



Jan. 15, 2018

It sounded like such an idyllic weekend: Snowed in and absolutely too cold to go anywhere. So, it was okay to curl up on the couch by the fireplace video and maybe read a book or catch up on mail.

This was sheer fantasy. We were snowbound with hounds. By mid-day Sunday, the place looked like a Mexican standoff in a spaghetti western — curled lips, snarls and stink eye all around.

Read a book? Hah! Oisin ATE all our books — after stepping on all four other dogs prowling listlessly around the living room while outside the wind howled and the ice sheets glinted.

It's a situation I know that moms or missionaries to the cannibals can identify with. You hope to keep the peace — and many of your digits.

We have four dogs. I may have mentioned this before. Two rescues and two giant hounds, including a young Irish wolfhound hurricane who's already easily the biggest living thing on the block.

He may just be a dog too far...

To look at him, you wouldn't think Oisin was such a gifted hooligan. Big, sweet, smiling puppy eyes. Big droopy mustache. Big teeth for deconstructing anything flimsier than structural steel.

He tirelessly trolled for trouble.

Trouble, as it happened, was just inches away. His aunt Oona lunged from her wintry stupor every few seconds to tell her nephew to behave.

Oona's the fun police. She's 160 pounds of teeth, muscle, law and order. She rules her domain. Her glare can boil water. Oisín is pretty sure he can outrun water. Possibly light. Taunting Oona is his life.

Let the face-fighting begin.

Two grizzlies going at it on the couch could not have matched these two for enthusiasm, shrieks, awful groans, roars — and, did I mention teeth snapping? — all with me perched on the other end of the couch tapping away at my laptop while odds and ends bounced off shelves and ceiling plaster fell all around the room.

You can see why the other dogs voted them out of the house. They'd planned on a leisurely weekend, too. Luckily, our back yard mud bog was now an ice flat. It was nearly 6 degrees outside. Oona stood by the gate looking cold, abused and indignant. Her claws were getting muddy. This was no way to treat royalty.

I don't think Oisín noticed the cold. I had to go out and snap him off the ice, two-thirds through a 30-foot skid, flash-frozen to the surface. The other dogs squeezed one space over and we hustled Oona and her amped-up nephew back inside.

Rinse and repeat, 472 times.

The sun set, the glaciers crackled and somewhere in all this, the whiskey came out as the dogs wore themselves down and the house finally went silent.

Which is when the cat started dropping things on their heads. She was ready to go out.

She did.

Such is winter in Tennessee. Wait a day or so and it'll be 60 degrees and rainy. The bog will reappear. No matter. We'll tossed them all out to commune with nature with while we clean the mud off the ceiling.

We may even lash lifelines to the little dogs so we can eventually reel them back in from the muck. Oona will swim back on her on. Once she lets Oisin come down from the trees.