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If It Ain't Broke, Don't Make Me Fix It (781 words)

Get this: I just took my car to the dealer and paid *six hundred dollars* for a car wash. Sure, the dealer claimed I was paying for the car's "forty thousand mile recommended maintenance." But I don't buy it. Because when I took my car in it was running fine. And when I picked my car up it was running fine. The only difference was, it was cleaner.

That's why I avoid taking my car in for service unless it really needs it. In that case, I'm the first one to call the tow truck. The problem is my husband, Steve. He buys into that whole "factory recommended maintenance" thing. Like last week. He was sorting through the mail with our daughter, Kelly. Waving a postcard in my direction, he announced: "it's time to take your car in for a tune-up."

"My car is running perfectly," I replied.

"If you want to keep it running, you have to take care of it!" he snapped. Then he brought up a point I couldn't argue with: "You take Kelly to the doctor's office for annual checkups, right? Even when she isn't sick?"

True. And they don't even throw in a wash.

So like a good car mommy I called the dealer and made an appointment. That's how I ended up with a clean car, and a bill for six hundred dollars. "*Six hundred dollars??*" I asked John, the service manager. "What in the world did they do to a perfectly-running car that added up to six hundred dollars?"

"Well," he answered, "they gave it a tune-up, checked everything, made some adjustments...." He rambled on, but I wasn't really paying attention. I was too busy wondering how it could cost *six hundred bucks* to fix a car that had nothing wrong with it! In fact, I wasn't so sure they really *DID* fix anything. For all I knew they just "pretended" to fix my car, like Ashlee Simpson pretended to sing on Saturday Night Live!

John must have noticed my skepticism, because he said, "Let me explain it to you." He pointed to the service record. "Here's a list of all the things that were checked."

Wait a minute! What was he saying? As he droned on about diagnostic systems, hoses, wipers and lights, I realized he'd just admitted none of these things needed fixing! There was nothing wrong with *any* of them, since all they needed was checking!

"Am I being charged for all that "checking?" I asked John.

"Well...yes, it's part of the maintenance program. Why?"

"Because my bank offers *free* checking."

He gave me a funny look, and started telling me about my "half shaft boots." Frankly, I didn't even know I had boots! "They're a little worn," he said with a frown, although I don't know why you'd even *want* boots if they're not going to be worn.

Next he told me about things that were flushed, like my transmission and radiator. I'm sure that was unnecessary; I've never had problems with my transmission transmitting or my radiator radiating. Besides, even if they did need to be flushed, how do I know they really *were* flushed? I'm always wary of this one, because I've been burned before. I've even had people in my own family tell me they've flushed, and later found proof they were lying!

John had already moved on, saying that my tires were rotated, which didn't make any sense. Every time I drive, my tires rotate, spinning around at up to eighty, um, I mean *sixty* miles per hour. Not to mention the road I'm driving on is technically attached to the earth, which is also rotating. If anything, my tires had been OVER-rotated, and needed to be UN-rotated.

He continued, telling me that they had adjusted some belts, which I could have easily done myself. I adjust my own belt all the time, usually after I eat too much for dinner.

Finally, John reached under the counter. With a dramatic flourish, he held up some grotesque-looking car part. "Look at this!" he exclaimed.

Supposedly this filthy and disgusting thing was my air filter, which had been replaced. I wasn't impressed; I wouldn't have known the difference between my car's old filter and the filter from someone else's furnace.

Afterward, I drove home from the dealer in my clean car, and tried to calm down. Steve's right, of course – a car needs to be taken care of. And maybe they really did all the stuff John said they did.

Either that, or my car and I both just took a bath.