PIPER'S CURLING ADVENTURES

Piper and the Game in the Window

BOOK TEN



Mary Deuhs

An illustrated chapter book

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AI-generated draft and illustrations

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CHAPTER 1

A Game to Watch

Piper stood at the edge of the house with Evie’s vice.

“One red,” she said.

The other girl looked from the red near the button to the yellow farther out.

“And then ours. Yes.”

Jo waited beside them. Piper checked the next red anyway. It was plainly farther from the middle than the yellow.

“One,” she said again, this time to Wren.

Only then did the coaches begin clearing the stones for another practice end.

Piper liked this part of being third. She delivered her own two stones, swept with her friends, and took the house when Wren delivered. Now she was getting better at checking the count with the other team too.

It had been a few ordinary sessions since their overnight trip. Her little travel bag was put away. Her curling bag was usually open, because something was always being taken out to dry.

Today she had remembered both gloves without Dad asking.

In the warm room afterward, Ruth was beside the big window with Jo.

“We’re having an open house next Saturday,” Jo told the two teams. “People can come and see what happens here. We wondered whether you’d like to play a friendly for them to watch.”

“A real game?” Wren asked.

“A real game. Four ends, with our usual junior stones and short setup. We’ve reserved a long enough slot for the game and a proper halfway break.”

“Against us?” Evie asked Piper.

“If you all want to.”

Evie looked around at her team. They did.

Piper wanted to as well. She liked the thought of people looking through the glass and finding a game already happening.

“We’d also like a few players beside the window for five minutes before the warm-up,” Ruth said. “And five minutes after the game, once you’ve had your water and rest. You could tell visitors about your own jobs.”

“I could do that,” Piper said.

“Me too,” Maisie said. “I know quite a lot about being Maisie.”

“I’d like to show where we start,” Nora said.

Wren considered it.

“I’ll do the five minutes. I want to get ready with everybody after.”

“You will,” Jo said. “The adults will look after visitors while you play and rest. We’re doing the teaching and taking anyone onto the ice.”

Ruth would stay in the warm room. Jo, Ben, and Granite would have their usual coaching jobs. Both teams agreed that if a count needed measuring, Ben would handle the instrument.

Piper had watched Jo use it during practice. It could settle something that looked almost the same from every direction.

She looked through the glass. From here, the house seemed small enough to fit between her hands.

Next Saturday, she would be inside that picture.

“Will people stay for all four ends?” she asked.

“Some might. Some will watch for a little while.”

Granite adjusted his glasses.

“I shall watch all four. I have been promised an excellent view.”

“You’re coaching,” Maisie said.

“That explains the view.”

CHAPTER 2

Half a Bus



That afternoon, there was half a bus on Piper's table.

There was also a bakery roof, a piece of river, and a very small person carrying something that might have been a parcel or a stomach.

"It's a parcel," Nora decided.

"Maybe the person has eaten a parcel," Maisie said.

"Please don't eat any of the parcels," Dad said, setting their snack plates on the kitchen counter.

He had arranged the afternoon with the other parents. The four girls were at Piper's house, making a big city

jigsaw on a flat board across the table. They could leave it there and move the whole board out of the way later.

Piper turned over a piece. It had three windows and the top of somebody's head.

She tried it beside a building with four windows.

It did not fit.

She turned it.

Now the head was upside down, which seemed unlikely to help.

Across the table, Nora was collecting the red pieces of a bus. The roof slanted up at one end.

"Why is it crooked?" she asked.

"Sharp corner," Piper suggested.

"Terrible driver," Maisie said.

Wren had found a dog looking out of a shop window. Only its head and front paws were finished.

"What does a dog buy?" she asked.

"An enormous bell," Maisie said. "So it can ring for a person whenever it wants a walk."

Piper made a low, important voice.

"DONG. The dog would like to go outside."

"DONG. The dog would like to come inside," Nora added.

"DONG. The dog has changed its mind."

Wren moved a brown piece close to the paws.

"DONG. The dog has found its bottom."

It was not the dog's bottom. It was a chimney.

Wren put it back.

They stopped for their snack at the counter. Piper looked at the small city from a little way off. Whole

streets were missing. A person with no legs was waiting beside the river.

“Still waiting for the bus,” Nora said.

“It’s only half a bus,” Piper told her. “They’ll have to go halfway.”

After eating and wiping their hands, they went back to the table.

Maisie found three pieces of river in quick succession. The fourth blue piece turned out to be the side of a delivery van.

“The river has a door,” she reported.

Piper slid the box lid closer. Its finished picture was busy with tiny people, shops, and trees. She could have looked for the bus in it, but Nora shook her head.

“I want to find its pieces first.”

“All right.”

Piper found the other half of her upside-down person instead. The person was leaning out of a high window to water a plant.

She joined the pieces and turned the little section the proper way up.

“There you are.”

Wren gave her a piece with the hanging pot on it. The leaves ran from one piece to the next.

Piper pressed it flat with a fingertip. That was one of the best bits. Something that had been a scrap a moment ago suddenly belonged to a picture.

They worked until the light on the table had moved from Maisie's elbow to the edge of the board.

The bus still had no wheels. The dog still had no bottom. There was a large hole in the park.

Dad came to say that the other parents were arriving.

"Can we leave it?" Piper asked.

"We can."

"After the open house?" Nora asked. "Another afternoon?"

The parents checked together. The following Sunday would work.

Maisie leaned down until she was almost level with the unfinished bus.

"Stay there."

"It hasn't got wheels," Wren said.

"I'm being thorough."

CHAPTER 3

Beside the Glass

On open-house morning, somebody Piper didn't know was sitting in her usual changing chair.

The chair beside it was empty. Piper put her bag there instead.

Ruth greeted people at the door. An adult helper was showing a family where to leave their coats. Through the glass, Piper could see Dad and Jo checking the junior lane.

There were familiar places with unfamiliar people in them.

Piper liked it.

She changed her shoes and found the others by the window for their first five minutes. Their helmets and brushes stayed neatly with their bags until warm-up time. Dad came in from checking the lane and stood with Ruth.

A woman in a green cardigan was watching Granite on the ice.

"Is that where you'll be playing?" she asked.

"Yes," Nora said. She pointed through the glass at their shortened setup. "We start over there. The coaches set it up for us."

"Which job do you do?" the woman asked Piper.

"I'm third. I throw after Nora. Then I go to the circles when Wren throws."

"Do you choose her shot?"

“We talk about it. She’s the skip.” Piper glanced at Wren. “Sometimes she wants the broom moved a bit. I have to look back and check.”

Wren nodded.

“I can see it from the starting end.”

The woman looked back through the window, as if the two places had become connected for her.

“Oh, I see.”

Piper felt a small glow of pleasure. She had said something that helped.

A boy beside his grown-up asked Maisie which job she liked.

“Sweeping,” Maisie said. “You get to go along with the stone.”

“Do you always sweep?”

“No. Sometimes it’s going fast enough already. Then I go along trying to look useful.”

“You’re watching,” Wren said.

“That’s the useful bit.”

Ruth looked at the clock.

“Warm-up time for our players.”

The girls went straight to Jo. Evie’s team joined them. Nobody had to wait for the people at the window to finish being interested.

They warmed up, checked helmet straps and clean grippers, and listened while Jo went over the safe routes and familiar release cue. Sliding feet would be covered before anyone walked along the ice.

Four ends. Two stones each. A tie would stay a tie today. After two ends, both teams would have water and a proper sit-down together with their own teammates.

“Ruth will answer questions while you’re playing,” Jo reminded them.

The Too-Cold Club won the toss. Wren chose the hammer, the last stone in the first end. Evie’s team chose yellow handles, so Piper and her friends had red.

Maisie went first for their team, then Nora, then Piper, then Wren.

Piper picked up her brush.

Beyond the glass, the woman in the green cardigan raised a hand.

Piper gave a little wave back before taking her place beside Nora.

CHAPTER 4

The First Two Ends

Evie's team sent the first yellow right through the house.

Maisie's first red stayed in, toward the front.

Piper and Nora had hardly needed to sweep it. They lifted their brushes at Wren's call and watched the red settle.

The next yellow stayed too.

For her second stone, Maisie looked at Wren's broom for a long moment before starting. The red came toward Piper more slowly this time.

"Sweep!"

Piper bent over her brush. Nora worked beside her. Ben watched their spacing as they moved with the stone.

"Keep going," Wren called.

The red crossed into the rings.

"Up!"

It stopped near the button, a little to the left.

Maisie came along the safe side after Jo helped her up and her slider was covered.

"That one," she said, pointing.

"Definitely that one," Nora agreed.

It stayed closest while the next stones arrived. Nora put her first red in the house, but her second went out at the side. Yellow drew nearer than Nora, though still outside Maisie.

Piper's first draw stayed in too, without getting inside the nearest yellow.

For her second, Wren wanted a guard in front of Maisie's stone.

Piper looked along the way Wren showed her. Granite checked the clear path with them. They had practiced this shot often enough for Piper to know how it was meant to feel.

Knowing did not always help her hand remember.

This time, it did.

The red slowed in front of the house, covering the straight way toward Maisie's counter.

Piper waited until it had stopped.

"Stayed out," she said happily.

"In a good way," Nora said.

Evie chose the open side for her next draw. Her yellow came into the rings and stopped closer than any red except Maisie's.

Piper took the house for Wren's turns. Wren's first red came into the rings, outside that yellow. Evie's last draw ran through without touching anything. Then Wren's final red stayed farther out too.

After Wren's final stone stopped, Piper and Evie's vice compared the count.

"One red. Maisie's."

"Yes."

One to nothing.

Maisie looked back at her stone while the coaches prepared the lane for the next end.

"I left it there ages ago."

"It was comfortable," Wren said.

Now yellow had the hammer.

The second end was less comfortable for red.

Nora made a useful draw nearer the middle than Maisie's opening stone. Then yellow's second player came closer still.

When Piper's turn came, Wren asked for a takeout on that yellow. There was an open way to it.

Piper settled at the hack with Jo nearby. She looked at the broom, began, and let go.

Her red struck the yellow with a firm clack.

The yellow went out. Piper's red rolled away and went out too.

"I got it," she said.

"You did," Jo said.

Piper would have liked her own stone to stay, but she enjoyed the clack again in her head on the way back to her waiting place.

Yellow found another way into the rings. Piper's next red stayed farther out than she wanted.

Wren's first red reached the house, but stayed farther out than Nora's. Then Evie drew close to the button.

Piper could see a broad space beside it when Wren came for her last stone. She showed the target they agreed on and called Maisie and Nora to sweep.

Wren's last red finished between Evie's nearest yellow and the others. Evie had one more try, but it stopped outside Wren's red.

One for yellow. One point each.

Piper and the other vice agreed before the clearing began.

Beyond the window, the woman in the green cardigan was talking to Ruth. The boy was pointing at the house.

Piper wondered whether he had liked the clack too.

Then Jo called the teams off for their break, and Piper found that she was ready to sit down.

CHAPTER 5

The Next Question

On the dry side of the doorway, Piper took off her helmet and had a long drink.

The woman in the green cardigan came a little closer.

“I saw you change places with your skip.”

Piper lowered her bottle.

“Yes. I was holding the broom for Wren.”

“I could see you calling, but I couldn’t hear the words.”

“I was telling the sweepers when to go. And when to stop.”

The woman smiled. “It’s much busier than it looks through the window.”

Piper liked that she had noticed. She began explaining the takeout too, because she had wanted that stone to stay after it hit the yellow.

Another visitor joined them. He had seen the red roll out and wanted to know what Piper had been hoping for.

She showed him with one hand, keeping the bottle in the other.

Behind him, Wren put her water bottle on a table. Nora pulled out a chair. Maisie sat down and said something Piper couldn’t hear.

Nora laughed.

Piper wanted to hear it too.

“And how do you decide where to put the next one?” the visitor asked.

Piper knew something about that. She could tell him about the guard. He was waiting in a friendly way, interested in what she would say.

Wren came beside her.

"Come and sit with us," she said. "I want our team bit."

"In a minute," Piper almost said.

But there would be another question after this one. She rather liked being the person who could answer it.

She liked sitting with her friends as well.

Jo was right beside the doorway, putting her gloves away.

"Could you take over the questions?" Piper asked her.

"Of course."

Piper turned back to the visitors.

"I'm going to have my break with my team. Jo can show you about the next shot."

"Thanks for explaining," the woman said.

Piper went with Wren to the table. Jo began answering the next-shot question, pointing through the glass.

There had been no need to wait for an empty space in the questions.

"What was funny?" Piper asked as she sat down.

"Maisie thought Nora had an extra thumb."

Nora held up one hand. Her other thumb poked up beside it.

Piper laughed. Up close, it was not convincing at all.

"From here it was," Maisie said.

They had their whole sit-down before Jo would ask them to get ready. Piper drank again and took an orange segment from her snack box.

Wren wanted another try at the draw she had made at the end.

“I liked the distance,” she said. “A little more to the other side next time.”

“I liked my hit,” Piper said.

“I heard it from down there,” Nora told her.

Maisie peeled her gloves apart. One had tucked itself inside the other in her bag.

“Mine have gone home together.”

Piper leaned back. For a while nobody talked about the next end. They ate and rested, with the ice on the other side of the window.

CHAPTER 6

One and Perhaps Another



Yellow played first after scoring in the second end.

Evie's lead put a stone toward the front of the house. Maisie's red came in on the other side. Her second went farther than she meant, but stayed near the back.

Nora's first was better. Piper and Maisie swept it toward the inner rings, where it stopped nearest the middle.

Yellow answered on the other side. Nora's second red went wide and out.

Then yellow's third player took out Nora's first red and rolled out too.

Nora made a small disappointed sound.

“I wanted that one to stay.”

“It was a good hit,” Piper said.

“Yes. Annoyingly.”

Wren looked over the changed house with Piper. There was still an open way in on the right.

“Draw?” Piper asked.

“Draw,” Wren agreed. She checked the path with Granite, then set the broom.

Piper liked having a place she could see. She began smoothly and watched Maisie and Nora follow her red.

It reached the rings. It stayed there. It did not get as close as the nearest yellow.

Her second went farther.

Much farther.

Piper watched it leave the back of the house, then pressed her lips together.

She still had Wren’s stones to call.

Evie’s first yellow had settled near the button by the time Piper took her place at the house. It was plainly the closest stone. Another yellow, from their second player, lay farther out on the opposite side.

Wren’s first draw finished too far away to change the count. Evie’s last yellow also stayed outside the ones that mattered.

Then Wren delivered the last red of the end.

“Just a little,” Piper called to Maisie and Nora.

Their brushes moved.

“Up.”

The red slowed into the house, on a different side from the second yellow.

Piper watched until it was completely still.

That looked close.

Evie's vice came to compare the stones with her. Ben joined them from the side.

"Your one by the button is first," Piper said.

"Yes."

"But I can't tell between that yellow and Wren's."

The other girl looked carefully.

"Neither can I."

Piper looked again from the clear space beside them. The circles did not settle it. One stone seemed nearer from one place; from another, she wasn't sure.

"Dad, can we have a measure for the second point?"

"Yes. Show me the two."

Piper pointed them out. Then she and the yellow vice moved to the places Ben showed them, clear of the stones and the instrument. The rest of the players waited farther away.

Ben brought the curling measure to the center of the house. He carefully compared the distance from the center to the nearest edge of each of the two stones.

Piper could see why guessing had been difficult.

Ben checked the reading.

“The yellow is closer.”

“So two yellow,” Piper said to the other vice.

“Two.”

They told their skips. Ben put the instrument away, and only after the score was agreed did the adults start clearing the stones.

Piper went with Dad to record the two points.

Three to one for Evie’s team.

She would rather the red had been closer. It hadn’t been.

Wren joined her at the side.

“I thought it might be enough.”

“It was nearly enough,” Piper said.

Wren looked toward the starting end.

“We’ve still got the last stone.”

Piper picked up her brush. Nora and Maisie were ready for the next end.

CHAPTER 7

Room for One More



Yellow's first stone stopped in the house.

Maisie's first red stopped just in front of it, outside the rings.

"Short," Maisie said when she rejoined them.

"For the house," Wren said. "We can still use it."

Her next red reached the rings on the other side. Yellow added stones of its own. The open space changed as each one arrived.

Nora's first red went through.

For her second, she took her time at the hack. Piper waited beside Maisie, both brushes ready.

The red came toward them.

“Sweep,” Wren called.

Piper and Maisie worked together. The stone passed the front of the house and moved toward the inner rings.

“Up!”

It stopped nearer the button than any yellow.

Nora came along the side with her mouth trying not to smile too much.

“I’d like to keep that one.”

“So would I,” Wren said.

Yellow’s third player tried a takeout, but the shot passed Nora’s red and went out at the back. Piper put her own first draw into the house, farther from the middle than Nora’s.

For the moment, both reds were closer than yellow.

Piper’s second draw went wide and out. She was beginning to be tired of watching her second stones leave.

When she reached the house, she pushed that thought aside to look at the stones that had stayed.

Evie’s first yellow came into the rings on the open side.

It stopped between Nora’s red and Piper’s.

Now only Nora’s counted.

Wren needed another red closer than that yellow to get two points. Two would make the game three each.

Her first try stopped short of the house.

Piper watched it finish, then looked back at Wren. Wren held a hand low, showing that she knew it had needed more.

Evie had her last yellow next. She and her vice chose a draw nearer the middle. It came through the house too quickly and went out without moving anything.

Piper checked the open side once more.

There was room for Wren's last red. It would not have to squeeze through a little gap. It needed to travel farther than her first one and stop inside the nearest yellow.

Wren looked from the hack. Piper placed the broom where they had agreed.

A small move to the left.

Wren nodded.

Maisie and Nora waited with their brushes. Jo watched Wren's start. Ben was near the sweepers, and Granite stood clear of the house.

Wren sent the red.

Piper watched the line first, then its speed.

"Sweep."

Maisie and Nora bent over their brushes.

The stone came toward the rings.

Piper wanted it to keep going. She wanted it to stop in time too. Those two wishes were very close together.

"Up!"

The brushes lifted.

The red carried on, slowing. It passed the front rings and settled a little to the right of Nora's stone.

Farther out than Nora's.

Closer than yellow.

Piper let her breath go.

This count was clear. She and Evie's vice checked the two reds and the nearest yellow, and agreed.

Two for red.

Three to three. The game was finished.

Wren arrived along the side. Maisie met her with an open glove.

"That was the more," Maisie said.

"I found it," Wren replied.

Nora looked at her own red.

"And mine stayed."

They joined the handshakes. Evie tapped Piper's glove.

"I wanted my last one to stop."

"I wanted quite a lot of mine to stop," Piper said.

Evie looked at the house.

"Next time."

"Next time."

The coaches took charge of the equipment. Piper went off the ice with her friends, hungry and pleased about the last end, with a game still happening in her head.

CHAPTER 8

Their Five Minutes

The girls had water and sat down before Ruth called them back to the window.

Piper's hands felt warm around her bottle. Nora was pleased that her last good draw had stayed. Wren was pleased with the extra distance she had found. Maisie wanted to eat before she explained anything at all.

There was time for that.

When their short visitor turn began, Jo stood with them on the warm side of the glass.

The woman in the green cardigan was still there. So was the boy with his grown-up.

"I saw the last one," he told Wren.

"So did I," Wren said. "Very carefully."

He smiled.

"Did it go where you wanted?"

"Close enough."

Piper pointed through the glass to where she had stood for it.

"I was there. Maisie and Nora were sweeping."

"Until you said up," the boy said.

"Yes."

Piper liked that answer better than another question. He had seen their game.

The woman asked Nora whether everybody always did the same job.

"In our team games, we keep these jobs," Nora said. "We try different things in practice."

“I like going first,” Maisie added. “There’s a lot of empty ice.”

“And later?”

“Less empty.”

Jo smiled. The woman asked her how the club decided which setup new players needed. Piper listened to the beginning of Jo’s answer. That was a grown-up part she had never had to arrange.

Another family came to stand nearby.

Piper could have told them about her guard. She could have pointed out the stone that had stayed for Maisie in the first end. There were still things she knew and things they had not seen.

Ruth looked at the clock.

“That’s our players’ five minutes. Thank you, girls.”

Piper picked up her bottle.

“Jo’s staying here if you have more questions,” she told the family.

Then she went with her friends to collect her bag.

Nobody called her back. Through the glass, an adult helper was preparing for the next activity. The open house would carry on.

Nora found one glove in her sleeve and pulled it out.

“Tomorrow,” she said, “I’m finishing that bus.”

“If we find its wheels,” Maisie said.

“We will.”

Piper looked for Dad. He was coming over with her outdoor coat.

Piper put her bottle away and took her coat.

CHAPTER 9

The Rest of the Bus

On Sunday afternoon, Nora found a wheel before she had taken her coat off.

She had stopped beside the jigsaw board on her way to hang it up.

“There.”

“You’ve still got a sleeve attached,” Wren told her.

Nora finished taking off the coat. Then she sat down and tried the piece.

It was a wheel.

It belonged to the delivery van.

“Nearly,” Piper said.

“Not nearly enough.”

The city had been waiting on its board. Dad had brought it back to the table before the others arrived with their parents. Now they had a bakery with a door, most of a bridge, and a park that seemed determined to stay full of holes.

Piper sorted green pieces while Maisie searched for the dog’s bottom.

“I’ve got a tail.”

It was a curling bit of smoke above a chimney.

“The dog is very tall,” Maisie said.

Wren turned a piece around beside the shop window.

“Wait.”

She fitted it beneath the dog’s front paws. There was a small wheel at the bottom.

Maisie leaned closer.

“A dog on wheels.”

“A toy dog,” Wren said.

Piper found another wheel. This one really did belong beside the first.

The little dog stood in the shop window on a narrow wheeled base. Maisie looked at it for a moment.

“It could still have the enormous bell.”

“What for?” Nora asked.

“To ring for somebody to pull it.”

Piper rang the imaginary bell once, very solemnly.

Dad looked around from the kitchen doorway.

“Who’s at the door?”

“Toy dog,” Piper said.

Dad nodded and went back to what he was doing.

Maisie whispered, “He was expecting it.”

They laughed so much that Piper had to put down the green piece she was trying to fit.

Later, they left the table for their snack. Nora talked about the bus. Wren had found a person carrying two flowerpots, and Piper wanted to know why both pots had faces.

“Plants are allowed to enjoy themselves,” Maisie said.

“Those plants look cross.”

“They wanted different pots.”

Back at the board, Piper finished a little path through the park. It ended at a pond that still had no middle.

She found a green piece she was certain would fit.

It didn’t.

“Try the other way,” Nora said.

Piper turned it. A leaf met another leaf, and the piece dropped neatly into place.

“Oh.”

Nora was holding two joined red pieces. One had a wheel; the other had a little stretch of sloping pavement.

She tried them below the crooked bus.

They fitted.

Wren brought over a section with a wide doorway. Together the pieces made a garage, its short driveway sloping up from the road. The bus stood halfway up it, with its nose just inside.

Piper leaned in to look.

No terrible driving. No sharp corner. The bus was simply on a slope.

Maisie made an engine noise under her breath.

“Where’s it going?” Piper asked.

“Nowhere yet. I’m finding the driver.”

Wren pointed to a tiny person sitting on a bench beside the garage, holding a mug.

“There.”

Nora rested her chin in her hands and looked at the completed bus.

“We’ve been waiting two afternoons for a parked bus.”