I

also discovered a hilarious, new way to look at Martha with the late-night show.

If Martha saw my laundry room with its new stylish Tuscan Chestnut front loaders complete with pedestals (over half-price off, but she wouldn't need to know that), I know she would be pleased and maybe a little impressed. She would probably construct a lighting fixture out of the discarded washer and dryer and make Christmas ornament decorations out of my dryer sheets and dry cleaner hangers while she was in there. If I could just figure out what labels to put in front of the newly cleansed and steamed Dora and Transformers sheets, I might give her a run for her money.

