

Poem for a son going off to college

by [Brian Doyle](#) in the [October 2, 2013](#) issue

Looking at photographs of the kids. One of them is going  
To college tomorrow. I used to wear that kid like a jacket.  
He fell asleep instantly given the slightest chance. School,  
The car, even once during a time-out at a basketball game,  
Although to be fair he was the point guard and had played  
The whole first half and been double-teamed. He could be  
Laughing at something and you'd turn away to see a hawk  
Or his lissome mom and when you turned back he was *out*.  
But tomorrow he's in the top bunk in a room far away. We  
Will leave the back porch light on for him out of habit and  
In the morning we will both notice that it's still on and one  
Of us will cry right into the coffee beans and the other will  
Remember that it felt like all the poems we mean when we  
Say words like *dad* and *son* and *love* when I slung that boy  
Over one shoulder or another or carried him amidships like  
A sack of rice or best of all dangling him by his feet so that  
All the nickels he put in his pockets for just this eventuality  
Poured down like something else we do not have words for.