Subarus are Delicious

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“My dog ate my car.”

“Excuse me?”

“My dog ate my car.” Today was the third time in the past fifteen years I had to utter those five exact words. I pointed to the damage and noticed the service manager’s raised eyebrows, wry smirk, and open mouth.

“Well, that’s a first,” he said.

I’m apparently a slow learner about leaving dogs alone in cars.

The damage proved dogs really do like Subarus. Brand new, top-of-the-line Subarus. Last night my husband, Walter, and I went out to dinner, took the dog with us, and left him in the car. This routine is not new for Magic, our young German Shepherd-Siberian Husky-mix rescue dog. He loves hanging out in the car as though it is his private, mobile dog house. And last night, he relished eating the knobs of my climate control system, proving he really does enjoy the car.

These knobs are back-lit and display the temperature each front-seat passenger has set for herself. Now I can’t tell if I am setting it to sixty-two or eighty-two degrees. Two white lights, like demonic eyeballs, stare at me instead.

In genuine planned-obsolescence fashion, you can’t simply purchase replacement knobs. Instead, the dashboard’s entire climate control panel must be replaced. What should be priced at $30 will cost almost $500. Just pull out the old unit, plug in the new unit, and charge the customer $456.10. Oh, and be sure the customer has a chance to hear the mechanics at the dealer guffaw at your dog’s bad behavior. Maybe submit it as an anecdote to *The Antics of Subaru-Loving Dogs*. Meanwhile, my dog looks at me with his big, soulful eyes, pants with his tongue sticking out an inch, and I kiss the top of his head.

*You missed me, Magic, is that it? It’s not your fault, boy, even though I’ve left you in the car dozens of times and you never did anything like this!*

I am now researching metal barriers between the front and back seats.

I should have known, though.

Previously, with another dog—Ranger—my husband dropped a dog biscuit between the driver’s seat and center floor console in his brand-new Acura MDX. The dog found it three nights later. He had to struggle in his effort, and I am certain it took him at least a few minutes to shred the highly-adjustable and heated (meaning very expensive) leather seat to get at his doggie cookie. The car was a week old and it took six weeks for the color to return to my husband’s face and the dealer to stop laughing.

Ranger was an excellent traveler and usually quite reliable when left alone in a car. Except for the day I forgot I had wrapped some bacon for him from a Denny’s breakfast and left it overnight in the glove box of my Toyota Avalon. The following day I went out to breakfast again and the dog remained in the car that morning.

Have you ever seen a shredded glove box?

That little mishap required the dealer to keep the car for three days to remove the entire dashboard, replace the glove box, and reassemble everything. I still see the dealer’s repair staff scratching their heads over that one.

Clearly, our dogs have made blithering idiots of Walter and me. Idiots who can’t resist a dog’s tilt of the head. Idiots who would probably pat the dog on the head as it munches on a $1,000 smart phone while we comment how cute he looks doing it.

But that hasn’t happened yet.

We purchase TV remote controls by the three-pack and computer mouse multi-packs. We run through a checklist of what we need to hide when we go out without the dog. We’ve learned that anything that has our scent on it is fair game, despite two bins of mangled doggie chew toys.

We tolerate the felonies our dogs commit. I try to understand why, since the damage has cost quite a bit of money. I believe the answer is quite simple: We have been hopelessly in love with any dog we’ve owned. Secretly, I think my husband is proud of our dogs’ misbehavior and we always absolve them of the mortal sins they commit in the dog-human universe.

But possibly, it is something more.

Reflecting on my lack of common sense when it comes to dogs and destruction, I realized that if we humans possessed the capacity to forgive people’s transgressions as readily as our willingness to forgive our dogs’ shortcomings, perhaps we would approach the nobility of the canine species.

On the other hand, maybe I should have accepted my friend’s offer to use his gun. But I’d probably shoot myself in the foot, and then Magic would comfort me, crunch 9-1-1 on my phone to call emergency services, and lick my face while waiting for the paramedics to show up.

I’d then give him his own set of car keys, a remote control or two, and a brand-new ergonomic computer mouse.