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Twenty years of living with giant Celtic hounds and it's come to this:

Our house is partitioned like Berlin in the Cold War to keep bananas from disappearing off the top of the refrigerator.

All my coat pockets have been ripped off by long, furry snouts idly poking around for anything interesting or gulpable.

I'm an old man with the reflexes of a feral cat from dodging 160-pounders as they wheel and slam into the couch. The one I was just sitting on.

In my pants pockets at this very moment are 20 plastic poop bags and... gobs of melted cheese. And, wait, that *may* be a bit of Vienna sausage. Or a fingertip I just won't be needing anymore.

My hair and beard look like rats nests from Oona intently "grooming" me and Oisin stopping by to say hi after every trip to the water bowl. His beard holds more water than Hoover Dam. Until he sticks his head under my shirt to see if I'm hiding bacon there. He's a friendly boy. And I am never completely dry.

So, it's pretty clear even to me now. Before Irish wolfhounds, I was a casual pet owner. I'm becoming one of them now, such is the pull these quirky, hilarious, confounding giants have once you invite one into your home. They do not merely take over your life. Like the Borg, they **will** assimilate you. I've become a classic Southern eccentric, that crazy old man lurching into town in a swarm of crazy-big hounds.

This is a *good* reason to start a blog? Time will surely tell....

I think so because there's this : Every time I step out with an Irish wolfhound, people come flocking. They cross the street or the park or the field to touch them and toss questions. Yes, wolfhounds are arrestingly, impossibly big. They had to be way back when in Ireland when they snatched warriors out of chariots and snipped off their heads. The man on the street knows so little about these elegant, shaggy giants.

But "big" isn't why wolfhounds are woven all through Irish myth. There's primal magic in their veins. I know. It sounds naive. Only...I've never had another dog salute a dying peer with a round of baying that shook the walls at the moment of

his death. None of my previous dogs ever visibly got a joke, told me more with a look in her eyes or made me proud to be considered an equal. Wolfhounds are the only dogs I've had that stopped dead with a look in their eyes that convinced me they were looking with awe into some other place.

And that's the wild stare.

So, let me tell you about my life with living legends...