

IT'S WASTELAND, BABY! It's first plane you've been on that has three sections . You're next to your father and eternally grateful to have this trip completely paid for; you've just graduated high school, and certainly do not have enough cash to pay for this trip yourself. The two of you have never been the closest, especially after you dropped chess as a hobby and your parents got divorced. But you try. After all, he's your dad (never fear, this trip will help – and college always makes the heart grow fonder). There's always been an irrational fear of traveling internationally – you've watched one too many episodes of *Lost*, you suppose. But it's not so bad; your cousins are traveling to England during the same time – and somehow, that gives you comfort when the plane leaves *six hours later* after the official departure time.

You're traveling with the Rudnickis and it's your second time meeting them. You have a feeling you'll be spending most of the time with Mrs. Rudnicki, she's got a little spunk in her step, and she's the one that makes a comment about the people singing "Jesus hippie songs" on the floor of the airport. After lounging around in the airport for a few extra hours, because there was a problem with water pressure and an apparent crack in one of the windows, you finally take off – and you're ready to pass out. It's a good thing you do so then, too, because you already know Chicago like the back of your hand – you've flown out of your city plenty enough. You're far more interested in landing in Dublin, you realize, as your eyes close and darkness drowns out that fear of the plane crashing (it doesn't).

You land in Dublin, Ireland around 2pm – and you're wide awake. It's definitely because you slept through the entire ride and you have a shitty sleep schedule anyways. You wonder if you're actually going to have a decent sleep schedule with this literal change of scenery (you don't). Already you feel a rush of excitement; forget thinking about how your sleep schedule is going to be – this is your first time out of the country, and you have a good feeling about this trip already.

The first step, after dropping everything at the Airbnb of course – you're not a bunch of savages - is to head to the pubs. You're 18, and here in Ireland, you're allowed to drink. Surrounded by accented voices that aren't *quite* as proper as British accents and have a far more rustic sound to them, you think you might like Irish accents more than British accents now anyways. You barely settle down after dinner when Mrs. Rudnicki says she's determined to go out. **Tonight.**

You walk down the streets of Dublin and there's this ever-looming feeling of *grey* in the air; everything is coated in a layer of dirt, the sky looks as if the raindrops were going to fall at any moment, and the bricks of the street is so worn down that they're almost rounded. It should be depressing, you think. Instead, you take the grey as meaning you're somewhere with history from mankind older than who had ever built anything in Chicago. There's moments where you pretend, you're not in 2016; you're in the 1600's, walking upon cobblestoned streets with your friends. You've always had this mild interest in history and being here was feeding you just right. You absolutely adore it, already enraptured by every single door being a different color and street artists playing their own rendition of Ed Sheeran's *Thinking Out Loud* as you walk past them. It's like you're the main character in *Brooklyn*, if *Brooklyn* was set in 2017. You've always liked

pretending you were someone else. The voices of the singer's echo in the valley of buildings, your eyes following their figures until your dad calls out to you. "Keep up!" he yells, and you scurry to catch up, a blush filling your cheeks as you hope that nobody notices how terribly *American* he sounds.

THE DUKE PUB It's still light as you make it to the Duke Pub, which is the meeting point of the literary pub crawl. The first drink you try is an Irish classic, a Guinness beer. The drink is darker than you actually expect it to be - all the TV shows had always said that beer would be a golden, very close to pee color - but this drink is about as dark as night. The liquid is heavy going down your throat, and the first thought you have is *bread*. Liquid bread, if you wanted to get specific at the table (you did). Now, you're not particularly the biggest fan of bread, you've always been more of a pasta girl, sometimes rice. But as you attempt to gulp it (there's a sign in a dark, murky corner of the pub, right before you hit the bathrooms and it reads "you do not SIP Guinness, you GULP it in three"), all you can taste is the way a bakery smells, but only in your mouth. You grimace, but you're determined to finish it - needless to say, it's the first and last Guinness you finish on the rest of the trip.

You make it up to the second floor, just as the pub-crawl begins to start, in your high school-marked sweatshirt that lets everyone, and their mother know that you were *indeed* a booth monitor for Vietnamese Club during Lane Tech's International Days. You tell yourself you won't be an obvious American ... but you most definitely are. There's an old man speaking about some kind of poetry that you won't remember three years later - you focus on the amount of brown in the room, how warm the color of the benches and tables were.

Literally everything but the people in this place were brown. As multiple Irish people and tourists perform some sections of their favorite play, because this is indeed a *literary pub crawl*, you focus in on the furniture. It seems like the thing to do, and you're so taken by the exact red-brown of the wood, that you don't mind staring at it for a moment, or until the old people quit talking about books, and you can move along to the next pub.

You don't move to the next one right away, though; instead, the pub crawl leaders bring you to a fence, where you can look at the outside of this ... big grey building. You sigh, this is not what you thought your first pub crawl would be; you thought it would be you drinking and getting more drunk by every second. But, what do you suppose - this *is* what you get when you go on a pub crawl with your father and his co-workers. The group moves on from the wall, you've got no idea what the leader was saying, but at least his accent was pretty - and you *finally* move on to the next pub.

MCD AID'S This one has a much larger amount of people bustling around, and the lights inside are a bit more neon. It's hipper, cooler with the students from Trinity College lurking in the corners; this Pub has more people your age, rather than the middle-aged moms and dads in your tour group. There's modern art you don't understand, but at least it looks like it should cool. And the music is hardly traditional, they instead playing Top Billboard songs of the summer of 2016. This time you know that you don't want Guinness - your Irish pride is a bit hurt, but

luckily you're only about 2% Irish anyways, so it doesn't knock your ego down too much. This time, you only have fifteen minutes in the bar – your father orders you a small sweet white wine, and you pretty much down it the moment you're handed it, because the crawl would leave without you if you didn't. Their next stop is Trinity College, they tell you it only costs about 5,000 euros for a year there – and you wonder again why didn't you choose to go to school in Europe again? They tell you *the* Oscar Wilde had a dorm here and would often be writing on this campus as well. You never had much of a care for Oscar Wilde – but that's cool, you guess. A now-famous author went to school there, so that's got to count for something. You're stepping in the same area as he once did, so you're *basically* his best friend now.

At this point, your head's a little woozy; the only thing you're really aware of is that you're outside, and you kind of feel like you're swaying – but at least you catch the part about Oscar Wilde. This is, after all, a *literary pub crawl*. You hear your father say, "Come on, Penelope – off to the next one." You follow after, lagging a bit behind the group, and find yourself doing so on purpose. Chicago's never been this old, never had this ability to transfer you and your creativity to a whole other world just by walking down the streets. You just want to be in the moment, you won't be here forever, you know that.

PALACE BAR The third pub you're at, you discover *cider* – and boy does this work more than ever! The nice thing about it is that it looks like a lighter beer and has the foam; you can fake it until you make it with these pints in your hands. This bar is smaller, lighter – the lights are florescent, and you sit next to strangers on red booths. Still, it's modern and you feel as if you're in a box for a majority of the time. By this point, you're definitely drunk and the bartenders are giving you looks that are equivalent to the side-eye emoji on your phone. "It's okay, Penelope – they still gave me the drinks!" Mrs. Rudnicki will tell you as she sits back down, and hands you another cider. You down it in about five minutes.

GILLIGAN'S The last pub is a classic, as the pub crawl leaders describe it. You can't remember what they were talking about literary wise, probably something about *Shakespeare* you think in the back of your head, as they make some long speech. You really don't care at this point. They lead you in and it's a classic pub; there's something important about the pub, perhaps it's the pub where a famous writer once also got drunk. Mrs. Rudnicki decides she wants to do shots, and you skip right next to her under the dim lightings of the pub, and order one as well – and the two of you take whiskey straight.

By the time you leave the last pub, Dublin is no longer some foreign city – you walk along with the cobblestoned steps in the dark, and it feels identical to walking along with your best friends in Chicago's Chinatown. The cobblestoned sidewalks give you comfort, they're a bit uncomfortable, but you're used to it after a day of walking on it. The dark disguises anything unfamiliar, all you're doing is simply following where the phone tells you to go. You're ahead of your travel buddies, hands sticking out as you try to balance and walk along one single line of cobblestones – they shine off the puddles that was reflecting the moon beaming upon your small group.

You suddenly stop, looking up and behind you. “*I’m hungry*,” you’ll whine to your father, bottom lip jutting out as you look at all of the adults. You hear a chuckle before Mr. Rudnicki says: “I don’t know what’s open right now...” But never fear; you’re a millennial, your phone is only at 67% and is already in your hand, ready to be googled on. You pick a small place only a block down, leading the group with confidence and sway in your step. You, after bounding towards the red dot marked on your GPS, arrive at the small place; it’s in a basement, and you can see the red carpeting through their glass door, and you gasp – running down the stairs as quickly as possible.

You discover that your favorite food to eat when your drunk is burgers, and you chomp down on it the moment it’s served. Your dad chuckles, teasing you with a question that asks: “You’re drunk, aren’t you?” Your eyes widen, and you begin to babble about *something* from high school, head shaking as you turn to answer him. “Nuh-uh!” is all you respond with, before taking a bite of your fries. There’s a shake of his head, he’s drunk too, he’ll tell you.

You wake up in the Airbnb the next day, no headache.