

The background of the book cover is a high-contrast, black and white photograph with a red color overlay. It depicts the rear of a classic Ford Mustang, focusing on the iconic three-bar taillight and the rear bumper. A person, seen from the waist down, stands next to the car, wearing jeans and sneakers. The person's right hand is visible, holding a small, dark object. The overall aesthetic is gritty and dramatic.

C H O I C E S

# double- cross

E. Robins

# chapter

# 1

Braden was at home. He was out of school for the summer. And it was the first morning he didn't have to go to school.

He went into the kitchen. It was almost time for breakfast.

His mom said, "Breakfast isn't ready yet, Braden."

"Do I have time to read the paper before we eat?" Braden asked.

"You can read it for a few minutes. But not for long," his mom said.

Braden wanted to read the car ads. So he hurried into the den. He knew the paper would be in there.

His dad was in the den. He was reading the paper.

“Can I read some of the paper, Dad?” Braden asked.

“Sure, Braden. Which part do you want?” his dad asked.

“The used car ads,” Braden said. His dad gave him that part of the paper. Braden said, “Thanks, Dad.”

Braden started to read the ads about used cars for sale. His dad read the other part of the paper. The two read for a few minutes.

Then his dad put the other part of the paper on a table. And he went into the kitchen.

Braden read five or six more ads. Then he found just the car he wanted.

And it was the right price for him. He could hardly wait to tell his dad and mom about the car.

His mom called to him from the kitchen. She said, "Breakfast is ready, Braden."

"Okay, Mom. Thanks," Braden said. Braden put the paper down on the table. And he went into the kitchen. His mom and dad were at the kitchen table.

Braden quickly sat down at the table. He put some food on his plate. Then he started to eat his breakfast. He ate for a few minutes.

Then he said, "I saw an ad in the paper. A car dealer has a used car for sale. And it sounds just like what I want. And it's the right price for me."

His mom said, "What kind of car is it, Braden? And how much does it cost?" Braden told his mom.

His dad said, "It doesn't matter what kind of car it is. Or how much it costs. Braden doesn't have any money to buy a car."

"You could loan me the money, Dad. And I could pay you back," Braden said. "With what, Braden? You don't have any money," his dad said.

"I can get a job. And I can make some money. Will you loan me the money for the car? And let me pay you back later?" Braden asked.

"I'll be glad to help you get a car, Braden. But I won't make it easy for you. First, you'll have to earn some money. So you'd better get busy and find a job," his dad said.

"But where?" Braden asked.

"I don't know, Braden. You'll have to look for one. And you should start doing that today. Or the summer will be gone

before you know it. And you still won't have a job," his dad said.

"What about the car I read about in the ad?" Braden asked.

"What about it?" his dad said.

"Can I call about it?" Braden asked.

His dad said, "You can call about it, Braden. But it would be a waste of your time. You can't buy it."

Braden thought his dad would say that. But Braden still had to ask him.

"Make some money this summer, Braden. And then look for a car," his dad said.

Braden knew what he had to do. He had to look for a job. And he had to do it quickly. Before some other teens got all of the summer jobs.

# double-cross

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Would Braden betray a friend to get the car that he desperately wants? Braden must find a summer job. If he doesn't, he will lose out on the car of his dreams. His father will only help with the payments if Braden gets a part-time job. But the competition for summer jobs is fierce. How far will Braden go to beat the competition? 