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OctWant to see an Academy Award-winning performance? Ask your Irish wolfhound who stole the roast. It was there just a second ago. The *wolfhound* was there a second ago. In the flicker of an eye the roast just....vanished from the counter. You have your suspicions.

But look at that face. Big, innocent eyes. A brow slightly wrinkled as he rubbernecks around looking for the culprit. His eyes return to yours, brimming with sincerity. If he could speak, he'd suggest, "Check the cat's pockets."

And you'd fall for it too if your wolfhound wasn't casually slurping roast juice from his mustache. At least he waits until you leave the room to belch and spit out the plastic wrapper.

We say they're almost human. Some of us think they're *better* than most people we know. Loyal (except for pot roast lapses), endlessly affectionate, surprisingly charismatic and fast on their feet when they need an alibi. *Big* pearly whites. They've got dash and style. And they will work for cheese. Hollywood should take note. The studios are missing out on major talent, here.

Think about it. The price of filmmaking goes up and up, but box office numbers are tumbling in the face of the rise of streaming TV. You can count the actors and actresses on one hand who have the magnetism and appeal to still be called mainstays of the Silver Screen.

Yet the popularity of dogs continues to skyrocket. Sure, there are dog movies like "Benji" and "Marley & Me," but what about the heavy lifting, the blockbusters? They need actors of great stature like, well, the Irish wolfhound. Here are some classics that could be way better with a wolfhound center stage.

Star Wars

Technically, the beloved space saga already *has* a wolfhound as a major character, Chewbacca. Great big furry guy. He howls and hoots when he's frustrated. He's as subtle as a car bomb and he sticks with Hans Solo no matter what kind of slimy alien or stormtrooper is blasting away at them.

But, Chewbacca is just a big man in a dog suit. George Lucas had an image in mind, but apparently couldn't quite put his finger on what. This was not the dog he was looking for. Someone should have introduced him to a wolfhound: Just as big as Chewbacca. Much less time lounging in a chair in makeup and wardrobe. The fur is strong with this one.

True, a wolfhound couldn't handle any more lines than Chewbacca, but think of the wit and *panache* as he doghandles the controls of the Millennium Falcon, blasts indiscriminately at bad guy and mugs at the camera for treats. Just a better wookie, this one is.

Harry Potter

For a film series that's already loaded with magical creatures and fantastic beasts, Warner Brothers missed the boat on this

one. The Boy Who Lived would have *really* lived if he'd had a wolfhound sidekick, Ron Wolfly. True, our "Ron" would probably be just as weirded out by big spiders as the Weasley kid, but when it came time to tuck in at the welcoming feast, it'd be game point for Gryffindor year after school year before it even began.

Quidditch? I'm not sure how gracefully a wolfhound could ride a broom, but any low-flying snitch would be a goner.

Wolfhounds never bully smaller dogs. They're natural champions of equality. Ron Wolfly would have had Severus Snape tip-toeing around Harry Potter in no time. There'd be no "mudblood" cracks around Hermione. Ever.

He-Who-Must-Not-Be-Named would lose a lot more than a nose if he came waving that stick around the Potter kid.

Werewolves? Just another wolf stomping around on its hind legs. The Malfoy kid? One sneer at Harry Potter and he'd be answering the question, "How fast *can* you run?"

And for comic relief, let's see how many times Ron Wolfly mispronounces the levitation charm. "Wingardium LeviOsa!"

Jaws

How many times have you been walking through the room eating a sandwich or carrying *any* sort of food in your hand when, in a flash, you see a set of teeth fly by and...the food's just *gone*? A wolfhound can leap like nobody's business. Steven Spielberg could have saved himself \$3 million and

major conniptions if he'd parked the mechanical sharks and just gone with an Irish wolfhound.

Not just any wolfhound, of course. A *rogue* wolfhound of the sea. About as big as a great white, only not as slippery.

Our Great White Wolfhound isn't just some mindless, unstoppable killing machine bent on eating Brody, Quint and Hooper. He's an unstoppable eating machine bent on snatching those sardines in their cooler. And, yes, they're going to need a bigger boat because nothing's more stubborn than a wolfhound on a food trail.

Lord of the Rings

A thoroughly magical movie, a majestic classic. But just think what Peter Jackson could have done with a few wolfhounds. The Riders of Rohan, where were their *hounds*? Wolfhounds were war dogs *born* to course alongside the horses. Orcs riding big, ugly wolves? Ask the wolves of Ireland about fighting wolfhounds. Oh, wait, there *aren't* any. Not anymore...

In fact, the whole 12-hour cinematic saga could have been whittled down to about 15 minutes if Jackson had featured wolfhounds instead of stumpy little people with big, hairy feet. Convince a wolfhound there's a sack of cheese waiting afterwards and he'd sprint straight through Mordor, dodge, leap or bowl over scores of orcs and spit that silly ring straight into the pit. Then cheese. And one wolfhound to eat it all...

The Shining

Stanley Kubrick's horror classic would be a lot livelier if he'd have ditched the weird ghost twins, the bloody walls, haunted ballroom and all the other supernatural malarky and gone with this story instead:

Jack Torrance, an aspiring writer and recovering alcoholic, accepts a position as the off-season caretaker of the remote historic Overlook Hotel in the Colorado Rockies. He desperately needs the quiet to finish his Great American novel. In our version, Jack has no wife and son. Instead, he brings his three wolfhounds. For company.

We're going for a psychological shocker here. The first snow of the season falls, Jack settles down at his typewriter in front of a roaring fire and...a wolfhound has to go out and tinkle. He takes care of it, settles down again and another wolfhound is staring intently at him. The hound doesn't like the kibble. Maybe there's a nice ham lying around somewhere, instead. Frustrated, Jack raids the well-stocked pantry. And settles down again. Another wolfhound paws him. He's out of water.

When the first wolfhound stands at the door again needing to go out, we notice as Jack climbs back into his parka that he's developed a facial tic. His language is getting pretty colorful when the second wolfhound starts pawing at the pantry door and when the third hound starts smacking his lips thirstily, Jack heads for the bar.

Two months later in a howling blizzard, Jack, completely unhinged now, chases the hounds out into the snow waving an axe, they slip back inside and Jack is locked out in the snow. The hotel's aged manager, acting on a premonition that something terrible is going down at the Overlook, rides a snowplow up to the sprawling hotel and finds Jack, frozen to death outside, grinning crazily and clutching that axe. Inside, the pantry door is wide open and three round hounds are sleeping off a binge. And the huge walk-in is *completely empty of food*...The horror....