

The Graduate

by Jim Breslin

My son wants to drop out of college. He intends to work, save money and travel the globe. He is 19.

I can only sigh. My lips inform him to stay, stick it out, be conventional. Study in the library, get the degree, network, develop connections that will lead to a glass enclosed corporate high-rise with fluorescent lights, modular cubicles, recycled air, and potted ficus thirsting for water.

For now though, relish odorous basement parties with blistering live four-piece bands, red Solo cups, stale Natty Lights and the pinprick glow from the tip of a spliff. A kid snaps an iPhone image of his roomy swapping tongue with a drunk girl, live tweets it into the ether. A sweet fog rises to the rafters. Inhale. Eat pepperoni pizza at 1:37 a.m. and blast that post-punk pop trio on scratched blue vinyl.

In my dreams, my son stands on the tar-baked roof of his North Philly apartment, looking south over Center City, the gritty Italian market, cheesesteak shops, roaring stadiums, airport runways and beyond. He levitates over the Delaware River, which leads to the brackish bay, and from there, flows into the great North Atlantic. It is March, and a late Noreaster rolls up the coast. The massive swells are frothy, creamy brown. The black water appears infinite, wild and dangerous. Go.

