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When you live with Irish Wolfhounds, it's too easy to get pretty full of yourself. After all, we live with legendary

creatures, statuesque individuals of grace and great presence. Walk down the street with one and you know you'll trail ooh's and ah's and gasps.

Luckily, Irish Wolfhounds are nature's deflators. When the hubris gets out of hand, they'll jerk you right back to the stony face of the planet again. They're happy to remind you that while you may live with the stuff of legends, the pixie dust is non-transferrable. You are still merely the concierge to the hounds, a dog valet.

It's not that they're argumentative. An Irish Wolfhound doesn't have to be. Go ahead, give your wolfhound a stern command. Amuse them with your range of facial expressions. You can tell they heard you by the twinkle in their eye. But leaping to obey just isn't in their itinerary. Would you come back tomorrow? And bring some nice cheese? Run along now. I feel a nap coming on. And then maybe I'll gas the attack the living room. I *did* hear you say the mother in law was coming, right? The *finicky* one? Well then, one must certainly set the mood.

Since most of us don't actually have the strength of Russian weightlifters and we don't keep a crane handy, we're not going to move a wolfhound that doesn't care to be moved. Command all you want. Moreover, just the suggestion that they should get up off a perfectly good couch to make room for you — the guy who pays the taxes and brings home the food — will get a big chuckle.

Wolfhounds appreciate humor, and not just slapstick

watching you try to put together that fancy new dog bed that they're not going to use. They can do subtle, too. Like watching you with a poker face while you search the kitchen for that pack of hot dogs. The one crammed in their left cheek. They're waiting to chew until you've completely taken apart the kitchen. Wolfhounds love a good punchline.

Your Irish Wolfhound's not defying you. He just has very definite ideas. We humans believe we're kings of all creation with our big brains and opposable thumbs. Wolfhounds do appreciate our finer qualities. *SOME*body has to operate those can openers for them and remember all those computer passwords when it comes time to order special treats for them online. They're not above more mundane treats like your pork chop or that box of pizza you turned your back on just now, but it was good of you to find all that nice stuff for them at the specialty shops like those fancy cheeses you like or those Italian leather shoes you got them. They commend you on your creativity. *And* your fancy thumbs.

They know they're the ones actually at the top of the stack, high-end predators who think for themselves. They love it when we jabber on about B.F. Skinner and operant conditioning to our dog friends. They like to see us strut our stuff and bring out the training clicker and that bag of treats, all smug over how we're going to "train" them to sit and heel like robots. Sure, they'll go along with it. They learned our silly word command the first time. They'll sit or pace alongside us as long as we keep popping the food. They *get* what this is all about. But when the fun's over and we think

we've conditioned them and made a behavior a solid habit, that's when they have *their* fun. We say "sit" and they yawn. We say it louder and...they stroll over to the corner and study dust motes. We go get the treats again and they take one. And then they take the clicker, too. What else ya got in those deep pockets? I hope it's steak. I'll *work* for steak. Oh, here's the pieces of that clicker back. We won't be needing this silly thing anymore....

And it's not that they don't love us and don't want to make us happy. After all, we're theirs. They let us think we're in charge because they don't want to stifle our initiative. We do the darnedest things. Usually they can work it to their advantage. More seasoned wolfhound companions like to say we're equals. Again, wolfhounds don't want to crush our spirits. *We* don't have teeth that can break heavy bones. *We* can't sprint 40 mph and make the ground shake. *We* work all day while they snooze on the couch and then drive them places for lovely walks. We fill their food and water bowls. We tend to them until we're ready to drop. Then they bathe our face with kisses and tell us it'll be alright. Now come and let me lie on you on the couch and you tell me all about your day. Of course I'm listening to every word. I hear better with my eyes shut. Ignore the snoring. It's how I process your troubles. You just keep rattling on.

And the thing of it is, we *do* feel better. Sitting here with them snoozing trustingly in our lap, it's made our day. Superiors, equals, abused toadies, they're just words. This is true humility. We love them. We know we're loved. We

have each other and life is good....