



C H O I C E S

break all rules

E. Robins

chapter

1

It was Friday night. Cole was at home. He had his radio on. His cell phone chirped. He had a text message from Anna. Anna was his girlfriend. Anna texted, “Call me.”

Cole turned the radio down. Then he called Anna. “Hi, Anna. When did you get home?” Cole asked. Anna had gone to see her little sister Sara’s play. That was why she and Cole didn’t have a date.

“A few minutes ago,” Anna said.

“How was the play? Did you have a

good time?” Cole asked.

Anna said, “The play was okay. But I wish you’d been there with me. Where are you now? What have you been doing tonight?”

Cole said, “I’m at home. I have the radio on. I’m trying to find out the Oak Hill game’s score.”

The winner of the game would play Dawson High in the state finals. Cole was on the Dawson High team. He played tight end.

He hoped that Oak Hill lost. Oak Hill had the best team in the state. And Cole didn’t want to play them in the state finals.

Oak Hill had the best running back in the state. His name was Garrett. And Cole didn’t think Oak Hill could lose with him on the team.

Anna said, “I’ll hang up. You can listen to the radio.”

“You don’t have to hang up. I can find out the score later. I’m sure Oak Hill will win,” Cole said.

“I’ll still hang up. I know you want to find out the score right away. You can call me tomorrow morning,” Anna said.

“Okay. I’ll talk to you then,” Cole said.

Cole turned the radio back up. He thought about the Oak Hill game. Cole couldn’t keep his mind on his homework.

About twenty minutes later, his cell phone rang. He turned the radio down. Then he quickly answered his phone.

A boy said, “Bro, it’s Jeff. I just found out who won the Oak Hill game.”

Jeff was Cole’s best friend. Jeff was on the Dawson High team. And he was a tight end, too.

“Great. Who won?” Cole asked.

“Bad news. Oak Hill won,” Jeff said. “I just heard it on the radio. Oak Hill won

by 21 points.”

“That doesn’t surprise me. But I hoped they would lose,” Cole said.

Jeff said, “Yeah, me too. That Garrett guy’s a good player. I don’t think we can beat Oak Hill in the state finals.”

“We need to believe we can win. If we don’t, we won’t have a chance,” said Cole

“Yeah. I know. I’ll try to think we can win. But I don’t believe we can. Unless something happens,” Jeff said.

“Like what?” Cole asked.

“I don’t know. But maybe something will happen that will help us. We need all the help we can get,” Jeff said.

“You’re right about that,” Cole said.

The only thing that would help was if Garrett didn’t play. And Cole didn’t want Garrett to get hurt. Cole couldn’t think of anything else that could help Dawson High win.

chapter

2

It was Monday afternoon. Cole was at football practice. Jeff was there, too. They were talking about the Oak Hill game. Their friend Rick ran over to them. Rick was the back-up center.

Rick said, “I don’t know why I came to football practice today.”

“What do you mean by that?” Cole asked.

Jeff said, “Yeah. What do you mean by that? We all have to practice. So we have to be here today.”

“There isn’t any reason to practice. We’ll still lose on Saturday. There’s no way we can beat Oak Hill. So why practice?” Rick asked.

Coach Brent blew his whistle. He was the football coach.

Coach Brent yelled to the team. He said, “Guys, all of you come over here. We need to get started.” The boys ran over to him.

Coach Brent said, “I think all of you already know this. We’ll play Oak Hill in Macon on Saturday afternoon.”

Cole knew the coach was right. All of the players knew it. And none of them were happy about it. They didn’t want to play Oak Hill. Their winning streak would be over.

Coach Brent said, “I want you to be rested for the game. So we’ll go to Macon after school on Friday.”

“That sounds good to me,” Jeff said.

Cole was glad about that, too. He wouldn’t have to get up early on Saturday. And then ride on a bus to Macon most of the morning.

Coach Brent said, “Our game with Oak Hill will be a tough one. And you will need to work hard all week. You will need to be at your best for the game.”

“Why does it matter, Coach?” Rick asked.

Cole couldn’t believe Rick asked the coach that. Some of the other players looked surprised, too.

Coach Brent looked at Rick. He didn’t look pleased with Rick. “What do you mean by that, Rick?” he asked.

Rick said, “We have to play Oak Hill. And Oak Hill is the best team in the state. There’s no way we can beat them. Not with that dude Garrett on the team.”

“That’s the wrong way to think, Rick,” Coach Brent said.

“Yeah, Rick,” Cole said.

“Yeah,” some of the other boys said.

“You’re wrong, Rick. We’ll beat them,” said another boy.

“Yeah,” most of the boys said. But not all of them looked as though they believed it.

Rick said, “No way. We’ll never be able to beat Oak Hill.”

Coach Brent looked at Rick again. He still didn’t look pleased.

He said, “You might be right, Rick. But you need to think about something.”

“What?” Rick asked.

Coach Brent said, “On any day the best team can lose. And on any day the team that isn’t the best team can win.”

Cole knew that was true.

Coach Brent said, "We might not be as good as Oak Hill. But this Saturday could be their day to lose. So we have to be ready to win."

Coach Brent told the team about some other teams that had won. No one had thought they had a chance to win. But they won anyway.

Then Coach Brent said, "So think about that, Rick. And all of you guys think about that, too. We might be able to beat Oak Hill. But you have to practice hard. You must be ready to beat them."

Coach Brent looked at all of the boys. Then he looked back at Rick.

"Anything else you'd like to say, Rick?" he asked.

"No," Rick said.

Then Rick looked down at the ground.

Cole said, “Coach Brent is right. We need to practice hard. Then we’ll be ready to beat Oak Hill on Saturday.”

Cole still wasn’t sure they could beat Oak Hill.

C H O I C E S

pay back

E. Robins

 **SADDLEBACK**
EDUCATIONAL PUBLISHING

chapter

1

Rae walked down the hall at school. She was on her way to class. Then she saw Jess. Jess was her best friend.

Rae wanted to talk to Jess. So she hurried to meet her.

Rae yelled, “Jess, wait for me!”

Rae looked very mad. And she sounded very mad, too.

Jess stopped and waited for Rae. “You look mad, Rae. What’s wrong?” Jess asked.

Rae hissed, “You’d better believe I’m

mad. I'll pay her back. I promise!"

"Why are you so upset, Rae? And who do you want to pay back?" Jess asked.

"Torie," Rae said. Torie was in her science class. Rae didn't like Torie.

"What did Torie do?" Jess asked.

"She had a date with Chance last Friday night. I just found out about it," Rae said.

Rae and Chance had gone on a few dates. And Rae liked him a lot.

Jess said, "Calm down, Rae. It isn't a big deal."

"It is to me. I like Chance," Rae said.

Jess said, "Don't worry about it. Torie likes Brad. So I don't think she'll date Chance for long."

"I don't care. She shouldn't have dated Chance at all," Rae said.

Rae still looked mad.

Jess said, "Rae, Torie really likes

Brad, not Chance. So you are getting upset about nothing.”

“I’m not upset about nothing. And I’ll pay Torie back,” Rae said.

“Forget about it, Rae. It’s no big deal,” Jess said again.

“It is to me. Just you wait and see,” Rae said.

Jess looked worried. “What are you going to do, Rae?” she asked.

“Torie likes Brad. I’ll get Brad to ask me out on a date. And that will pay Torie back,” Rae said.

“You don’t even like Brad. You’ve never wanted to date him before. So why do you want to date him now?” Jess asked.

Jess was right about that. Rae didn’t like Brad. And she’d never wanted to date him before.

“I just told you why I want to date

Brad. I want to pay Torie back. She dated Chance. And I have to get even with her," Rae said.

"Forget about it, Rae," Jess said.

Rae said, "I don't care what you think, Jess. I'll get Brad to ask me out."

"Don't do it, Rae. You don't even like Brad," Jess said.

"So what? I just want to date him," Rae said. "I don't want to *marry* him," Rae said.

"But it wouldn't be fair to get Brad to date you. You wouldn't want a guy to date you to get even with another girl. Think of how that would make you feel. And Brad would feel that way, too," Jess said.

"He won't know the reason why I want to date him," Rae said.

"But someone might tell him," Jess said.

“You’re the only person who knows. And you won’t tell him, will you?” Rae asked.

“No. But he could still find out,” Jess said.

“No way. Only two of us would know. You are my best friend. You won’t tell him. And I sure won’t,” Rae said.

“Don’t do it, Rae. Think about it some more. Think about how you would feel,” Jess said.

“Don’t try to make me feel bad, Jess. I’ll get a date with Brad. And I’ll pay Torie back. Just you wait and see,” Rae said.

chapter

2

Rae hurried into the lunchroom. She got her lunch. Then she looked for Jess.

Rae saw Jess sitting at a table. Rae hurried over to the table. And she quickly sat down. Rae looked at Jess.

“I have a plan. And I can’t wait to tell you about it,” Rae blurted.

“What kind of plan?” Jess asked.

“A plan to get Brad to ask me out on a date,” Rae said. She had a big smile on her face.

Jess said, “Forget about Brad. And

forget about your plan, Rae.” Jess looked worried again.

“No way, Jess. Don’t you want to hear my plan?” Rae asked.

Jess said, “Not really. But I guess you’ll tell me anyway.”

“I found out Brad will be at the pep rally tonight,” Rae said. The school had a football game the next night. And the school always had a pep rally the night before.

Rae said, “Brad is going by himself. And I’ll go without a date, too.” She laughed. “I’ll get my dad to take me. That’s the first part of my plan.”

“Do you want me to go with you?” Jess asked.

“You can ride to the pep rally with me. But we can’t stay together once we get there. You’ll have to find your own way home,” Rae said.

Jess asked, "Why? Did your dad say he couldn't come back and get you?"

"No," Rae said. She laughed again.

"Then why would I need to find my own way home? Is there a reason why I can't ride home with you?" Jess asked.

Rae said, "Yes. I told my dad that I didn't want him to come back for me."

Jess looked surprised. "Why did you tell your dad that?" Jess asked.

"I told you. I have a plan," Rae said.

"So what's your plan?" Jess asked.

"I'll look for Brad at the pep rally. Then I'll get him to take me home," Rae said.

"A lot of people will be at the pep rally, Rae. You might not see him," Jess said.

"Don't worry about that. I'll find Brad. You can count on that," Rae said.

"Maybe. But you can't be sure that he'll take you home," Jess said.