



Dec. 9, 2017

It's that time of year when every parents sweats over what to tell the kids about Santa. Is he really real? Why is there one in every department store? Why does Santa at the mall smell like mothballs and Schnapps? So many decisions....

Since my kids are grown and gone, I thought I was long past all that. But recently it hit me that I *do* still have two "little ones," [Oona](#) and Oisin, and I'd sure better prepare them before Christmas Eve when the jolly old elf slides down our chimney and...stumbles over two hulking Irish wolfhounds heaped on my floor.

Because, it's true that Santa knows when you are sleeping, he knows when you're awake, but he doesn't know my "kids" can sprint 40 mph and bite through structural steel when startled. And I'm pretty sure an old fat guy in a fuzzy red suit skulking in our living room at 2 a.m. would qualify as "startling." Especially for him.

Does Santa know about letting sleeping dogs lie? I'd email him a warning but I discovered that santa@northpole.com is a phishing site. Looks like Vladamir in Russia is going to get a sack of coal for Christmas. Along with your Social Security and passwords if you try to reach Santa at that address. Santa needs a better webmaster.

But Santa's the one I really need to warn about Oona and Oisin. Because my "kids" are hard cases. They're not waiting for Santa to bring them a Fingerlings robot monkey puppet or a new X-Box for being good. They'd *like* a bundle of switches. Santa's just low on leverage with these two.

Oh, sure, I've *tried* talking to them about the situation. You scoff, but most dogs have a working vocabulary of 200 words or more. Sadly, "Big Guy In A Red Suit" isn't a phrase that comes up a lot. And the command "leave it" they obey on an item by item basis. Cheese in a pocket is high on Oona's "do not respond" list.

I wonder what Santa has in *his* pockets? Cookies, I'm guessing. Can't eat 'em all at *every* house, right? That must be why that coat has big pockets. So, yeah, Santa's toast.

Oona's never met a pocket she can't get to the bottom of in a millisecond. She'd be a pickpocket if she didn't draw such an

attentive crowd when I take her walking. Still, a girl does what she can. Fortunately, many people don't carry cheese or meat in their pockets. Just me, apparently. Which is why I no longer *have* pockets.

But I digress. If I can't forewarn Santa through the usual channels and I don't look forward to finding scraps of red felt strewn wildly about the living room in the cold dawn of Christmas morn, what's my next step. Elves? They don't come around much any more since the Elf on the Shelf incident of 2014. Don't ask. It still makes Oona grin. And I'm still checking her teeth for shreds of evidence.

You'd think the clatter of reindeer on the rooftop would be enough of an early warning system. My dogs howl when a *raindrop* taps the windowpane. Airborne ungulates ought to do the trick. But Oona and Oisin have slept straight through every other Christmas Eve....Which tells me they've succeeded in making it to Santa's bad list. My house is a no-fly zone.

So then, I wonder how Oona and [Krampus](#) are going to get along? Who am I fooling? She may *be* Krampus...