PIPER'S CURLING ADVENTURES

Piper and the Trouble with Winning

BOOK SEVEN



Mary Deuhs

An illustrated chapter book

Contents

1 Six Ends and a Spoon 1

2 Two on the Board 4

3 Their Turn Our Turn 7

4 The Halfway Table 11

5 Three Ends Left 15

6 Six to Five 20

7 Our Good Bit 23

8 Pudding Later 26

Story by Mary Deuhs

AI-generated draft and illustrations

Free digital edition · HouseCall

© 2026 Mary Deuhs. Curling clubs, schools, and families may download, print, and share these free books for noncommercial educational use. Not for resale.

CHAPTER 1

Six Ends and a Spoon

“Soup in a sieve,” Evie said.

Piper considered this.

“You’d have to eat very quickly.”

“With a fork,” Evie added.

“Then you’d mostly be having lunch on your trousers.”

Maisie pulled out a chair. “Which restaurant are we never going to?”

“The Very Unhelpful Café,” Piper said.

It hadn’t had a name until that moment. A minute earlier, Evie had found a clean teaspoon beside the club’s water jug and wondered how long it would take to eat a whole watermelon with it. Now they were inventing the worst lunch in the world.

Nora sat down with her water bottle.

“I’d like toast.”

“Certainly,” Evie said. “It comes with the butter underneath the plate.”

Wren looked beneath her empty hands as though there might actually be a plate there.

“I’ll have the bill.”

Piper laughed. Through the warm-room windows, Ben and Jo were checking the junior setup. The same small stones waited beside the same familiar stretch of ice.

Today they would be there longer.

Several more Saturdays had passed since the girls first tried starting from different practice places. Maisie still

liked her in-between start. Nora was working from farther back sometimes. Wren's aim was getting steadier, and Piper could usually begin without feeling as if her feet had held a secret meeting.

There were fewer dates left on the junior noticeboard now. Piper could remember when the list had seemed to go on forever.

For one of these later-season Saturdays, the coaches had offered the Too-Cold Club and Evie's group something different: a six-end friendly.

Their usual games had four ends.

When Jo first asked, Maisie had said yes so quickly that Nora checked what she had agreed to.

"Six ends," Maisie said. "Not six whole games. I was listening."

The coaches had watched both groups in practice and talked with the players and their grown-ups. Everyone wanted to try. They had booked a longer session, with a proper rest and water break after the third end.

If anyone needed another break, they could say so. Jo had made that part particularly clear.

Piper liked that the extra ends had their own space waiting for them. Nobody would have to squash them into the last few minutes of ordinary practice.

She looked at Evie, who was putting the teaspoon where it belonged.

"We need pudding for the café."

"At the break," Evie said. "I'm thinking of something with peas."

"That's already bad."

"I can make it worse."

Jo called them together. The girls left their bottles on the table and joined the warm-up. Piper could see Evie's purple shoelaces whenever she bent her knees.

Evie leaned toward her during a pause.

"We're going to try to beat you today."

"We're going to try to beat you too."

"Good."

Evie sounded pleased about it.

After the warm-up, Ben checked helmet straps and clean grippers. Everyone's sliding foot would be covered again before walking. Jo showed both teams their waiting places and went over the familiar release instructions for this shared short setup.

There would still be two stones for every player in each end, taking turns with the other team. A tie after six ends would stay a tie.

The Too-Cold Club kept their usual order. Maisie first, Nora second, Piper third, Wren fourth. Wren was skip, choosing shots at the house. Piper would take her place there when Wren delivered.

Granite waited by the doorway in his coaching jacket.

"Any final questions?"

"Would you eat pea pudding?" Maisie asked.

Granite looked at Jo.

"I meant about curling."

"We haven't decided whether it has custard."

"I withdraw the invitation to ask questions," Granite said.

He held the door, and they went onto the ice.

CHAPTER 2

Two on the Board

The coin landed in Jo's palm.

The Too-Cold Club had won the toss. Wren chose the last stone in the first end, the hammer. Evie's team chose yellow handles, so Piper's team would play red.

They wished one another good curling.

Piper went with Nora to sweep for Maisie. Ben was nearby. Jo stayed at the delivery end, and Granite watched from beside the house.

Yellow started.

Its first stone settled near the front of the rings. Maisie followed with a red on the other side. Both teams had somewhere useful to begin.

Piper liked how quickly the game filled up with jobs. Watch the moving stone. Listen for Wren. Move along the clear route when it was time to change places. There wasn't much room for wondering how six ends would feel.

Maisie's second stone went wide and out of play.

"The first one had better ideas," she said when she joined Piper.

Nora's first red stayed in the house. Her second came closer still, until a yellow takeout knocked it away and rolled out too.

"Good shot," Wren said to the yellow player.

Evie tapped her teammate's glove when she came back. Then she looked at the house again.

Piper's first attempt went too far. She watched it pass through the rings and beyond the back line.

She would have liked to call it back by the handle.

Then the next yellow draw stopped closer than any red.

On her second turn, she settled more comfortably at the hack. Wren showed her an open path toward the middle. Maisie and Nora waited with their brushes.

Piper looked at the target, then began.

The red traveled along the ice. She stayed at the delivery end until Jo helped her safely up and her slider was covered. From there she watched her friends match the stone's pace.

"Sweep!" Wren called.

Maisie and Nora worked together. The red came into the house, slowed, and stopped near the button, the little circle in the center.

Closer than yellow.

Piper let out the breath she had been keeping.

"That one," Maisie said when Piper reached the waiting place, "had very good ideas."

There were still four deliveries left.

Piper took over at the house for Wren. She checked the target with her, then moved clear while Evie played her first stone. Yellow passed Piper's red without touching it and went through.

Wren wanted another red beside Piper's, on the open side.

"Here?" Piper asked, placing the broom.

Wren looked carefully from the hack and nodded.

Piper held it still until Wren began, then watched the line. This was a different sort of busy. She couldn't do Maisie and Nora's sweeping for them. She had to see

where the stone was going and tell them what she needed.

“Sweep.”

The red kept coming.

“Up!”

Both brushes lifted clear. Wren’s stone stopped on the other side of the button, a little farther out than Piper’s.

They were lying two.

Evie’s last yellow stayed in the house, but both reds were closer. Wren still had the final delivery. She tried to add a third. It stopped too far from the middle to count.

When all the stones were still, the teams checked. Piper’s second red and Wren’s first were closer than the nearest yellow.

Two for the Too-Cold Club.

Maisie held out her glove. Piper tapped it, then Nora’s and Wren’s.

She had helped put an actual point on the board. So had Wren. Maisie and Nora had swept both those stones.

“I liked that,” Piper said.

“Which bit?” Nora asked.

Piper looked at their two reds.

“Quite a lot of it.”

Across the house, Evie was asking her second player about a shot. The girl showed her a direction with her brush, and Evie nodded.

Piper was still smiling when the coaches began the safe reset for the next end.

CHAPTER 3

Their Turn Our Turn

Now yellow had the hammer.

Maisie delivered first, and the second end began to look nothing like the first one.

A yellow sat where Piper had hoped a red would go. Nora put a red nearer the middle. Yellow found a better place. Piper's next draw was almost close enough, which was a particularly irritating distance.

She came to the house for Wren's stones and studied the yellow that was nearest.

They chose a straightforward takeout. The team had been working on those in practice. Wren's red struck the yellow and sent it out, but the red rolled out too.

It left one of Piper's stones closest for a moment.

Then Evie chose a draw on the less crowded side of the house.

Her sweepers brought it in nicely. The yellow settled near the button.

"Lovely," said one of her teammates.

Evie's grin was quick and bright.

Wren's last red finished between that yellow and the other yellow stones. Evie tried to add another with her final delivery, but it stopped farther out.

One for yellow.

Two to one altogether.

At the side, Evie stretched her fingers inside her gloves.

"We needed that."

Piper nodded. “Your draw was good.”

“I wanted two.”

“I know.”

Piper did know. She had wanted three at the end of the first.

While the coaches reset their lane, Maisie stood beside Nora and quietly practiced the sweeping rhythm with her hands. She wasn’t holding her brush out into anybody’s path. She was moving two imaginary mittens across a very small imaginary table.

“What are you doing?” Piper asked.

“Trying to remember the bit when we matched.”

Nora copied her once.

“Like that.”

“Yes. I liked that bit.”

They both stopped when Jo called them ready.

In the third end, yellow played first again. Its opening stone went through the house. Maisie took a proper look at Wren’s broom before starting.

Piper and Nora followed her red. It was slowing earlier than Piper wanted.

“Sweep!”

They bent over their brushes and worked. Piper could hear Nora breathing beside her. The stone crossed into the house and kept moving toward the inner rings.

“Up.”

Maisie’s red stopped in a useful place near the front of the middle.

“That’s mine,” Maisie said when she came along the side.

“We noticed,” Nora said.

“I was checking that it knew.”

Yellow answered with stones of its own. Nora’s first red finished too far out to be nearest. For her second, she asked Wren to show the target once more.

Then she sent a draw into the house, on the other side of Maisie’s red.

Piper and Maisie swept it together. Their brushes sounded like hurried whispers.

Nora’s stone stopped a little farther from the button than Maisie’s. Both were closer than yellow.

Piper wanted to keep them there.

Wanting did not give her two perfect turns. Her first red stopped short of the play area and was taken out. Her second traveled right through the house.

She returned to the side with her mouth twisted.

“I tried both ends of wrong,” she said.

“There’s a middle,” Maisie told her.

“I’ve heard of it.”

Piper took over at the house. Wren's first stone made a guard in front of Nora's red. Evie chose an open draw around the other side. Her last yellow came into the rings, but it finished farther out than the two nearest reds.

Wren's final draw ran through without changing them.

Maisie's first and Nora's second still counted.

Two more for red. Four to one.

Piper could see Maisie trying to look calmly at her own stone. It wasn't working. Nora's cheeks had bunched beneath her glasses.

"Halfway," Jo called after the count was agreed. "Time for our break."

Evie stayed beside her team while they put their brushes in order. Her grin from the second end was gone.

Piper looked at the score, then at Evie.

She had wanted their reds to count. She still did.

But the pudding conversation suddenly seemed farther away than the warm room.

CHAPTER 4

The Halfway Table



On the dry side of the doorway, Piper took off her gloves. Her fingers felt enormous when she wrapped them around her water bottle.

Everyone had a place to sit. Ben and Jo went between the tables, checking how the players felt and whether they needed anything before the second half.

“Arms?” Dad asked Piper.

She moved her shoulders.

“A bit tired. All right.”

“Tell us if that changes.”

He went to check on Nora.

Evie was at the next table with her bottle. Two of her teammates were already sitting down. The fourth was talking with Jo.

Piper took a step toward her.

"Do you want to work out the terrible pudding with us?"

Evie looked up.

"Not yet. I want to sit with my team for a bit."

"Okay."

Evie unscrewed her bottle. One of her teammates moved a chair closer so they could all see the ice through the window.

Piper went back to her own table.

That had been an ordinary answer. She knew how to leave somebody to do what they had asked to do.

She had not expected the odd little feeling that came with it.

The Too-Cold Club were ahead. Maisie's lovely first draw had stayed. Nora's had stayed too. Piper wanted to talk about those stones, and about the one she had made in the first end, and about how there were still three whole ends left.

From the other table, Evie said, "We've got to get one closer."

Piper turned her bottle between her palms.

"When you called that last sweep," Maisie was saying to Wren, "I thought we weren't going to reach."

"Which one?"

"Nora's. The second."

Piper looked over at Evie again.

“Piper?” Nora said. “Did you think it was going to get there?”

Piper had missed part of what they were saying.

“Sorry. Which stone?”

“Mine.”

Nora waited. Wren had her elbows on the table, and Maisie was still wearing the pleased face she had brought off the ice.

Piper put her bottle down.

“I thought it needed us right until you said up,” she told Wren. “The last little bit, especially.”

“That was the bit I liked,” Maisie said. “We did the same thing at the same time.”

She made one tiny sweeping movement with both fists. Nora joined in. Their pretend brushes collided.

“Mostly,” Nora said.

Piper laughed.

She pulled her chair properly into the table. Evie knew where they were. Piper didn’t need to keep checking whether she was ready to come over.

Wren asked what they had noticed about the ice.

“Mine went farther on that side,” Nora said, pointing through the glass. “The first one in the second end.”

“Mine too,” Piper said. “We could watch for that.”

They talked about it until Jo came to ask if everyone felt ready to continue. Each girl answered for herself.

Maisie still wanted the extra ends. So did Nora and Wren.

Piper looked through the window at the red and yellow handles waiting for them.

“Yes,” she said. “I’m ready.”

At the other table, Evie stood with her team.

Piper picked up her helmet and gloves. There were things she wanted to do in this game, even if Evie wanted to stop her doing them.

She followed Maisie to the door.

CHAPTER 5

Three Ends Left



Yellow’s second opening stone made itself comfortable near the middle of the house.

Piper would have preferred a less comfortable yellow.

The fourth end had begun.

Maisie’s first red was in the rings, but farther out. Nora’s next good draw came closer. Piper put another red closer still. None of them beat the yellow.

Evie kept bringing her team back to that part of the house. She moved her target when a red took away one route. Her sweepers listened, called to each other, and lifted their brushes together.

Piper knew that feeling from the first half. Yellow were having it now.

When Wren's turn came, she tried to remove the closest yellow. Her red missed it and went out at the back.

Evie then drew another yellow nearer the button.

Wren's last red stopped close enough to prevent any of the farther yellows from counting. It couldn't get inside the nearest two. Evie's final attempt didn't add a third.

Two for yellow.

Four to three.

One of Evie's teammates reached toward her, and their gloves met with a little padded thump.

"Good end," Piper said as the teams moved clear for the reset.

"Thanks," Evie said.

She was already turning to listen to her lead.

Wren came to stand with Piper, Maisie, and Nora.

"We have the last one now," she said. "Let's get some reds in good places."

"I have two available," Maisie said.

"Excellent."

Maisie got both into the house. Neither was right in the middle, but they gave Wren choices when she looked down the lane.

Nora's first draw came closer. Yellow took it out with a clean hit that sent both stones away.

Nora watched until they stopped.

"I'd like another go at that place."

Wren agreed. Nora's second stone finished near the button, a little to one side.

Maisie squeezed Piper's glove after they had finished sweeping it.

"We did the bit."

"We did."

Now it was Piper's turn.

She didn't hurry to get ready. Jo watched her settle at the hack. Wren showed her the open space behind and to the side of Nora's stone.

Piper began smoothly. The red went where she had looked.

She watched Maisie and Nora follow it. Wren called. Their brushes moved.

The red came into the rings and stopped beyond the button, nearer the middle than the yellow already in the house.

Nora's red was still closest. Piper's was second.

Piper smiled as she got safely up.

This time, when she reached her friends, she looked straight at them.

"Did you see that?"

"We were quite near it," Maisie said.

Nora held up a gloved hand, and Piper tapped it.

Then yellow changed the picture.

A draw settled in front of the way Wren had planned for Piper's second stone. The yellow wasn't close enough to count yet, but there was much less room to come past it.

Piper stopped at the safe waiting place instead of going straight to the hack.

Nora was studying the house.

"There's still room in front of mine," she said to Wren. "Could we put something there?"

Wren looked from Nora's stone to the yellow.

"A guard."

She checked the idea with Granite, who asked her to show the path she meant. Wren pointed it out. There was room.

"Let's try that," she told Piper.

Piper's second red stopped in front of the house. It was off to the side of the yellow, covering the direct approach to Nora's stone.

It wouldn't count for a point there.

Piper liked it anyway.

Evie talked with her vice before her next delivery. They chose another way into the house, and yellow came in closer than before. Still not closer than Nora and Piper.

Wren's first red went through. Evie tried to remove Piper's counting red with her last stone, but passed it and went out at the back. Wren's final draw stayed too far out to add another point.

The teams agreed on two for red.

Six to three.

"One end left," Jo said.

Piper flexed her fingers. She could feel all the sweeping they had done, and she was glad of the break they had taken.

Maisie was looking toward the starting place.

"Ready?" Piper asked.

"Yes."

This time, Maisie didn't make a joke.

Piper went with Nora to sweep for her.

CHAPTER 6

Six to Five

There were only three stones left in play when Wren's last red had finished.

Getting there had taken most of an end.

Maisie's first red had reached the house, then been knocked out by a yellow later on. That yellow had rolled out too. Nora had removed an early yellow with a takeout and lost her own red afterward.

Piper had taken out another yellow from the rings and lost her own red as well. Her second draw went through. Other stones had finished too short or had crossed a side or back line.

Now the house looked surprisingly empty.

Two yellows were nearest the button. One belonged to their second player. The other was their third player's second stone. Nora's second red lay farther out, third closest.

Every other stone that had already been played was out.

Evie had one yellow still to deliver.

Piper stood clear at the side of the house. Wren had tried to get a red inside the two yellows with her last draw, but it had run through without touching anything. She came along the safe route to join the others.

If Evie put her last yellow closer than Nora's red, yellow would have three.

Three added to their three would make six.

A tie.

Evie and her vice looked at the open part of the rings. They didn't need to find a tiny gap or move a pile of stones. There was space for a draw.

Evie pointed. Her teammate moved the broom a little and looked back at her.

Evie nodded.

Piper tucked her free hand into her sleeve. She wanted their team to win. The wanting hadn't become any smaller because she liked Evie.

Maisie stood beside her, still and watchful. Nora was looking at her own red.

"It's a long way from the middle," Nora said quietly.

"It's there," Wren said.

Across the ice, Jo waited while Evie settled at the hack.

Evie looked up at the broom. Then she sent the stone.

Yellow came toward the house. Her teammates moved alongside it, their brushes ready. They watched its speed and listened to their vice.

It was traveling quickly.

The brushes stayed up.

The yellow passed through the open space, beyond the button and beyond the place where Nora's red lay. It kept going over the back line.

Nothing else moved.

Piper waited while it was taken out of play. Then the teams came to agree the count.

Two yellow stones closer than Nora's red.

Two for yellow.

Six to five for the Too-Cold Club.

Wren looked at Piper. Her smile started small and spread across her face.

“We did it.”

Maisie let out a long breath. “Six ends.”

“And we won,” Nora said.

“And we won,” Piper repeated.

They touched gloves, then joined the handshakes.

Evie’s face was quite still when she reached Piper.

“Good game.”

“Good game,” Piper said. “That was close.”

Evie nodded. “I wanted that last one.”

“I know.”

One of Evie’s teammates came beside her. Evie turned toward the girl, and they walked back together.

Piper stayed with Wren while the coaches organized the equipment. Maisie and Nora were already talking about the fifth end.

Through the window, someone was setting cups on a table.

The game was finished. Their win was real.

So was the look on Evie’s face.

CHAPTER 7

Our Good Bit

Maisie put both hands around her cup and sighed.

“My fingers have arrived before the rest of me.”

Piper sat beside her. Nora was taking off her glasses to wipe a little mist from them. Wren had lined her gloves up neatly on her bag.

At the next table, Evie’s team sat with Jo.

Piper noticed them. Then she took a drink.

“My favorite was the third end,” Maisie said. “When mine stayed all the way through.”

“Mine too,” Nora said.

“Your favorite was my stone?”

“My stone stayed as well.”

“We can have a joint favorite.”

Nora put her glasses back on. “I also liked my second one in the fifth. After they took the first out.”

Piper remembered the way Nora had asked for another try at the same place. She had sounded cross about losing her first stone and determined about the next one, all at once.

“You put it closer the second time,” Piper said.

Nora smiled. “I did.”

Wren took a cracker from her snack box.

“I liked knowing what we wanted in the fifth. Even after yellow changed it.”

“You changed it back,” Maisie said.

“Nora saw the guard.”

“Piper made it.”

“I liked making it,” Piper said. “And I liked the one before.”

She held her hands apart to show where her red had stopped, then realized none of them could possibly understand a whole house from that small patch of table.

“The one you were quite near,” she told Maisie.

Maisie grinned.

Piper could talk about the good parts without making them smaller. Her friends had been in them too.

Dad came by with his water.

“How did six feel?”

“Longer than four,” Wren said.

“Detailed report. Thank you.”

“I liked the second half,” Piper said. “I’m glad we tried it.”

The others agreed. Dad listened to Maisie’s account of the third end, then went to help Jo put something away.

Nora opened her snack box. A cucumber slice had stuck to the lid.

Maisie inspected it.

“The Very Unhelpful Café serves your lunch on the ceiling.”

“How do you reach it?” Piper asked.

“You order a ladder.”

“We’re out of ladders,” Wren said immediately.

Piper nearly swallowed her laugh with her water. She put the cup down first.

“Then I’d like pudding.”

“We have peas,” Maisie said.

Piper thought of Evie’s unfinished idea. She could ask about it another time, if Evie brought it up.

For now, Nora was carefully rescuing her cucumber.

“At this café,” she said, “the peas are served individually.”

“On enormous plates,” Piper added.

Wren held up her cracker.

“I have brought my own lunch.”

CHAPTER 8

Pudding Later



Piper was putting her gloves away when Evie came over.

Her team had finished talking. Two of them were collecting their bags, and the other was showing Jo something on a brush.

Evie rested her hands on the back of an empty chair.

“I thought of the pudding.”

Piper looked up.

“We’ve already got individual peas.”

“Mine is jelly.”

“That sounds quite helpful.”

“You have to eat it with chopsticks.”

Maisie stopped fastening her bag.

“Does it keep falling off?”

“Of course.”

“Can we have a spoon?” Nora asked.

Evie shook her head. “The chef’s using it.”

“For what?”

“Eating a watermelon.”

Piper laughed. So did Evie, a small laugh that was still hers.

Then Evie looked through the window at the scoreboard.

“I’m still annoyed about that last draw.”

Piper pushed a loose glove into her bag.

“I would be too.”

Evie nodded. She gave the empty chair a little pat, then turned when one of her teammates called her name.

“Coming.”

She went to collect her things.

Piper found her other glove and tucked it beside the first. Maisie was waiting with Nora at the bench. Dad had their outdoor coats.

“What’s for dinner at the café?” Maisie asked.

Piper looked over toward Evie, who was pulling on her own coat.

“She says dinner’s ready,” Piper called, nodding toward Maisie.

“Already?” Evie asked.

“It’s on the ceiling.”

Evie looked up.

“Then I’ll need a ladder.”

All four members of the Too-Cold Club answered together.

“We’re out of ladders.”