Cody Barnes was not happy. It wasn’t just the open window of the Escalade blowing his book pages back and forth. Or the non-stop chatter of his 14-year old sister. Or the dripping slobber from the family boxer, Champ, leaning over the back seat. Or the constant, “Oh, look at that. Isn’t that pretty?” from his mom. No. Cody Barnes was not happy with his entire life.

He brought it up again to his non-empathetic family. “Again, why are we moving to this god-forsaken place?”

Jennifer took on a school girl mimic and repeated what they had heard from their parents since the first night they told them they were moving to Wallace, Idaho. “It’s a good place to raise kids and it’s a nice change of pace from the rat race of Huntington Beach. Oh, and dad got a big fat raise since no one else would move here.”

“Shut up. I wasn’t asking you,” Cody chastised.

“Well it’s a good place for you kids to be raised and it gets us out of the rat race of California,” Cody’s mom reiterated.

“Yeah, I got that. But really, why?”

“Oh, come on Cody. Give it a chance,” his dad begged. “I grew up in a small town like this and it was great.”

“For every reason you tell me that’s great about it, I will tell you what’s great about Huntington Beach. As soon as you run out of things, I will keep going. If my tally is twice as long as yours, we turn this car around and head back,” Cody suggested.

“We’re not doing that.”

“Of course not. Because you probably can’t even come up with one good thing. And you know my scholarship opportunities are screwed, so I hope you’ve considered the cost of college in three years.” Cody’s football coach had told him college recruiters don’t look at small 4-A Idaho schools when recruiting for football.

“You’re chances of getting a scholarship are still just as good. College recruiters will still watch you. Being an all-league pick as a freshman at Mater Dei doesn’t just disappear.”

“Oh come on, dad. Be real. My name will be forgotten as soon as they don’t see it on the roster next year.”

“Not if we get those letters out telling them where you are and keep delivering updated game films.”

Cody rolled his eyes. Jennifer caught it, “Don’t roll your eyes at dad.”

“Cody,” his mom scolded.

Cody reached across and pinched Jennifer in the back of her arm.

“God, you’re such a jerk,” she screeched.

“I’m the jerk? You’re the one that has to be the jerk all the time. Why don’t you just keep your mouth shut?”

“Cody, don’t talk to your sister like that. You know you should start getting along, since you‘re going to be in the same school and everything,” Cody’s mom laughed.

“Now, you’re being the jerk. And who ever heard of a high school going 8th through 12th grade? That is so lame.”

“I think it’s cool,” Jennifer said.

“You would. And don’t even think of talking to me if you see me at school.”

“Oh, ha. Like I would talk to you. You better just stay away from me.”

“Gladly. It’s embarrassing enough that you are going to be cheerleading for me. Loser.”

“Mom.”

“Cody, your sister is not a loser for cheerleading.”

“Oh, come on, you said yourself for years that she better not be a cheerleader and now that she is you defend it.”

“I never said that.”

“Oh, I recall the phrase, ‘over my dead body.’ Dad, can I get some help on this?”

“I do remember that. And also the comment ‘why would a girl stand on the sideline and cheer when she could be out playing?’”

Cody’s mom knew they were right, but she still needed to support her daughter, “Whatever makes Jennifer happy, that’s what she should do.”

“Thanks mom. That sounded so sincere.”

“Well, you know I still don’t understand it. You were the best athlete in the school and then all of a sudden you decide to become a cheerleader. I still can’t believe they let you try out by video up here.”

“Cause they probably suck,” Cody said.

“They do not,” Jennifer defended.

“How do you know? They let an 8th grader be on Varsity. They must suck.”

“I saw them on YouTube. They’re not that bad.”

“I saw them too. Not one of those girls would make the Junior Varsity team at Mater Dei.”

“Well, maybe I will be able to help them out.”

“That’s a great attitude, honey.” Her mom turned around in the seat and patted her knee.

“Looks like we’re here,” Cody’s dad announced.

“Here? Here where?” Cody looked out the window and saw Sherman Avenue Exit three miles.

“This is Coeur d’Alene. This is the biggest city near Wallace. We’re about an hour away. This is where I‘ll be working until we get the office up and running in Wallace.”

“An hour? It’s an hour to the nearest city? This just keeps getting better,” Cody whined.

“Come on, Cody. Look at how pretty it is. Everything is so green.”

“Whoop.”

Jennifer squealed, “Oh, look a water slide. Can we come back?”

“We’ll see. We’ve got a lot of unpacking to do in the next few days. And Cody, when do you start football practice?”

“Why bother?”

“Don’t be that way.”

“They start two-a-days on Monday.”

“This Monday?”

“Yeah.”

“Why so early? Don’t you normally start in September?”

“Yeah. But that’s in Santa Ana where they don’t get snow in November. Gotta start early in Idaho.” Cody made sure that his annoyance was known in everything he said about this Idaho thing. He still could not believe his parents decided to move him starting his sophomore year. His dad didn’t need to take this stupid partnership in Wallace. He seemed to be doing just fine in his law firm in Los Angeles. Cody had even been to his office in downtown and it had been the largest building, so he knew that he made enough money. He just had started talking about this corny small-town idea in the past two years. Cody never thought it would become a reality. And now, here they were. One hour from what would become his living nightmare. He text his buddy back home: *R U-da-ho? No. I-da-ho. so freakin lame here. how the waves?*

The reply was immediate: *so tight man. Amy askin abt u this morning. U should txt her.*

Another reason for Cody’s sour mood. He had finally made some head way with Amy this summer and then they had to leave. He knew it wouldn’t last any length of time, even though she said she would keep in touch. Amy was a mover. And as soon as Cody was out of the picture for a few days, she would be moving on. The top cheerleader in his grade, it had taken him a year to get the courage to ask her out. It was ok to date a cheerleader; it was not ok for his sister to be a cheerleader. Not when they were a family of athletes. He knew it was killing his mom and dad and liked that Jennifer had fallen a little out of grace with the new direction her life was taking.

“So, when do your cheerleading practices start? Do you have two-a-days also?” Cody mocked.

“Shut up.”

“Well, I hope you’ve kept in shape so you don’t get too tired from all that jumping.”

“It is actually considered a sport, you know.”

“Ha. Really? Is that what your defense is going to be? Cause you know we are going to blow holes all over that lame argument. Right, mom?”

“Enough Cody,” but Cody could tell his mom was not buying the “sport” thing either.

“Holy crap look,” Cody burst out. “There’s a McDonalds. I guess we aren‘t at the end of the world.”

“Well, then I’ll save you the disappointment and tell you right now, there is not a McDonalds in Wallace.”

“What the…you’re kidding, right?”

“No, son.”

Again, Cody, repeated what he knew would be his mantra, “This just keeps getting better and better.”

One hour later, pulling into his new demise, Cody sent another text to his buddy: *we r in Wallace. No lie. Its 1 street abt 5 blocks long. U can c whole town at once. Hell.* Before they had even driven through the entire town, which took about 3 minutes, Cody’s buddy replied: *Then I wont tell u Amy just went surfing with Jordan.*

“Damn it.”

Cody didn’t realize he said it out loud until his mom turned in her seat, “Language, Cody, language.”

Heading up a hill on the north side of town, his dad ended the tour with, “And here’s our new home.”