Piper and the Postcard Challenge



Mary Deuhs

HOUSECALL

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A HouseCall picture book

This is a work of fiction.

Learn the game. Love the game.

For the friends we meet one small moment at a time.



A visiting junior handed Piper a postcard. On the front was a drawing of a curling club with a crooked blue door. “Your turn,” she said.



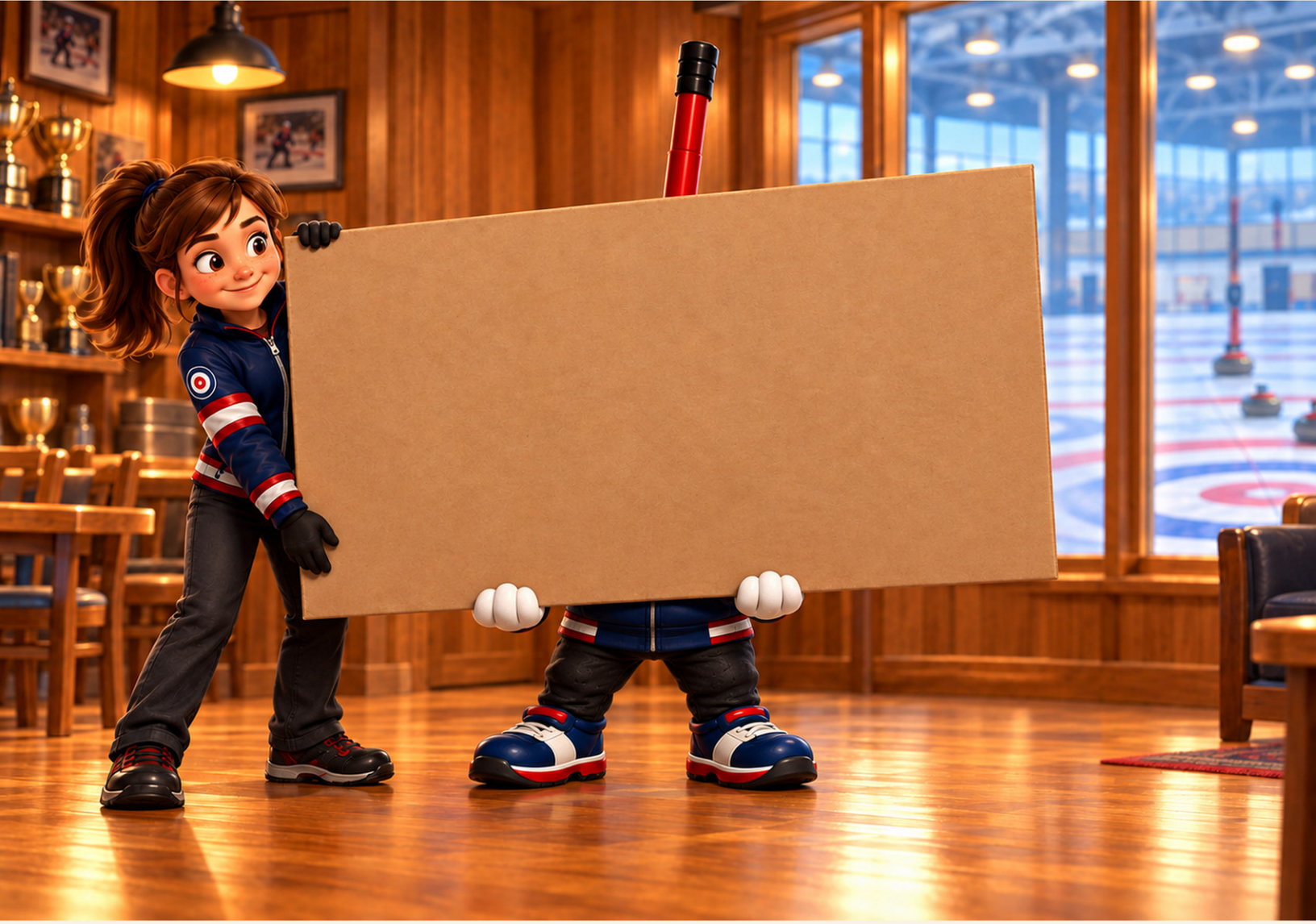
“Draw something about your club,” the girl said. “We’ll trade next time.” Piper looked at the little card. Her club was much bigger than that.



Piper began with the ice. Four long sheets, bright houses, tidy rows of stones. Then she tried to add the warm room. The warm room fell off the edge.



She tried drawing the people instead. Five teammates. Granite. Sweep. Everyone who made the club feel like the club. She ran out of elbows.



Sweep had a solution. He brought a bigger card. It was so big he could not see around it. “Now,” he said, “we can include the parking lot.”



“It has to fit in her pocket,” said Piper. Sweep looked at the enormous card. “We could also make a bigger pocket.”



Granite pulled up a chair. “What do you notice on her card?” Piper studied the blue door. A tiny mitten hung from its handle.



On the back, her friend had written: Our door squeaks like a mouse. We always know when someone has arrived.



Piper could almost hear it. One little door had made her curious about the whole place. She picked up her pencil again.



This time she went looking for one small thing. The scoreboard? The stone rack? The bench where everyone said they had only sat down for a second?



She watched Nia save a place at the table without being asked. A chair slid out. A conversation opened up.



She watched Sofia turn her phone around so everyone could see a ridiculous team photo. The quietest table became the loudest one.



She watched Maya hold the door with her foot while carrying far too many empty cups. Bea rescued the cups. The door rescued nobody.



Every small thing seemed to lead to another. Piper filled her notebook. The postcard was still blank. “I have made the problem smaller,” she told Granite. “There are more of them.”



Then her pencil rolled away. Nia caught it with her shoe. Sofia passed it back. Sweep bowed as if they had completed a championship shot.



Piper laughed so hard she forgot to decide what belonged on the card. For a moment, she was simply there.



That was it. She drew the table. She drew the hands passing the pencil. She left room for one empty chair.



It was not a picture of everything. You could not see every sheet of ice. You could not even see the snack cupboard. Sweep noticed that immediately.



But you could see a place where someone would make room for you. Piper added one sentence: There’s usually room for one more story.



At the next club visit, Piper held out her postcard. Her friend studied it. “Who caught the pencil?” she asked.



Piper told the story. Nia added the part Piper forgot. Sweep demonstrated the bow. It was even bigger the second time.



Her friend laughed. “Our club has a wobbly table,” she said. “I think it would like to meet yours.”



They traded another pair of blank cards. This time Piper did not wonder how to fit a whole club inside. She wondered what she would notice next.



Before they went home, Piper pulled out the empty chair. Her friend sat down. The next story was already beginning.