



## *Baby Bug* by Amy Cizolla Barnes

### **Stress Spray and Ford's Edict**

We recently purchased fish. The fish are going to be our first attempt at pets. It was a much more arduous task than we thought it might be. First, we had to pick out a just-right tank and all the chemicals. Then, the tank had to be put together and filled with water. The fish didn't actually come home with us because our home water had to be treated in the tank and gotten ready for the fish several days later. The empty tank was brightened by the rainbow of stones in its bottom but it wasn't an exciting fish scene.

We finally made it to get the fish. After a water test, the kids stood at the tanks for awhile and chose their fish based on color and size and overall personality. The first fish Emily chose reacted adversely to their removal from their home. When the salesperson told us about the three day return policy in case of expiration that really applied to those fish, we directed her to other pink fish. The salespeople explained the benefits of some fish and the scary things about other fish like extreme aggression.

As the fish were placed in their plastic transport bags, the salesperson sprayed each bag with something called "Stress Spray" because the fish had to adjust to their new homes and got very stressed out. We joked a little that the process almost entitled us to some stress spray as well.

When we got home, my car payment bill had a side note on it that said we had been mailed information about an extension of credit to buy a new Ford. My car is almost paid off and we have 0% interest on it plus we plan on keeping so I had simply tossed the information. However, Ford went on to dictate that "you received a credit offer, now buy a new Ford". It was a true hard sell. There was no mamby-pamby, "you received a credit offer, maybe you should test drive a new Ford and consider it strongly". It was a little like Emily and Joel in the toy aisle. "Buy me a toy" is not the best technique for them either.

I envisioned the car shopping process from the past. We still have a car seat and a booster which made it too hard to get everyone in the test drive at the same time. We had to drive the car with the salesperson while the other parent stood on the sidelines trying to keep the kids out of the pathway. There were a myriad of options and features and price ranges available. It was a lot like standing in front of very expensive fish tanks. Of course, we had no idea which Fords

would be recalled or make us want to exercise the non-existent three-day return policy.

Even though it was just a piece of paper, I found myself wanting to reach for some stress spray just at the thought of buying another vehicle. I resented Ford's assumption that they could tell me to buy a car. The decision-making process for eighty-eight cent fish took us days. I am going to stick with my almost-paid for SUV that I hope will make it for another ninety thousand miles. It has been almost three days so I think the fish might make it past their expiration period as well.

I wonder if Ford uses a four-year-old and eight-year-old as their sales writing team. I also am thinking that I need to invent Stress Spray for people. I can see the infomercial now. The copy would begin with "You have stress, now buy Stress Spray." The millions will roll in and maybe then I'll buy a new Ford.