

What the Wind Knows; a novel

(a summary by Pat Evert)

The wind. It's singing. Listen closer. Maybe it's singing for you. The wind you hear is the same wind that has always blown. The rain that falls is the same rain. Over and over, round and round, like a giant circle. But **the wind and water know all the earth's secrets**. They've seen and heard all that has ever been said or done. And if you listen, they will tell you all the stories and sing every song.

Eoin, my grandfather, was born in 1915, nine months before the famed Easter Rising that changed Ireland forever. His parents died in that rebellion, and Eoin was orphaned without knowing either of them. We were alike in that way, both orphaned young. I was only six years old when I lost my parents. I was a little girl with a tied tongue and an overly active imagination, and Eoin, my grandfather, stepped in, rescued me, and raised me. And now he was close to dying. It is the history of my family, woven into the fabric of my past, etched in my DNA, and seared into my memory. "Ireland is **so many opinions and so few solutions**. And all the opinion in the world doesn't change the past." Eoin sighed. "That's one of the reasons I left. When I die, you'll take me back. When I die, take my ashes back to Ireland and set me loose in the middle of Lough Gill. We'll be together again, Annie."



	Characters	Timeframe
	Anne Gallagher	Born 1970
Parents		
	Declan & Hannah Keefe Gallagher	Both died 1976
Grandparent		
	Eoin Declan Gallagher	Born 1915, America 1933, Died 2001
Great grandparents		
	Declan & Anne Finnegan Gallagher	Both died 1916 (the rebellion)
	Dr. Thomas Smith	Raised Eoin from 6 - 18
Great great grandparent		
	Brigid Gallagher	

On May of 1916 Eoin's parents died, Declan died and Anne disappeared, never to be found. From then on Dr. Thomas Smith raised him. Thomas was Declan's best friend and very much loved Anne. For years he searched for her.

I flew into Dublin, smuggling the urn of Eoin's ashes in my suitcase. Numerous times before I had tried to coax Eoin to go to Ireland, but it was never quite time. In exploring the area of my grandfathers origins I was told that there was a woman named Gallagher who drowned in Lough Gill, . . . it had to be almost a century before. My grandfather went to America in 1933. The local librarian mentioned, "We have a whole collection of books written by a woman named Gallagher." She stopped in front of a shelf and straightened a stack. "They were written in the early twenties but professionally reprinted and donated to the library last spring. I've read them all. Delightful, really. All of them. **She was ahead of her time.**" **Anne came back.** Not right away, mind you. There were some rumors . . . speculation about where she'd been. But she came back.

I found my ancestors beneath a tree. The stone was a tall rectangle with the name Gallagher engraved at the base. Just above it were the names Declan and Anne. I had with me a picture of Thomas Smith and my grandmother. It was a photo of Thomas and Anne in an ornate ballroom. A big, smirking man with dark hair stood in the center of the shot, one arm slung loosely around Anne's shoulders and his other arm around Thomas. The man was Michael Collins, leader of the movement that led to the Treaty with England. I had also brought with me Thomas' journal that Eoin had given me. 11 July 1916 [journal] - Instead of the executions and imprisonments tamping down the rebellious undercurrent in the country, it seems to have fed it, contributing to a growing sentiment that another injustice has been done. We simply add it to the centuries-old list every Irishman keeps tucked in the back of his mind and hands on to the next generation... I see Anne's face. I dream about her, and my heart is unsettled. Bridgid would not understand. I'm not sure I do. I didn't love Anne, but she haunts me. If I had found her, maybe it would be different. But I didn't find her.

I brought you back, Eoin. We're here. In Ireland. Dromahair. I'm in the middle of Lough Gill. It's lovely, just like you described. I clutched the urn to my chest a moment more. Then with a silent prayer to the wind and water to forever keep Eoin's story on the breeze, I upended it, flinging my arm in a wide arc, gasping as the white ashes melded completely with the wispy tendrils of mist that had begun to settle around me. It was as though the ash became a wall of white fog, billowing and collecting, and suddenly I could not see beyond the end of my boat. The bow of a barge slid into view, and I was suddenly staring up at three men, who in turn stared down at me, clearly as shocked by my presence as I was by theirs. The men stiffened as I rose, as if my standing posed a threat, and the man in the middle, his eyes wide with tension and his lips thin with mistrust, jerked his hand from his pocket and pointed a gun at me. With no warning, no demand, no reason at all, he pulled the trigger, and I was tossed into the lake. I'd been shot, and I had to find my boat. A boat emerged from the mist. "**Good God. Where did you come from?**" **the man asked.** "**Anne?**" **he asked,** the incredulous lift of his voice and the familiarity with which he said my name as odd as my predicament. The man

was staring at me with shock stamped on his handsome face. He knew my name, and I'd been found. For now, that was enough.

I awoke from sleep into a dream world. I had a wound in my abdomen. I was in Garvagh Glebe in June 1921 with a six year old boy at my bedside and Thomas as my doctor. It was Eoin as a child. This was my Eoin, not as my grandfather, but as my child. And I was not his mother. I was not the woman he thought I was. Because I looked so much like that Anne Gallagher they lost 5 years earlier they had numerous questions for me. But I didn't know what had happened to the Anne Gallagher of 1921.

I was staying in Thomas' house. These people—Thomas, Brigid, Eoin—they didn't exist. Not anymore. Yet here they were, as alive as I was, flesh and bone and feelings, moving through days that were already past. I was half convinced I was dead, that I'd died on the lake and gone to a strange heaven where Eoin existed as a child again. **I was an imposter, and the knowledge was ugly and frightening.** I told Thomas that in a week the British will propose a truce with the Dáil. Both sides will agree on July 11, 1921. I didn't want to pretend I was someone else. But if I wasn't Anne Finnegan Gallagher, would he let me stay? And if I couldn't go home, where would I go? I was more afraid than I'd ever been in my entire life. As Maeve had said, "She came back. Anne came back."

In Thomas' much questioning I told him I had been in America. "You left your child, a babe, and went to America?" **"The truth will be impossible for you to believe.** You won't believe it. And you will think I'm lying. I would give you the truth if I thought it would help. But it won't, Thomas." I was left to wonder yet again when my predicament would end, when it would all be over, when my life would right itself.

"But can you promise that you won't leave?" Thomas said, finding the chink in my armor. "No," I whispered, shaking my head. "I can't." "Then maybe you should go, Anne. If you're going to go, go now, before more damage is done."

What if I could go home? Did I really want that? **Will any one miss me?** I had always been married to my work, in love with my stories, and I'd never wanted anyone or anything else. Grandpa Eoin had been my island in a very lonely sea. Eoin's sixth birthday was coming on Monday. I needed to be Anne Gallagher, the writer, to create a special story for a perfect little boy. I was making Eoin a book for his birthday. Writing him a story that's never been told before. It is about a boy who travels through time. He has a little red boat—and he takes it out on the water . . . on Lough Gill. The boat is just a child's toy, but when he sets it in the water, it becomes big enough for him to climb inside. He rows across the lake, but when he reaches the other side, he is always somewhere else. America during the revolution, France with Napoleon, China when the Great Wall was being built. When he wants to go home, he simply finds the nearest lake or stream, sets his little boat in the water, and climbs inside. I wrote the stories, and Thomas drew the illustrations.

I'm here. As impossible as it seems. I'd never felt that pull before, that pressure, **that desire to discover and be discovered in return**. Not until now, not until Thomas. Now, I felt all those things.

8 July 1921 [journal] - New pain because she has returned, and I'd given up on her. I didn't find her. She found us, and oddly, she isn't angry. She isn't broken. It's almost as if she isn't Anne. She refuses to tell me where she's been or what has happened to her. I've tried to imagine plausible scenarios, and I can't. Was she wounded in the Rising? Did someone find her and care for her? Did she lose her memory only to regain it five years later? Was she really in America? Is she a British spy? Did she have a lover? Or did Declan's death send her over the edge? The possibilities—or lack thereof—will drive me mad. Brigid thinks Anne will take Eoin and run if given the chance. I'm afraid of that too, and though I am drawn to her like never before, I don't trust her. And if I'm being honest, I can't bear to see her go.

"I know you aren't Declan's Anne," Thomas said quietly. "And if you keep looking at me that way, Anne, I'll kiss you. I don't know if I trust you. I don't even know who you are half the time. But damn if I can resist you when you look at me like that." ... "But no. I had no wish to be consumed by you. I had no desire to be burned." "None of us are the same, Anne. Some days I hardly recognize myself in the mirror. It's not my face that has changed; **it's the way I see the world. I've seen things that have permanently altered me**. The next few weeks, I moved in a sort of haze, straddling reality and an existence that was both illogical and absolutely undeniable. I stopped questioning what had happened to me—what would happen to me—and accepted each day as it came. I accepted my predicament with the imagination of my childhood, lost in a world I had created and fearful that the story would come to an end and that I would return to my previous life, where Eoin and Ireland and Thomas Smith no longer existed. I was snagged between a future that was my past, and a past that might be my future, if alive is what I was.

Liam Gallagher, Declan Gallagher's brother and Brigid's son, was the man who shot me on the lough. I'd rowed away from the shores of 2001 and into another world. And in that world, Liam Gallagher had tried to kill me. Later Thomas and I went to a wedding party at the Gresham Hotel. There Thomas introduced me to Michael Collins (Mick) one of the leaders of the Irish revolution. "Do ya love him?" Mick asked me in Thomas' presence. I breathed deeply, unable to look away from the dark eyes of a man who wouldn't live to make his own wedding vows, who wouldn't see his thirty-second birthday, who wouldn't ever know how truly remarkable he was. "He's easy to love," I answered softly. We took a picture together, the three of us. Those weren't photos of my great-grandmother at all. They were pictures of me.

26 August 1921 [journal] - **Anne told me everything. And yet . . . I know nothing.** Anne remembered this date and wedding party at the Gresham Hotel. She gasped. "You need to get Michael Collins out of here, Thomas. Right now." "Tell him it's Thorpe. I think that was the name. A fire is set, and the door is barricaded so no one can get out." We avoided the mass murder they had planned for us.

I didn't know if I'd changed history or just modified it by sounding the alarm. For all I knew, I'd been part of the history all along. And, however innocent, my foreknowledge of the fire was still impossible to explain. I didn't want to lie to him. And I didn't know how to tell him the truth. I can't live like this. Pretending to be someone that I'm not. Being punished for things I can't explain and blamed for things I know nothing about. "You'll tell me everything? Mick too?" Thomas asked. "Yes," I breathed, surrendering. "But it's a long . . . impossible . . . story. Do you know the story of Oisín and Niamh, Mr. Collins?" I asked softly, letting my mouth find comfort in the sound of their names—usheen and neev.

I began to recite the tale the way I'd learned it, in Gaelic, letting the Irish words lull the table into a hushed silence. I told them how Niamh, Princess of Tír na nÓg, the Land of the Young, had found Oisín, son of the great Fionn, on the banks of Loch Leane, not so different from the way Thomas had found me. Collins snorted and O'Reilly shifted, but Thomas was still, holding my gaze as I wove the ancient tale in a language every bit as old. "Niamh loved Oisín. She asked him to go with her. To trust her. And she promised to do all in her power to make him happy," I said. "Oisín believed Niamh when she described her kingdom, a place that existed separate from his own world, and he went with her there, leaving his land behind. Oisín and Niamh were very happy for several years, but Oisín missed his family and his friends. He missed the green fields and the loch. He begged Niamh to let him return, if only for a visit. Niamh knew what would happen if she let him go back, and her heart broke because she knew Oisín would not understand unless he saw the truth for himself. Niamh told Oisín he could go but to stay on Moonshadow, her horse, and to not let his foot touch Irish soil. And she begged him to return to her," I said. "Oisín traveled for several days until he returned to the lands of his father. But everything had changed. His family was gone. His home too. The people had changed. Gone were the castles and the great warriors of the past," I said. "Oisín stepped down from Moonshadow, forgetting, in his shock, what Niamh had begged him to remember. When his foot touched the ground, he became a very old man. Time in Tír na nÓg was very different from time in Éire. Moonshadow ran from him, leaving him behind. Oisín never returned to Niamh or the Land of the Young. "Just like Oisín, **there are things you won't understand unless you experience them for yourself,**" I urged. I told you I was no threat to you or Ireland. And that is the only reassurance I can give you. I cannot explain how I know, but I will tell you what I know, if it will help. Before long, Ireland will not be fighting England anymore. We will be fighting each other."

26 August 1921 [journal] - She confessed, "My name is Anne Gallagher. "I was born in America in 1970 to Declan Gallagher—named after his paternal grandfather—and Hannah Keefe, a girl from Cork who spent a summer in New York and never went home again. Or maybe she did. Maybe Ireland claimed her when the wind and water took them away," she whispered. "I hardly remember them at all. I was six, just like Eoin is now." "**We've traded places, Eoin and I,**" she said, inexplicably. "Who is the parent, and who is the child?"

I'd told him a truth he could not accept, his countenance stricken and sad. I ached for my grandfather—the man, not the boy. I mourned for my life—the author, not the woman. But the choice was easy to make. Here, I loved. **I wanted to love more than I wanted to return.** Loving Eoin didn't excuse lying to him. I was an imposter, and all my devotion didn't change reality. I know it's hard to believe. I don't believe it half the time. I keep trying to wake up. It was all too much, too hard to believe, and Thomas couldn't grasp it. "The girl I claim to be. Whether you believe it or not doesn't make it less true, Thomas. Because regardless of whether you believe me or not, regardless of whether you think I'm lying or deranged or sick, I know things that haven't happened yet, and I don't know half of the things you think I should." "If you're crazy, then so am I. I'll be Tom the Lunatic, and you can be Crazy Jane. The truth is, I feel crazy. For the last month I've been slowly going insane," he panted.

1 October 1921 [journal] - For a month I found myself in constant argument with my heart, with my head—with her—although I hardly said a word. I silently cajoled, begged, pleaded, and persuaded, and she stood firm, insistent in her absurdity. I told my heart I could not have her, and the Irish dissident in my blood rose up and said she was mine. The moment I surrendered, **embracing the impossible**, fate tried once more to take her away. "You were there, walking into the water," I whispered. "And then you grew faint . . . like a reflection in thick glass, and I knew you were going to disappear. You were going to leave, and I would never see you again." I had come to terms with the impossible. I had joined Anne's rebellion. "**You really aren't Anne Finnegan, are you?**" "**No. I'm not.** Anne Finnegan Gallagher was my great-grandmother, and I'm a long, long way from home."

Like the sun coming out from behind the clouds, everything changed the moment I was believed. The storm receded, the darkness lifted, and I shrugged off the heavy layers I'd been cowering behind, warmed by sudden acceptance. Thomas had been freed as well, liberated by his own eyes, and he began to shoulder my secrets with me. We believe what makes the most sense. Who I am doesn't make sense. **Some things are better left to discover. Some paths are better left unknown.** "Do you think I get to choose, Thomas? I didn't choose to come. So what if I can't choose whether or not I go?" I'm afraid that love will only bring us pain, but it doesn't change the truth now, does it? "**We're arguing about a fairy tale**, Countess," he whispered, "**No, Thomas. We're living in one.**" Only the wind knows what happened to Anne. The wind knows everything.

27 November 1921 [journal] - "It's all a game, Tommy. To us, it is life and death; to the Brits, it is simply political maneuvering. They talk of diplomacy when we know diplomacy means dominion. If the talks break down, I will be lucky to make it safely out of London. Either this little ragtag Irish delegation comes to an agreement, or England and Ireland will descend into all-out war. We don't have the men, the means, the weapons, or the will for that. Not among the regular folks. They want freedom. They've sacrificed a great deal for it. But they don't want to be slaughtered. And I can't, in good conscience, be the man that condemns them to that fate." I love her with an intensity I didn't think myself capable of.

In a moment, in a breath, it could all be over. He was a dream I could easily wake up from, and I knew all too well that **once awake, I wouldn't be able to call the dream back.** It's terrifying to love so much, knowing how fragile our existence really is. You're going to have to hold on to me, or I'll burst. But don't let them divide us. Don't let them destroy families and friendships. **If we fight each other, we will have nothing left.**

They will have truly destroyed the Irish. And we will have done the wet work for them.

24 December 1921 [journal] - We looked at ourselves and at each other, and there was a sense of anticipation. There was pride, even reverence, for who we were, what we could aspire to, and those we had descended from. I was taught to love Ireland. And the worst part is . . . I know how it ends. I know the ending, and I still don't understand it.

"And what will you do with that love?" You will turn on each other because you don't love Ireland. You love the idea of Ireland. And each man has his own idea of what that is."

26 December 1921 [journal] - I married Anne today. Our eyes were locked as she promised me a lifetime, **however it unfolded.**

In Leitrim and Sligo, like in every county in Ireland, sides were being taken and lines were being drawn. The tension in the streets once due to the Auxies and the Tans was redirected; hostility between neighbors and distrust between friends was the new strife. "I fought the British, Tommy," Michael said. "I killed and ambushed and outmaneuvered. I was the Minister of Mayhem. But I don't have the bloody stomach for this. I don't want to fight my own countrymen." Men like Collins, men like Thomas, and men like my grandfather were irreplaceable. "My grandfather told me once that **happiness is an expression of gratitude. And it's never wrong to be grateful.**" "What did your grandfather tell you about faith?" he asked. "He told me everything would be okay because the wind already knows, ... They can't forget, they never will, the wind and waves remember Him still."

I fought to stay conscious. The weight pressing me down became hands pulling me forward, grasping, lifting, dragging me onto the pebbled shore. I flopped onto the sand, gagging, choking, and retching as the lough lapped at my feet. "Where did you come from, miss? Good God almighty. Scared me to death, you did. It's you, lass. Dear God. What the . . . where the hell have you been?" he stammered, asking questions that I couldn't process. I was back in 2001. We've been lookin' for you for ten days. The boat, everything, was just gone. Lost. Gone. Just like that. A breath, a submersion, and I died and was born again. Liam had tried to kill me. And he'd succeeded. He'd taken my life. Taken my love. Taken my family.

26 April 1922 [journal] - Liam had tried to force Anne into a boat on the lough at gunpoint, and Robbie had shot him. When Robbie ran into the water to pull Liam off her, she was gone. Robbie said he searched the water for an hour. All he found were her shoes. He thinks she drowned, but I know what happened. Liam and Brigid are both convinced my Anne was an imposter. They are right. And they are horribly wrong. Oh, Eoin, my precious boy, my poor little boy. He would have to wait so long to see her again. "I didn't think she was real," Liam murmured. "I see her everywhere I go. I keep killing her, and she keeps coming back."

Ireland feels like home. I got lost in Ireland. Eoin had named me executor of the Smith-Gallagher family trust—a trust I knew nothing about—of which I am the sole beneficiary. Garvagh Glebe and her surrounding properties were included in the trust. Thomas was a very wealthy man, he left Eoin a very wealthy man, and Eoin gave it all to me. In the big house there was a painting. “That’s a picture of the Lady of the Lough, she’s famous around here. As famous as an eighty-year-old ghost can be, I suppose. The story goes that she only lived at Garvagh Glebe for a little while. She drowned in Lough Gill. Her husband was devastated and spent years painting pictures of her.”

I’m going to be staying here. Living here. I still want you to remain on as caretaker, Kevin. I am also expecting . . . a child . . .” When my things arrived from the States, he unloaded boxes and assisted me in setting up a new office in my old room. He marveled at the books I’d written. I had waded out into the lough at least once a day, reciting Yeats and pleading with the fates to send me back. I sent Kevin to buy a boat and rowed it out into the middle of the lake. I stayed all day, trying to recreate the moment I’d fallen through time. I willed the mist to roll in, but the August sun did not cooperate. The beautiful days played dumb, and the wind and the water were silent, pretending innocence, and no matter how much I recited and raged, **the lough denied me.**

16 July 1922 [journal] - Eoin asked me if Anne had crossed the lough into another place, like he did in his adventures. I said that I believed she had, and it seemed to reassure him. It occurs to me that Anne might have created the stories to comfort Eoin in the event that she couldn’t. So Eoin will have to wait, and I have promised to wait with him, even if it means I will never see her again.

There were eight of them, just like I remembered. “Written by Anne Gallagher Smith. Illustrated by Dr. Thomas Smith,” I read, running my thumb across our names. That part was new. I opened the cover on the first book and read the dedication: In loving memory of a magical time. Beneath the dedication it said, “Donated by Eoin Gallagher.”

28 August 1922 [journal] - On our way to Cork a single shot rang out, clean and sharp, and Mick fell. Night had fallen, and the Big Fella was gone.

I could not find it in my heart to be angry with Brigid. **She’d been tangled in a web of deceit and impossibility, and none of it was her fault.** I told her everything. In September, I awoke to news that the Twin Towers had fallen, that my city had been attacked, and I watched the television coverage, clutching my growing belly, sheltering my unborn child, wondering if I’d returned from one vortex only to be plunged into another. But my world had been spinning for months, and 9/11 just added another layer of impossibility. **The world was upside down - but I’d been falling when it tipped, and I already had my sea legs.** I’d stopped going into the water. I’d stopped rowing out, away from the shore. The water was cold, and I had a child to consider, a life beyond my own. But I still came at least once a day to plead my case to the wind. Thomas appeared and said my name, low and disbelieving, as the small red boat split the fog and slid toward the shore. “How is it that I’ve lost eleven years, and you haven’t aged at all?” his joy tinged in sorrow. “Is this my child, or have I lost you too?” “This is your child, and you will never lose me,” I vowed. “You stayed in Ireland,” he choked. For

by Amy Harmon

eleven years, two months, and twenty-six days, he had patiently waited. He'd worried that I would be gone, that he would have to find me in an unknown world and across an ocean. He expected to find a son or daughter half grown, if he found us at all. And what if time took him somewhere he didn't want to go, and he lost everything? It was the legend of Niamh and Oisín all over again.

13 November 2001 [journal] - We went and paid Mauve a visit today. We talked for hours of the years I missed and the loved ones who are now gone. When we left, I embraced her and thanked her for being a friend to Anne, both now and then. **Eoin is very present. He's in the wind.** I can't explain it, but I have no doubt he's here. Anne showed me the books—The Adventures of Eoin Gallagher—and I felt him beside me, turning the pages. Then she handed me a box teeming with letters Eoin had insisted she keep. Hundreds of them. Anne says she never understood why he hadn't sent them. They are dated and bundled in decades. There are more from the early years, but at least two for every year of his long life, and all of them are addressed to me. He promised he would write. And he did.