

## A Change of Plans

By Mary Ann Koontz

Julie rolled onto her side and yawned lazily. The robin perched on the branch outside her window and sang sweetly, but Julie didn't share its good mood. Instead, she lay in bed thinking. She thought about the summer plans she had made with her best friend, Karen. But now sleeping in late was the only thing she felt like doing.

Julie sighed. Two days ago, Karen and she were enjoying the freedom of summer, no school and no schedules. They had been eager to play outside, but they couldn't agree on what to do. Karen had wanted to roller blade, while Julie had wanted to go swimming. Karen had won, as usual. If only they had gone swimming instead, Julie thought, maybe she wouldn't have fallen and broken her arm. Julie was mad, and if she had to be mad at someone, why not Karen?

"Julie," her mom called as she knocked on Julie's bedroom door. "Karen is here. It's time you got out of bed anyway."

Karen walked into Julie's bedroom and sat on the bed with a bounce. "Are you still sleeping?" she asked. "Come on, get up. I've got a surprise for you."

"What kind of surprise?" Julie asked, propping herself up on one elbow. It was easier to be mad at Karen when she wasn't around. How could she stay mad when Karen sat there bubbling with excitement over some surprise – a surprise for her.

"I'm not telling, so you'll just have to get dressed and come over to my house as soon as you can and see for yourself." Karen giggled and waved goodbye from around the corner of the door as she left.

Julie couldn't imagine what Karen was up to. There was only one way to find out. With her mom's help, she struggled into shorts and a T-shirt then adjusted the sling around her cast. She brushed her hair as best she could. Thankful that she had bought slip-on shoes for the summer, she slid her feet into them and hurried out of the room.

"Thanks, Mom. I'm going to Karen's," Julie called over her shoulder as she headed out the front door.

Walking to Karen's house was so familiar to Julie that she could do it with her eyes closed. Today, however, Julie wanted to keep her eyes open for any clues.

At the end of her block, Julie walked up Karen's driveway. She looked in the window as she passed, but the drapes were closed. Julie rang the doorbell. The door opened and Julie stepped inside.

"Surprise!" It was the voices of Karen and three of her other friends.

Julie's mouth dropped open then she laughed at the sight of them. Each one had an arm in a sling.

"It's a cast party," Karen announced. "We've all got our favorite color markers to sign your cast. Then we're going to wear these slings all day and see who is the best at doing things with one arm. Of course, you have the advantage since you've had a day to practice."

"I already know who's the best," Julie exclaimed. "You're the best, Karen – the best friend in the whole world. And here's something I can still do with one arm." One by one, Julie put her good arm around each of her friends, and gave them a big hug.