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She was our second Irish wolfhound and we expected another hearty round of sugar and spice. What we got was Grace O'Malley, the Irish pirate queen. And again, our lives were changed...

Our first wolfhound, Finn, a wheaten male, sold us on the breed forever. He was the kindest, most compassionate giant imaginable. He smelled like hay in the sunshine when I held him and I held him often. We had to have another, of course.

And so she finally came. All summer, we watched Oona and her 13 siblings from afar on a Facebook page that her Florida breeder created for the puppy parents. They romped, they

rambled, they yanked on cowbells and ranged the grounds, a diminutive pack of wildlings. The fact that Oona was born in a hurricane on the Fourth of July should have told us something. But she was so *cute*!

I picked the name Oona because (A) it was Irish and (B) I wanted her to know she was loved every time I crooned her name. Ooonaaaaa.... She smiles and nods now when she hears it. The queen is due her tributes.

Oona was serious and quiet on the 12-hour drive from Tampa. I'm pretty sure now that she was making mental notes on where to raid for booty. At the time, I was worried that maybe she'd be tired and disoriented. I didn't know Oona at all.

She was just 13 weeks old when we cautiously introduced her to the household. We didn't want the other dogs to frighten the puppy. Finn was curious and gentle, as expected. Then she met Little Bentley and his minion, Sully, our two rescues. Bentley is a brilliant, natural-born leader. But then, he never had any *real* competition in McMillan's House O' Fur.

Bentley decided to start the puppy off right. He barked in her face. Tiny Oona didn't miss a beat. She roared back and rocked all three of the guys back on their heels. And so it began....

Bentley went back to the drawing board, charting and graphing how he was going to dominate the puppy. Sully slunk to the corner, hoping Oona wouldn't see him. She didn't. Oona had her sights on Finn, the biggest individual in the house. She adored him. She swung from his beard, nipped his heels and rode him like a monkey. The old batchelor was baffled and did his best to shuffle off and ignore her.

It was like deciding to ignore a hurricane. Oona was a hundred pounds at six months. We set up baby gates to keep her from hurting those her tender joints bashing the guys. They got the back bedrooms and the hall. She got the living room. They watched her smugly through the bars. So she lithely and silently vaulted the gate. We didn't miss her until we heard the wailing in the back.

Bentley must be part herd dog. He stands in his target's path and tries to seduce them with his eyes. I step over him. Oona snickers and rolls him into a ball. Then she steps over him. Little Bentley gets no respect.

I don't mean Oona was wild or grim. Her mother, aunts and sister were noted Amazons, all. From day one she was coolly in control, a furry Wonder Woman. She can be a comedienne, too. She had a twinkle in her eye every day when she frisked me. Just in case I had the odd piece of cheese in my pocket. Then she pinned me to the couch with a paw and gave me warm, wet kisses. Resisting Oona was futile.

And so it surprised us all what she did when we brought a *third* Irish wolfhound puppy into the house....