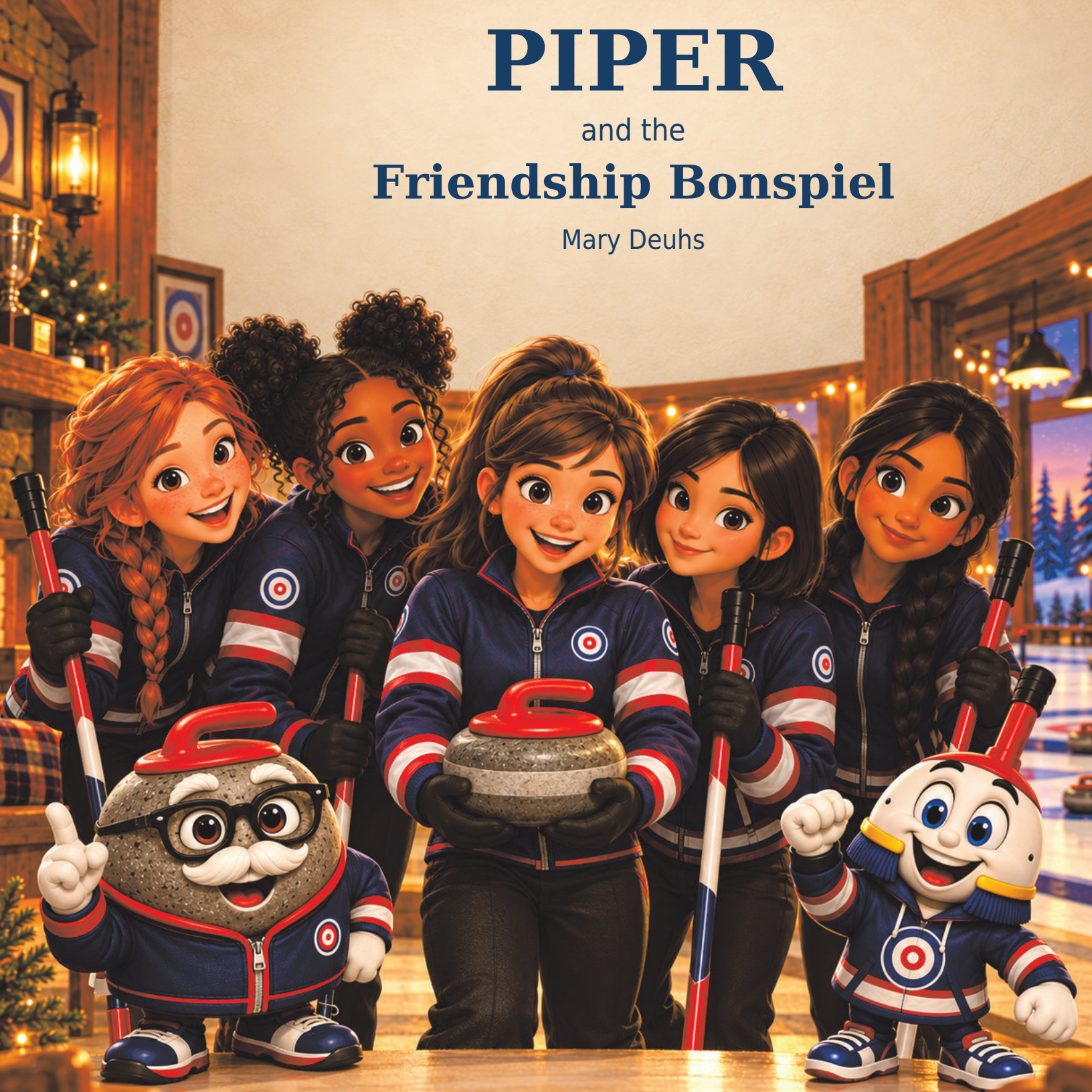
PIPER

and the

Friendship Bonspiel

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A HouseCall curling story

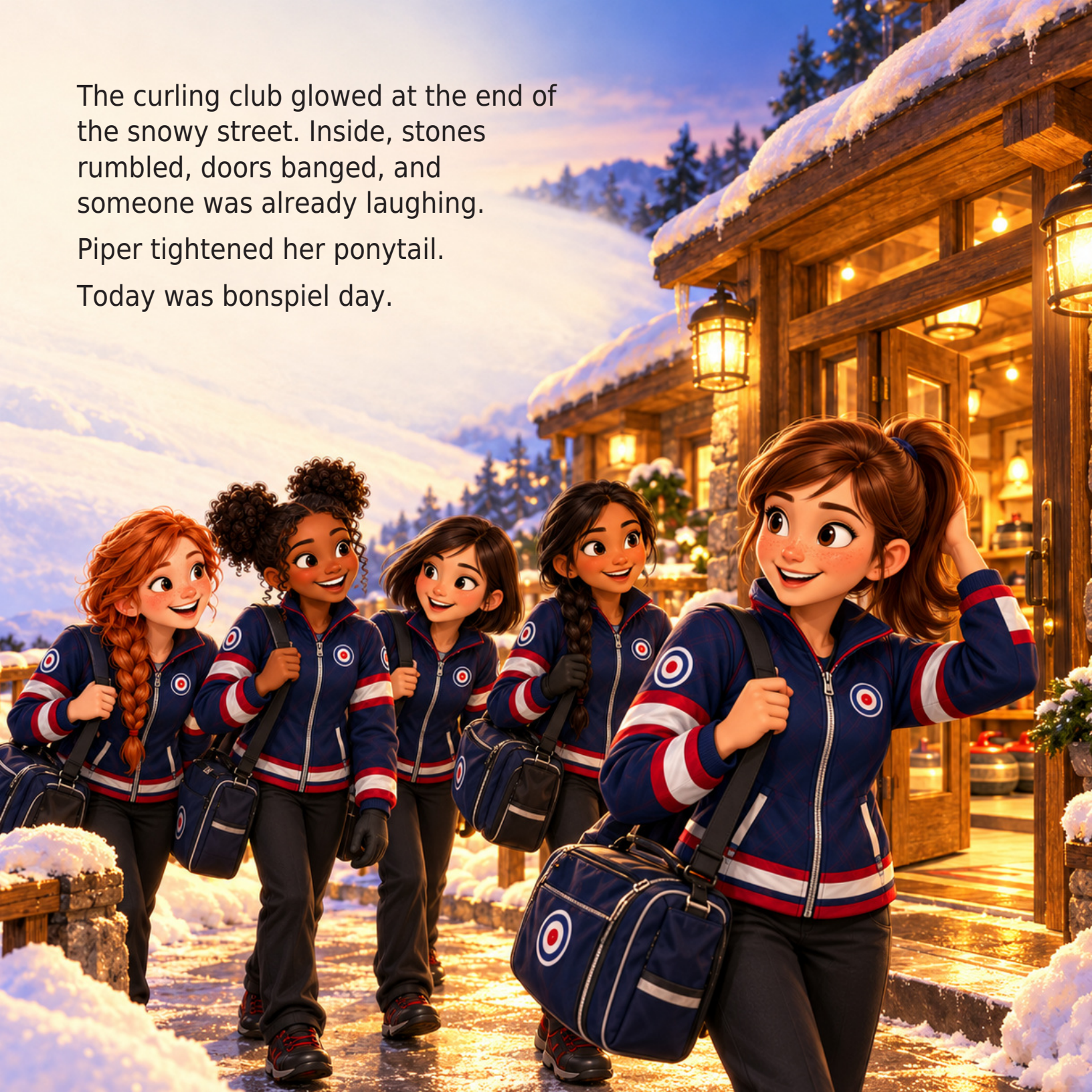
Piper and the Friendship Bonspiel

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This is a work of fiction.



For every junior curler with a dream.



The curling club glowed at the end of the snowy street. Inside, stones rumbled, doors banged, and someone was already laughing.

Piper tightened her ponytail.

Today was bonspiel day.

Bea brought extra mittens. Nia brought a lucky hair tie. Sofia checked the schedule, and Maya counted the team's brooms.

Piper brought a notebook.

At the top, she had written: OUR PERFECT BONSPIEL.



Piper was the team's fifth player. Four girls would play each game, and they had planned their turns before the bonspiel.

She would watch the first game, then play in the second.

She wanted to be ready.



Near the door, another girls' team stood in a tight little bunch.

One girl turned the rink map upside down.

“First bonspiel?” Piper asked.

The girl nodded. “Is it that obvious?”



“Come with us,” said Piper. “We'll show you around.”

Sweep proudly pointed toward the ice. Then toward the snack table.

Then back toward the snack table.

“We found your favourite spot,” Nia said.





Granite peeked at Piper's notebook.

“No missed shots?” he read.

“That's the plan.”

He adjusted his glasses. “And what is your plan for the shot after a miss?”

Piper hadn't written that part yet.

The teams met at the ice.

“Good curling!”

Hands shook. Brooms tapped. The first stones began their slow, rumbling journeys.

Behind the glass, Piper opened her notebook and leaned forward.



Bea's first stone stopped short of the rings.

Bea stared at it.

“Well,” she said, “it found a parking spot.”

Nia laughed, and Bea's shoulders relaxed.

There was another stone to throw.



Nia's stone needed sweeping.

“Hard!” called Maya.

Bea and Sofia swept until their cheeks glowed. The stone slid into the rings.

From behind the glass, Sweep cheered so hard his hood flopped over his eyes.



Sofia aimed for a takeout.

Click. Click.

One stone rolled away. Then another.
Neither stopped where she expected.

Sofia blinked.

“I may need to draw you a picture of what I meant to do.”



Maya's last draw crept toward the middle.

Closer.

Closer.

It stopped just outside the little centre circle.

Piper held her pencil above the page. So many almosts!

On the ice, Maya was already smiling at her teammates.



After the game, the girl with the upside-down map found Piper.

“I thought we'd be the only ones making mistakes.”

“Oh, no,” said Piper. “We've brought plenty.”

The girl laughed. This time, she didn't look so nervous.



At lunch, Piper looked at her notebook.

She had written down every missed shot.

But she hadn't written how Bea kept trying. Or how loudly Nia cheered.

Piper turned to a fresh page.



For the second game, Piper would throw first. Bea would take her turn behind the glass.

“Save me a good view,” Piper said.

“I'll be the one cheering,” Bea promised.

Piper stepped onto the ice.



Piper took a breath, slid forward, and let go.

Her stone sailed past the rings.

And kept going.

Piper watched it settle at the back.

That was definitely not the shot in her notebook.



“Same target,” Maya called gently. “A softer push.”

Nia gave Piper a small nod.

Behind the glass, Bea lifted both thumbs.

Piper breathed out.

Now she had a plan for the shot after a miss.

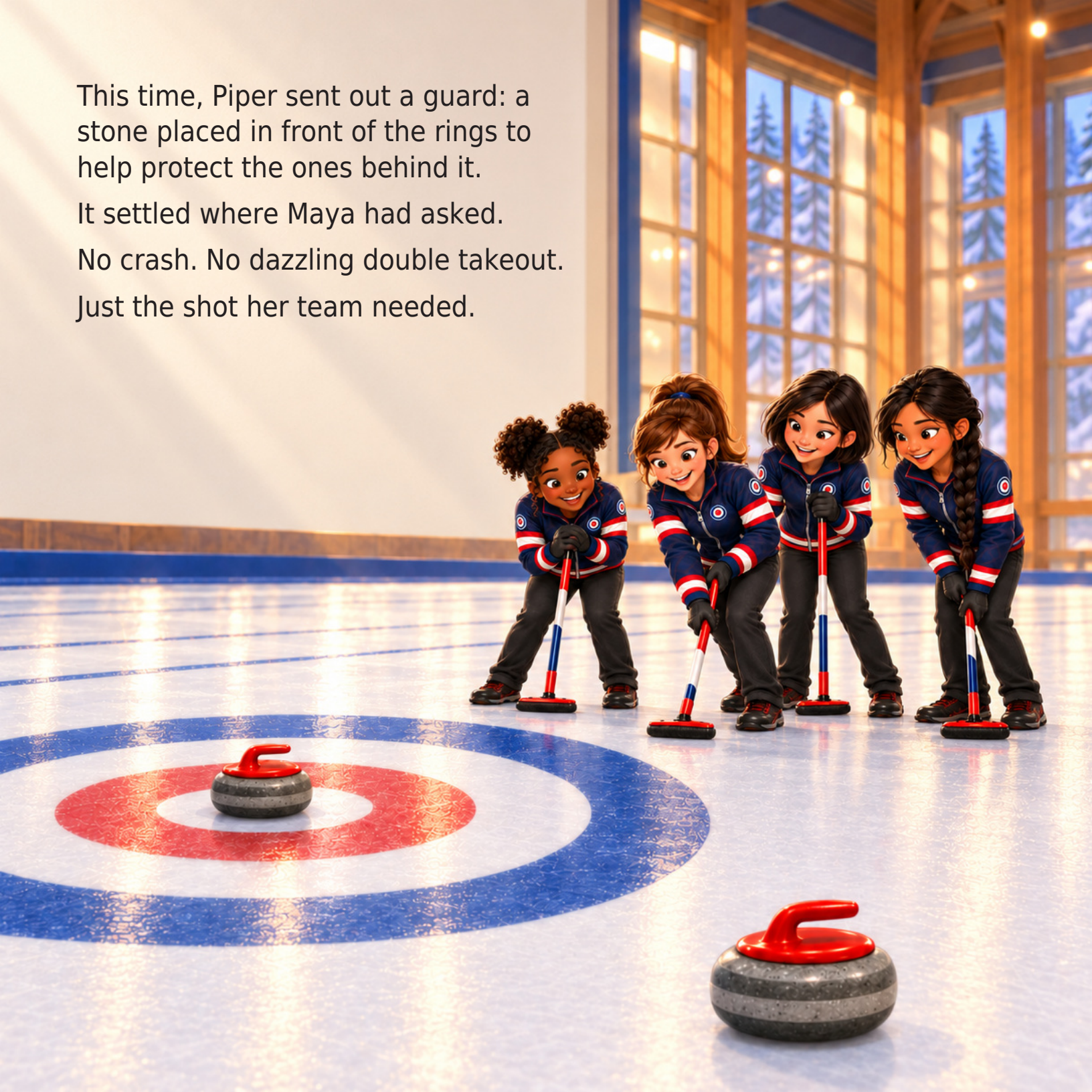


This time, Piper sent out a guard: a stone placed in front of the rings to help protect the ones behind it.

It settled where Maya had asked.

No crash. No dazzling double takeout.

Just the shot her team needed.

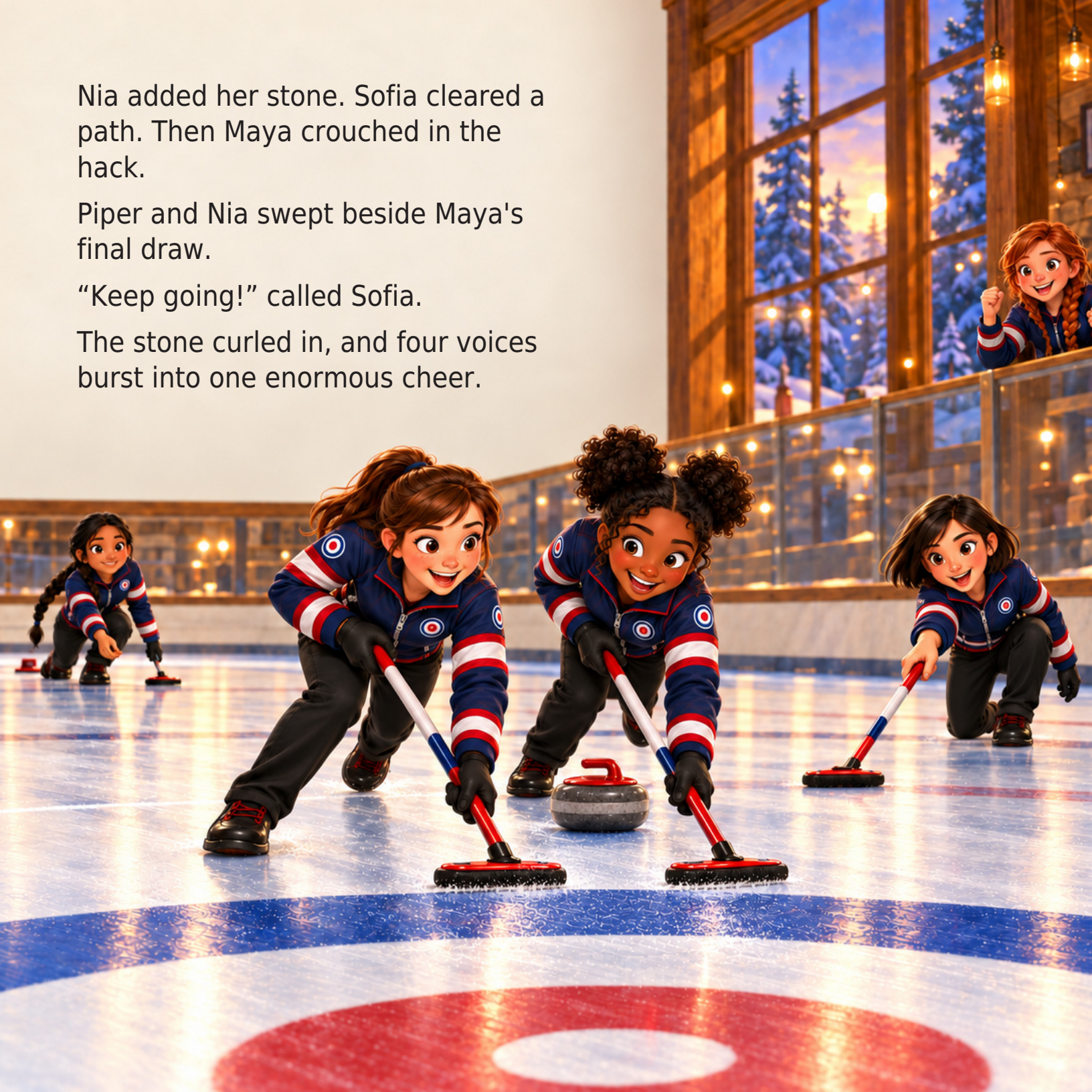


Nia added her stone. Sofia cleared a path. Then Maya crouched in the hack.

Piper and Nia swept beside Maya's final draw.

“Keep going!” called Sofia.

The stone curled in, and four voices burst into one enormous cheer.



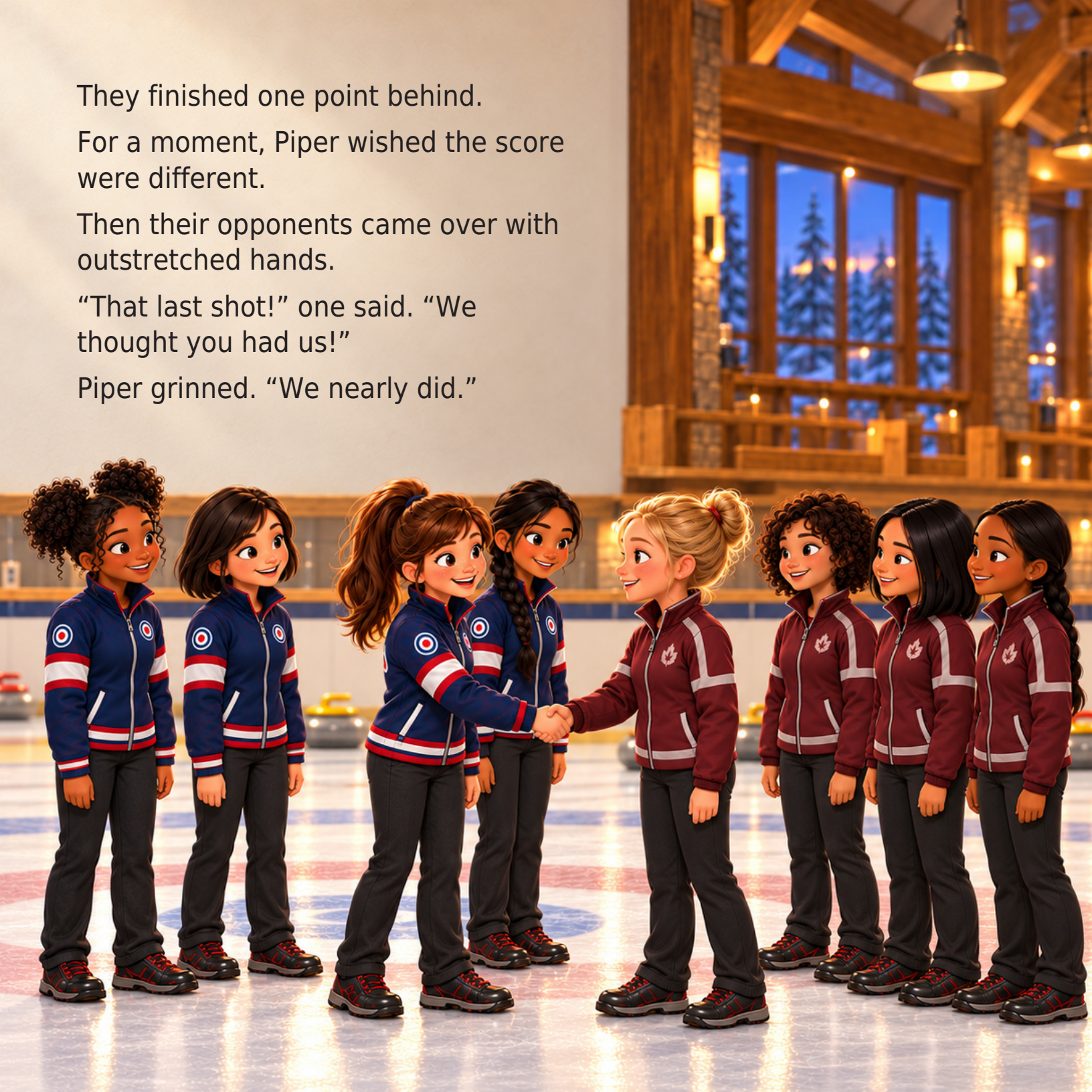
They finished one point behind.

For a moment, Piper wished the score were different.

Then their opponents came over with outstretched hands.

“That last shot!” one said. “We thought you had us!”

Piper grinned. “We nearly did.”



The clubhouse smelled of warm muffins. Every table seemed to be full.

Across the room, the new girls stood together again, holding their plates.

Piper caught Maya's eye.

“Can we make some room?”



Chairs shuffled. Bags moved. Sofia borrowed a bench.

Soon, two teams crowded around one table.

Sweep arrived with napkins.

Most of the napkins arrived with Sweep.

The rest fluttered behind him like a tiny parade.



Bea told the story of her parked stone. Sofia used two muffins to explain her takeout.

Even Maya laughed so hard she had to put down her cup.

Then the new girls began sharing stories of their own.



Before they left, Piper opened her notebook.

Under OUR PERFECT BONSPIEL, she wrote:

We missed. We tried again.
We made room.

She looked around the table, then added one more line:

Let's do this again.



Outside, the night sparkled.

“See you at the next bonspiel!” called the new girls.

Piper waved until their car turned the corner. Then she joined Bea, Nia, Sofia, and Maya.

They were already planning their next game.





There is room for you here.

Piper has a plan for the perfect bonspiel. But curling stones do not always follow a plan.

With Bea, Nia, Sofia, and Maya beside her, Piper discovers what to do after a miss, how to cheer for someone else, and how much can happen when you make room at your table.

A warm, funny story for every junior curler learning, trying, and finding their team.

Mary Deuhs