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When you're big and strong, it's easy to be brave. But consider the young Irish wolfhound. You're still small and untested. But you've got the stuff of greatness singing in your veins. You step up to dangerous deeds because for you, there's just no backing own. You make your wild, defiant leap and, yes, it's likely you've got crazy eyes.

What's the face of real courage look like? I've seen it in the eyes of three generations of wolfhounds. One of the advantages of having a great breeder isn't just that you get priceless advice, you get to know their hounds and know them well. It explains so much about your own puppy.

Irish wolfhounds are known for stubbornness and courage. If a wolfhound decides to do a thing, he'll see it through. When I want my pluck edgy with dash of nerve, I look to Bean Rohan and her two daughters, Luna and Oona. It's a dilemma, a tight spot when you're quick enough to see the dangers in a thing but your belly is all full of fire. A Rohan girl backs down for nothing.

And, as it turns out, neither does a Rohan boy.

I've posted a series of photos at the bottom of the page. They make me laugh, even as my heart soars seeing them. The first two belong to my exceptional breeder, Helen Rohan. The last two are closer to home (Peggy shot them) and together, they demonstrate how nerve starts young in our wolfhounds — and runs right on down the line.

Baby Bean

Bean is just a few months old but there they are — crazy eyes — as she amuses her mother Maddie, darting in, defying her (and gravity) and daring her to do something about it.

Young Luna

A puppy never counts the cost, but you can see in young Luna's eyes that she knows. The older dogs are playing with a ball. Luna wants it. She's nervy enough to snatch it. Come what may,

she is not about to give it up to her mother Bean or anybody else.

Oona In Charge

This is my girl, Oona, at 13 weeks. She's just left her home, her mother Bean and her 13 siblings and taken a 12-hour drive, 80 mph all the way in a bouncing box that roared and smelled funny.

Puppy Oona was then taken inside a strange house and two old boys, Sully and Bentley, decided to put the young thing in her place fast. They barked at her. Oona didn't miss a beat. She was in their faces, roaring. It rocked them back on their heels and set the tone for things to come.

The photo was snapped back outside when she was introduced to Finn, who's a little baffled by the tiny girl with the crazy eyes. From that day on, Oona was in charge.

The Young Prince

When I heard that Luna — a wolfhound Amazon if ever there was one — was having puppies, I was all in. There's a feral, old-soul magic in both Luna and in her sister, Oona. And I wondered very much how it'd translate in a male.

Oisin is one of the sweetest natured wolfhounds I've ever known or imagined. When he smiles, you expect to hear violins and see butterflies. It's so sweet your teeth hurt. Oisin is soft and shy. But he's the son of Luna...

Oona wanted to eat Oisin when she first met him. She knew what another wolfhound in her kingdom meant — competition.

But then she sniffed him. She inhaled his scent for a strangely long time. When she raised her head again, she was a different girl. Our wild child had turned into her nephew's guardian. She had a different kind of crazy eyes then. They said that anything that tried to harm Oisín would pay an awful price.

She raised a devil dog. Oisín found his courage. He used it deviling her. He'd seen her teeth. He'd heard her roar. But he was a Rohan boy. And darned if he didn't have his mother's eyes.

And this is the story of all wolfhounds, really. Even before they're 160-pounds of formidable, courage blooms. Gentle when stroked, but oh-so fierce when provoked. And sometimes just for the fun of it...