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It's a question I've posed before about the Irish war dog: How can a single individual be both a ferocious and feared fighter and

a sweet, tender companion? If it's two sides of a coin, it's one helluva coin. And so the Irish wolfhound is.

Closer to home, how can one juvenile wolfhound be so loving and adorable and such a maniac blur of mayhem? All in the same breath...

Puppy Oisin is growing up. Just not fast enough to keep ahead of the testosterone. Our sweet little boy checks in just often enough to reassure us he's still inside there before his kidnapper hormones whisk him away again up the wall and across the ceiling.

I'm not sure how the ancient Celts dealt with the bedlam. Maybe they were just higher-spirited than I am. And didn't live in tiny houses. Maybe they were of sterner stock. And had stronger liquor...

Some things I've learned about living with a young war-dog-in training:

Sleep when you can.

They will too, eventually. A young hound needs rest after burning through enough energy to power Manhattan. He'll sleep like the dead while you're at work. When you drag home tired? Game on!

They have keen body awareness.

Like any fighter should be, young wolfhounds are nimble. How else could they leap over the couch, slide under the table, flip up the wall and land in your lap without breaking something? Other than the table, the lamp, the door frame and...maybe your lap.

They're 140-pounds-or-so of crazed Ninja. They're the Flash in fur.

Practice makes a shambles.

Of course, they got those crazy moves through repetition. You may have taught young Diablo "sit" and "stay" when he was younger but that part of his brain is simply no longer in radio contact. You're speaking to a big knot of hormones now. You can't reason with hormones. Worse, it's a big knot of hormones residing in a member of the sighthound group. Which means if it moves, it must be chased and harrowed. It's likely your homeowners insurance doesn't cover chasing and harrowing. At least this stage only lasts for a year. Or so...

You learn what's really important.

Living with a shaggy hurricane teaches you to prioritize. Want to keep that big screen TV? Bolt it *high* on the wall. No, higher than that.... Enjoy using those legs? Keep them and the rest of you against the wall when moving from one part of the house to the next. Book, magazines, your favorite DVDs, they're probably goners. But wait, is that your life insurance policy *in his mouth*? How did....? Well, young warriors are *resourceful*, too.

What doesn't kill you gives you a colorful new vocabulary.

You only have so much patience. Your young warrior is boundlessly full of himself. You'll soon find words and strings of obscenities coming out of your mouth that you never even used in college. Shipyards are convents compared to the expletives you just used in surprisingly creative ways. It's okay.

If you lose your job due to insanity, lack of sleep or maiming, the merchant marines will gladly take you in.

Young war dogs have formidable survival skills.

Just when you think you can take not a moment more of this hellstorm, the hormones do a surprising thing. They crack open the door just a sliver. The puppy you once knew comes down off the ceiling, plops his head in your lap, gazes at you adoringly and lets out a big sigh. You cancel your call to 911 and gaze adoringly back. Because you know that one day you'll have your love muffin back. And because you've just been played. The door snaps shut, and Pennywise the Clown is coming at you again. Just like the movie.

Strangely enough, people who have one wolfhound...usually get another. We're a certain kind of crazy. Maybe we're not that far from the ancient Celts after all....