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In 1839, a mighty wind swept Ireland one January night, toppling stone towers, scouring villages and trailing devastation. The Night of the Big Wind was talked about for generations.

Because of their belief in an unseen world, many Irish said it was a Gaoithe Sidhe, a fairy wind.

So, Irish fairies — the Tuatha de Danann — were nothing like Tinkerbell, not at all the stuff of whirring wings and moonbeams. They were capricious, shining individuals of terrible beauty.

W.B. Yeats, the Irish poet and nationalist, wrote of their pull on the Irish imagination in works like The “Stolen Child:”

“Come away with me, O human child, to the waters and the wild... for the world is more full of weeping than you can understand...”

Irish fairies trailed unseen across the countryside at night on white horses, their great hounds weaving in and out of the band, bending treetops as they swept the air, gusting, taking away the unwary and the beautiful to Tir na nÒg, a land beyond pain and aging under the sea.

This was on my mind the other day as I rode in the car with Finn, my Irish wolfhound. The wind rocked and pulled at the car. The winds here on May 1 were strange, almost a gale on a sparkling spring day.

The last time Finn was in such a wind was in Dunedin, Florida, when he stood stiff-legged on a bandshell and let the blow whip through his silky white coat. A hurricane was brushing the opposite coast of the peninsula. Light danced frantically on the wild waves that day as Finn stood against gusts.

On May 1st, Finn’s face was in the wind again. He lay in the back of our SUV and we parked and popped the hatch so he could savor the fresh air and sunshine while we waited. I held my old boy close.

We’d reached the vet’s. Over the years he’d survived two cancer surgeries there. He didn’t much like the place. This time he just lay with me, weakly watching the leaves shimmy in the wind. His back legs had failed him the day before. His body was shutting down.

You could see the wind coming across the fields and I wished it was an Irish wind, a fairy wind coming for my Finn.

But who’d believe a thing like that?

It was a gurney coming, and then, two injections.

By the time he was a year old, I knew we had a very different kind of dog. He was the most loving, compassionate individual I have ever known, 130 pounds of pure intentional tenderness towards everything from donkeys to chihuahuas. He gave loved ones and strangers chin nibbles of affection.

But he savored his alone-time too, rambling in the sunshine in the backyard, letting the wind ripple through his fur. Sometimes I caught him with a fey, faraway look in his eye, as if he were looking into another place.

I'd heard about the mystique of the Irish wolfhound and then I saw it in Finn. Living with wolfhounds leads to magical thinking.

But after his back legs collapsed, no amount of wishing could make him stand again. We got Finn to a shaded, out-of-the-way spot in the grass out back where the other dogs would leave him in peace and let him enjoy the breeze, hoping he'd rally like he had six weeks earlier.

Before dark, we took Finn inside on a stretcher. He had a hard night.

Our teenage wolfhound Oisin is tightly bonded with his aunt Oona and sleeps touching her every night. That long night he curled up with Finn and stayed there all the hours.

He would have been ten years old in three weeks, ancient for a wolfhound. He was calm as we rolled him in. He accepted it. From our tears and caresses, he knew he was very loved. He took the shots, unflinching. Finn looked me in the eye as he passed over.

Three mornings later, my wife Peggy let Oona and Oisin out in the back at dawn to do their business as usual. When she went to get

them, only Oona was at the gate. She found Oisín calmly lying in the cool, wet grass.

Where Finn had lain.

Sometimes, things happen that tease and flicker at the edge of our understanding.

So, I'm persuaded to believe this: When the next wind blows, I'll feel Finn passing, telling me to step it up. He's waiting in Tir na nÓg or some place like it, waiting in fields of high clover.