



WE ARE SPARTANS

ACHIEVEMENT RESPECT RESPONSIBILITY EMPATHY

IMMS Messenger January 2020 Volume XV Issue XLIII Indian Mound Middle School McFarland, WI



Photo by Sofia Bexson, grade 7

IMMS students and staff lauded the new Performing Arts Center for its increased capacity—on stage, back stage, and seating.

New play in new PAC space

By Sofia Bexson and Ava Van Houten

IMMS 7th and 8th Grades

IMMS has a new musical this year: “Frozen Jr.” Performances will be at the high school’s new PAC. The play is based off the movie with a couple twists to make it interesting. It is performed by a selection of sixth, seventh, and eighth grade students, and is directed by Ms. DeeDee, Ms. Lemens, with the help of a few high school student directors. You can enjoy the show at 7 p.m. Thursday-Saturday, Jan. 23-25. A 1 p.m. show will be performed Saturday, as well.

Behind the scenes of the performances are the tech crew. First-time tech crew member Veva Riddle shares her experience in this year’s show.

What is Tech Crew like?

It’s really fun! Overall, it’s really enjoyable, and I do recommend it for anyone interested in art or building.

Do you have to be hard working?

Yes; there’s a limited time to finish projects, and there are meetings 2-3 times a week, so commitment is necessary. You have to work hard to make sure things get done in time, and look great for the performances.

What kind of things do you do on Tech Crew?

Painting: Arches, stairs, props, actual

paintings, tables.

Building: Props, chairs, tables, scenery.

What have your favorite tasks been?

Painting; getting to build scenery, and anything not involving shelves.

Do you see behind the scenes of the play?

Yes! We get to watch some rehearsals, and we get to listen to actors practice.

What are some of the rules?

All black clothes during performances (you should be seen as little as possible by the audience).

No goofing around. There is dangerous equipment in the scene shop, and you could end up accidentally messing up a piece someone is trying to work on.

Show up for attendance.

Be respectful of what others are doing, including the actors.

Not necessarily a rule, but I recommend bringing a change of clothes. There are aprons, but sometimes not enough to go around, and they don’t cover your sleeves or shoes.

How do you get in?

Students who have previously been on tech crew, and were good workers will be chosen first, then the rest by random lottery.

Praise for PAC

Nearly 200 students and staff at IMMS recently responded to a survey on the new Performing Arts Center at McFarland High School. Of the respondents, more than 40 percent said they had both attended and performed in the space this year.

IMMS respondents praised the new space for many reasons. Chief among them was the larger space.

“It’s freaking huge!” wrote one respondent.

Another specified enjoying, “Having a second floor and more area.” While another highlighted the big stage.

“It better because it’s bigger so more people can watch,” wrote one.

Adding to “How large it is,” another wrote, “It’s a really big space that can fit over 800 people! It also has a much better stage and much better acoustics.”

The list of appreciations for the larger space also lauded the balcony.

“I like the seats up high,” said one respondent.

Two others included the balcony with other parts: one with the new stage and backstage, and the other with wheel chair accessibility.

One of the performers said, “I like the backstage and all places for actors to be ready.”

A respondent who has both performed and attended said, “I like how big it is and open. No matter where your sitting you can hear and there really is no bad seat.”

Agreeing, another said it was “easy to see the stage.”

Many other positive comments related to the seats.

One said, “I love how the seats are comfy and there are so many spots!”

“It’s really roomy and calming,” agreed another.

As for looks, one respondent said, “It looks very modern, and there is a very good sound system.

“It looks like a mini version of the Overture Center,” compared another.

See more responses on page 4.

The homework problem: Stress and no sleep, family time

By Veva Riddle

IMMS 8th Grade

You get out of school at 3:40. By the time you get home and get settled, it's 5:00. You take a necessary hour or so to relax and help around the house, as well as maybe get a snack and do chores. You practice your instrument or sport for an hour, or do another extra curricular activity. Now it is 7:00. You have an hour of homework, and you do it. Now it is 8:00. But now, you've just realized you haven't done the reading for class, and you stay up until 10:00. You go to bed at 10:30. If you have to wake up at 6:00 for school, that leaves you with 7.5 hours of sleep. Not much, but a decent amount, right? Nope. Kids in middle school should be getting 9-11 hours of sleep.

According to a *Los Angeles Times* opinion piece, "More Sleep and Less Homework," by attorney Vicki Abeles, the maximum number of work hours for adults in the U.S. is 40 hours per week. Students in the United States are at school an average of 35 hours a week, not including homework and clubs.

Professionals recommend a ten minute homework rule: Ten minutes per grade. 20 minutes for a second grader, 50 minutes for a fifth grader, and so on, going up each year. That means a seventh grader should have around 1 hour and 10 minutes of homework a day. Even at that average, students are doing more than 40 hours of school work a week.

Many students go way over 40 hours, especially high school students, who spend an average of 3.5 hours on homework according to a 2014 survey cited by Abeles. That is more work than adults are legally required to do. Kids are doing more work in a five day week than many full grown adults with jobs. Does that really seem fair? Does this actually help the students? Not really, no. It takes away family time, and causes major issues like stress, anxiety, and sleep loss. Homework does more harm than good, and therefore should be removed or reduced from schools.

One argument for why kids should have less homework is that it takes away from social time. I'll guess that any middle school student can remember a time when they had to stay up late, not go to a fun event with friends, or not be able to spend time with family because of homework. Many students are also blamed for "hiding away" or "being antisocial" by parents or peers. Most people I've talked to have this experience, as well. Are attitudes towards socialization really the problem? Maybe, but in many cases, kids actually *want* to socialize, they just have too much work.

There are many ways that homework affects family time, as well. According to a *Chicago Tribune* article, "Should Kids Have Homework? The Great Debate" by Kate Thayer, many parents admitted that homework caused constant, if not nightly fights between themselves and

their kids. Kids may not want to do homework, or fight with parents about how to do a problem. This can be due to being overworked, and changes in curriculum, causing confusion from parents. Parents may also force kids to stop homework for family activities, which can be frustrating. Students who have a busy night might not have time to do an hour of homework. Teens should not be blamed for problems that they did not create. If they did not have this work piled up, they could be socializing or spending quality time with family.

After a "no homework" policy was enforced at Hamilton Primary school, writes Thayer, many parents contacted the school about how happy they were. Some commented that they were able to spend more time with their child, now that homework wasn't getting in the way. Several also mentioned that their kids had joined new activities, with the newly given time after school to do what they pleased.

This shows why kids should have less homework, as it has a positive effect on family life. When kids are given the freedom, they socialize more, and do more healthy and essential activities. This gives them the opportunity to join clubs and activities, do sports, spend more time outside, and socialize more.

Another reason why kids should have less homework, is that it causes severe issues like anxiety and lack of sleep. Again, many students can remember staying up late to finish home-

work before a due date. This is because a student could have reading, writing, social studies, and math homework all in a day. For kids in clubs or sports, this is especially difficult. This is also paired with chores, possible jobs, and having to walk home from school.

"Sleep is critical to mental health," argues Abeles. School forces kids to stay awake late, and doing homework on a device before bed can make it hard to sleep. Teachers recommend not being on screens before bed, but to get homework done on time, this might be necessary. This shows why they should have less or no homework, because sleep loss is unhealthy and creates anxiety. This can affect students mental health, and make their performance in school worse.

According to the Nationwide Children's Hospital, teens get an average of 7-7½ hours of sleep a night. That's a few hours less than the bare minimum they should be getting. Schools can start as early as 7:00, meaning students sometimes have to wake up as early as 5:00. For a younger kid in maybe fifth grade, ok. But studies have shown that teens should be sleeping two hours later than when they were younger. That means *waking up* at 7:00. Along with this, many sports run for longer, creating late bedtimes. Lack of sleep can cause moodiness and bad behavior. It can reduce decision making skills, reaction time, creativity, and ability to properly focus.

According to an article by

Nationwide Children's Hospital, *Sleep in Adolescents*, "Teenagers who are sleep deprived are also more likely to engage in risk-taking behaviors, such as drinking, driving fast, and engaging in other dangerous activities."

This means that high schoolers who are sleep deprived are more at risk to get in accidents, because of falling asleep at the wheel, or lacking in attentiveness. Studies have shown that they also have lower grades, and fall asleep in class more.

Some people may say that homework is beneficial because it helps students understand lessons and concepts. In reality, this is completely wrong. According to Thayer, homework is almost completely ineffective unless students understand the lessons in the first place. Homework is meant to help students who are struggling, but in reality it just stresses them, because it doesn't make sense. If they are doing something wrong, doing it over again won't help. If you practice something the wrong way, you aren't going to get any better at it. It's the same with homework. It is not in any way beneficial to struggling students, and only helps those who understood the concepts in the first place.

Homework keeps students up late. It causes stress, anxiety, and to struggling students, a low self image. It causes kids to suffer, and not be able to spend time with their friends and family. This is why homework should be minimized, if not completely abolished in schools.

More argument for less homework

By Ren Gletty-syoen

IMMS 6th Grade

Kids should be given less homework because it can stress kids, make them have less social time, and make them get less sleep.

Stress

The first reason why homework loads should be reduced is that it can stress kids out a lot.

I know this because I am a student myself and know the feeling of having lots of homework and not enough time to do it. This is common among other students my age.

Also, a HuffPost blog by Peter Druker, "5 Reasons Why Homework is Bad for Your Child," said, "Students need to learn in a classroom setting, but they should also be able to spend some time exploring other things outside of the classroom."

That shows that kids need more time outside of school and classwork, and homework is taking up too much time stopping that from happening.

This is because homework is a big counter on your conduct and effort grade. So if you have a lot of homework you can get very stressed about doing good because it is going in your grade book. This is why stress is a big part of why we

need less homework because students would be way less stressed.

Social Time

The next reason that we should have less homework is that it takes up a very important social time especially in middle and high school. Homework prevents students from getting very important social skills that are needed for adulthood, such as making friends.

Druker stated: "Children need time to spend with their family, catch up with friends and attend extracurricular activities so they can refresh their minds and bodies."

Also, friendships are one of the main points of support in middle and high school because you can trust them with many things that you might not want to tell other people. Friends do take time to hang out with, talk to, and help them; this is stopped by homework getting in the way, and everyone needs their support systems.

Family is also a good support system, but if you have lots of homework, friendships, and other activities, dinner time could be the only time to connect. Still, some families don't even have that time, which makes it even harder for the kid.

Those are just some of the reasons why should we should

have less homework because of social time.

Sleep

My last reason I could fit into this article is sleep. This is important because sleep is one of the most important things in life to stay focused in class.

First, you need to stay focused in class. It's hard to stay focused. I am a student who has had those nights that I totally forgot about an assignment and stayed up late doing it. This makes you tired all day the next day, making you very tired and doing the opposite of learning because you get even more lost in the day.

Next is energy because you not having energy can cause problems in many classes, like gym, tech ed, science, and many more. Also in a Time magazine article, "Why I think All Schools Should Abolish Homework," author Vicki Abeles says, "When my daughters were in middle school, I would urge them into bed before midnight and then find them clandestinely studying under the covers with a flashlight." This is showing that kids are being overworked with homework and is not letting them get a healthy night of sleep.

This is why schools should not have homework because of stress, social time, and sleep.



Photo by CSU Northridge

CSU Northridge's Oasis Wellness Center offers nap pods for students to take a break during school.

Should napping pods be added?

Yes

Sleeping is a big part of life, it makes your mind more clear so you can learn at school. The average hours of sleep for a kids/teens are 9-11 hours a day. Most teens, however, get less sleep.

If you play sports like me it might be hard to do your homework, while fitting time for sports. If you can, you usually sleep very late. When you don't sleep enough, your brain doesn't function. School starts early at 8:10, and that means you just can't get enough sleep to work properly through the seven hour school day.

Napping pods would be perfect because they will let kids get a nap and then their brains reset and they are all good for class.

No

The reason why napping pods will not be great is because many kids will take advantage of the napping pod and use it to skip a class. The napping pods have their perks but also big disadvantages.

Another reason is that most people will think that you do not need to sleep that much anymore because you can nap. Sleeping is important for your day. If you don't sleep enough it can increase the risk of certain cancers. Not just that but it can badly damage your immune system. This is why you should not have napping pods.

~Steve Hoang,
IMMS 6th Grade

Roses: A short story

By Hailey Yang

IMMS 7th Grade

I remember the night very vividly. The way Hannah said the sentence. How my heart dropped to my stomach like a stone in water. The warm air in my room trapping me, basically suffocating me. I didn't realize the way my voice hitched, but it's not like it mattered since she was gushing the whole time. Sooner or later, I got over it. Sort of. Once Hannah broke the news to me, I realized that I had to get over it. Of course you never get over someone, but as long as Hannah was happy.

"Tris! You won't believe what just happened!" glee could be heard in Hannah's voice, even through the phone. I simply hum in response, eyes trained on my work. I'm not so sure what to expect from her, since there are a lot of things going on in her life. Before she starts talking, I get a text from Trey, mine and Hannah's best friend. As well as my crush, but we don't talk about that.

"Trey asked me out!" she squealed.

It takes a while for me to process this. But when I do, my pencil falls out of my hand, dropping onto my bed. My ears

start ringing, yet my mind is blank.

Hannah keeps talking but I'm spacing out, not knowing what to say. *It's not like I could just tell Hannah that I like her boyfriend. Instead of listening, my finger presses the red button as the words fall from my mouth.*

"I have to go, I'll call you back later." my head turns to look at the vase of roses yellow, white and pink. The roses Hannah and Trey got me when my mom passed away about six years ago. Though they're fake, I can still see the beauty of the roses. I remember the way I smiled slightly as I was given them. I recently looked up what the roses represented, but now I wish I hadn't. Now that what just happened and I know what they mean, it makes everything worse. My world gets blurry as the tears that were forming in my eyes, that I was not aware of, stream down my cheeks. I can't help but let my thoughts link to Chris. I grab my phone, searching for his name in my contacts. I finally find his name, hesitating to call him. But I pushed those thoughts aside and remember what he had told me.

"Don't be afraid to talk to me at anytime." his voice echoes through my mind. I press the call button on his contacts,

listening to the ringing that fills my ears. I get more and more anxious after each ring with no answer, hoping he would pick up.

"Hello?" Chris' voice is sweet like honey and soothes me, helping me calm down more.

"Chris-" I try to pull myself together, breathing to calm myself down, "Trey asked out Hannah and now they're dating and now-"

"Whoa. Calm down, take a breath, Tris." I nod, his reply helping me notice how my shoulders are up to my neck, I'm slowly breaking down within myself. I take a few deep breaths before I continue talking. The corners of my mouth curl up, making a smile. I'm happy that Chris is here to help me.

"Now that you're calmed down, what happened?" Chris whispered. His voice was calm and strong, matching the rest of him. I explain everything that happened. Every single detail.

He nods and hums at the same time.

We end up talking almost all night and I head to bed on a happy note. I don't know or understand **how**, but it's like my crush on Trey never occurred. Like I was

never hurt.

Nearly a month later, the three of us are together. We're sitting on the bench of a small park in the small neighborhood we live in. I take a glance at Hannah and Trey, their laughs filling my ears. It's been a while since we were together, but it feels like it was just yesterday. My thoughts go back to the roses on my desk, making me feel warm and happy inside. The roses are safely protected inside the white vase with small gold details all over it. I'm squished between the two of them my smile wrapping around my cheeks like how Trey's arm wraps around my shoulders. I can feel the weight of Hannah's hand in mine, keeping my skin warm. My figure is safe in Trey's embrace. We aren't dating and same with Hannah and Trey. We're back to where we began. Best friends. That's it. My life wasn't always as great as it is now. My mom passed away after my sister was born, leaving us with my dad. So many things were going on, making me busier by the second. Then I met Hannah and Trey. The two of them dragged me out of the darkest times of my life, shining a bright light on it. Now, here I am. And I would never change this.

Debate: Should IMMS students wear uniforms?

Yes

By Ava Van Houten

IMMS 8th Grade

Many schools across the world have uniforms, yet, there are still many that have yet to enforce them, or just haven't. Uniforms have a number of benefits to students, parents, and teachers, all of which are quite appealing to one's self. So, the real question is, why don't we have uniforms?

Among students at our school, having uniforms offers the chance to create a sense of equality among each other. It can break down barriers between peers, and has the ability to promote safety. All of these outcomes are good things for people, so why not enforce these positive aspects?

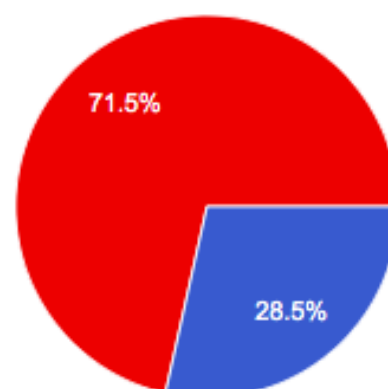
Not only can uniforms benefit students, but they can also benefit parents as well as teachers. If schools have uniforms, parents won't have to worry about possibly having to dress younger children, because every day their child, or children, have an outfit for them to wear already. It makes it easier in general to get ready for school in the morning. Teachers also wouldn't have to worry about possibly having to enforce a dress code.

Overall, uniforms are quite controversial. The survey of IMMS students clearly displays that uniforms are so, with one in four voting that our school should have them. So, why not enforce uniforms? This is a question I ask you all.

(The newspaper staff respects anyone's opinion on the matter, this article was written for the sake of an argument).

Do you think we should have uniforms at IMMS?

172 responses



● Yes
● No

As shown in the graphic results of a recent survey, at left, most students at IMMS think they should not have to wear uniforms.

No

By Ava Van Houten

IMMS 8th Grade

Uniforms being introduced to schools has steadily increased, but what good would they really do? First off, many students don't like the idea of uniforms, or the actual uniforms. By focusing on whether or not schools should even have them, school boards or committees are starting their attention away from problems that really matter, such as the general safety of students in the school building. Even the majority of a survey taken in our very school shows that many don't like uniforms.

One of the first things that come up when you think of school uniforms is the cost. Uniforms are usually expensive and can lead to financial struggles, and it limits the amount of money that students' parents have to spend on other things, such as vacations. When you're a parent and having to pay fees involving school already, the last thing you want to do is spend even more money on a uniform for your child, so why even have to do that?

Not only that, but the overall comfort of uniforms aren't exactly very comfy. Students end up sitting in the same building for around 7 hours, and one of the things that would make it much worse is

sitting in uncomfortable clothes while trying to focus on the current task on hand. Uniforms restrict students' sense of style, and they can make some feel even worse about themselves depending on the uniform itself. Studies also show that uniforms might even delay the transition into adulthood.

Overall, uniforms can be self-restricting, expensive, and flat out annoying. Therefore, it seems fair for us students to have freedom over what we wear to school each day.

(The newspaper staff respects anyone's opinion on the matter, this article was written for the sake of an argument).

IMMS Messenger contributors include:

Sofia Bexson, Ren Gletty-soyen, Steve Hoang, Veva Riddle, Ava Van Houten.

To participate, contact Adviser Ms. Ndlovu at NdlovuT@mcfsd.org.

The nightmare of Halloween in an ice storm

By Steve Hoang

IMMS 6th Grade

This year's treat-or-treat was one of the worst in the recent history of Halloween. It was snowing hard earlier in the day, and it was freezing! At first I personally wanted to go treat-or-treating;

but when I saw absolutely no one, I decided to change my plans. My brother who was shoveling the field in the high school saw only one trick-or-treater from there to my house. I've never seen such an appalling Halloween ever since I have been living. In my opinion they should have delayed and put it on Nov. 1.

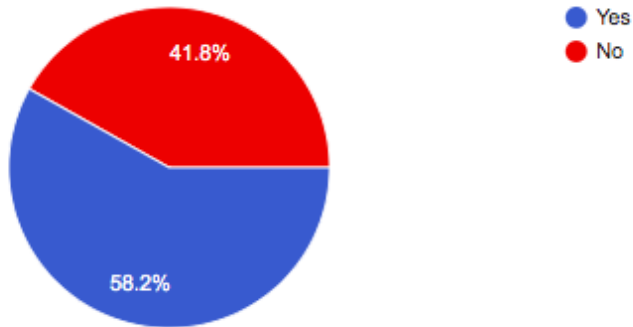
One girl from 8th grade said, "One lady gave me a handful because she said she wasn't getting many people."

Likely that was the only plus.

One problem with changing Halloween is keeping it on the traditional night. Another is sticking with other places, and not all states are freezing cold.

Have you performed at the new PAC?

184 responses



Have you attended a performance at the new PAC?

184 responses

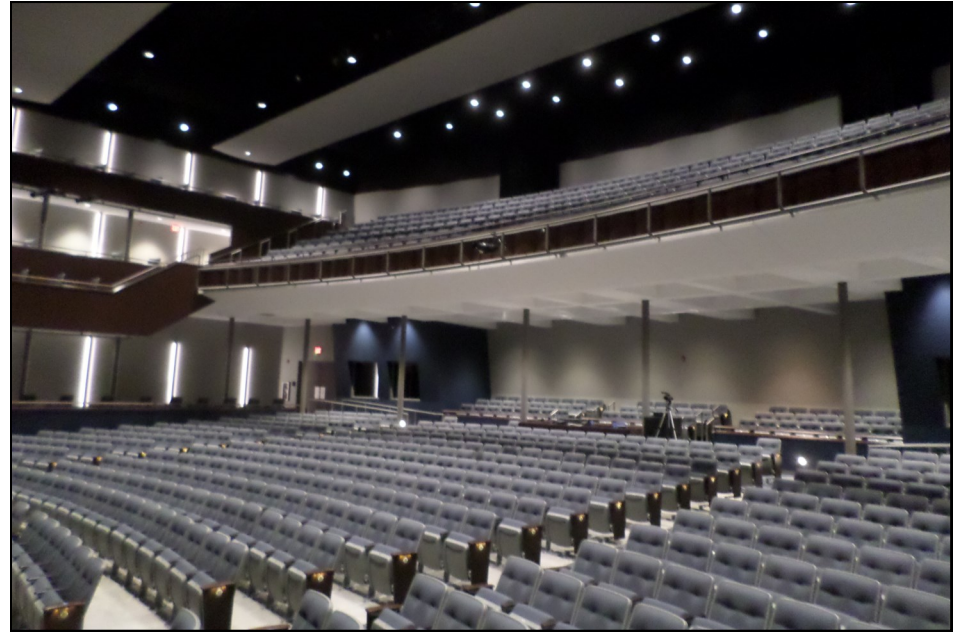
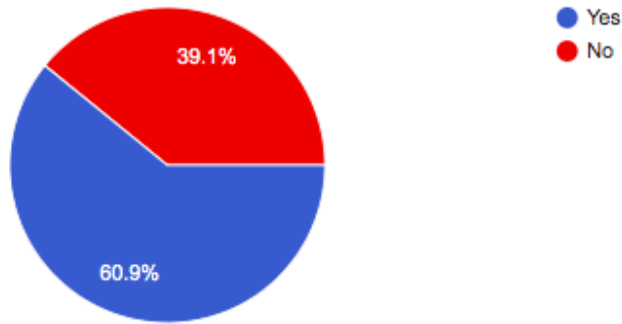


Photo by Sofia Bexson, grade 7

PAC criticisms are few

More than 50 percent of IMMS students and staff who responded in a recent survey said they had performed in the new Performing Arts Center, pictured above looking out from the edge of the stage.

One performer gushed about “how much fun it is to perform in there.”

The only comment that was on the negative side was, “The audience is too bright when you look out from the stage.”

Looking to the future, one said, “I love it!!!!!! We should make sure to keep it clean and new.”

Ceiling darts

In an effort to build empathy, respect and responsibility, IMMS staff have been rewarding clean classes and addressing problems, such as the dart at right, with lessons.

Photo by Sofia Bexson



Open Mic event joins Family Fun Night lineup

By Steve Hoang

IMMS 6th Grade

Mrs. Zamastil will be hosting an Open Mic event during Family Fun Night, Wednesday, Feb. 12. I asked her why she came up with the idea, and her response was, “I did it because I did it in the schools I taught in before and I

thought it would be a fun idea that we do it this year.”

She also said, “Mr. Tarnutzer and I thought that if we did it, we could provide a way for the students to express themselves, and show their writing, projects, and singing.”

Students and staff can sign up through Tuesday, Feb. 11.

Other events in the works for Family Fun Night include: Valentine cuttings/drawings, escape rooms, Henna tattoos, puzzles, food, games, and more.

Clubs involved include the Alliance of Allies, Student Council, GSA, Art Club, Ambassadors, and Robotics. Individual teachers, the public library and MYC also are planning activities.

Hurricane: A short story

By Jack Jordan

IMMS 7th Grade

It feels so odd. The dry and bitter-sweet smell of a fall breeze. The brewing scent of snow, unrelenting. Leaves losing their green. Just like my sister. My sister moved in. Not to my house, but to my parents'. I am only a middle schooler, so I cannot own a house. Though, I wish I could, just so I could give it to my sister.

The flimsy cardboard box in my hands feels empty. The rough, cold surface feels painful on my hands. This is my sister's box. I'm helping her bring her things inside. Or at least, I am trying to.

“Hey, I can take these boxes. Go inside. It's starting to get cold outside” she says this to me, with finality. But it is not cold outside at all. It's an excuse. She just doesn't want my help. Or anyone's help, for that matter.

“But...” I begin to say. But, I stop.

Her upside-down lips, curved at the edges, spread thin, tells me everything I need to know. I realize that her face is more wrinkled than it used to be. It must have been all the sun.

I retreat up the dusty steps, covered in dead leaves and residue of rainwater.

She calls out to me, “If I need help, I'll ask for it. But right now, I need to be alone.” She turns her back to me.

It pains me. That she won't let me help her.

She drops a box. It stays on the ground, deteriorating slowly. There wasn't anything in it. So why did she have it? How do you fix an old wet cardboard box? Is it even possible? And if so... could I do it?

My sister is almost done unpacking. Unpacking the few personal items she still owned. It's only been an hour. It's

not like she didn't have enough money to buy a house. It's just that... she lost most of it. Along with her house. It's not her fault that she lost it.

She stares at me. “It's too cold here.” She rubs her hands together. “It makes my nose feel numb.” She states this as a fact, as she shivers.

I just laugh. “What? It's freezing! It's only fall!! How can you take all this cold?” It is hard to remember her living in this house. In this climate. “Technically, it isn't freezing. 47 degrees Fahrenheit isn't that cold. But... it is supposed to snow soon.”

She stiffens. She still misses the climate that she used to live in. How ironic. She sighs. I don't know why. Because of the weather, or exhaustion? Or... maybe both?

As I pull my blankets up to my chin in bed, I feel tired. The whole day, I've barely spoken to her. Or should say, she has barely spoken to me. I have so much to think about. My tired mind, still hungry, is glad. More for it to chew on. It will have to decide what to do: take action or eat more.

I hear the mindless beeping of cars outside my window. An uncommon sound. I hear the rustling of oak trees that makes me feel hollow inside. It is raining. Drizzle is coming through my open window. I used to like rain. Not after what happened to my sister.

Well, now my brain has decided. I will take action. I feel energized. I bolt out of bed and grab a piece of paper, then an old pencil. I plan, my ideas flowing through my pencil just like rain from the sky. I don't have a house or money to give her, but I do have support. Specifically, emotional support. As I plan, I realize that there was never going to be snow.

The rain sprinkling my head makes my hair wet and cold. I expected snow. But it rained.

My sister never got snow at her old house, the house she cannot live in now. The climate was too hot there. My sister is like snow.

I stop writing, both because I finished my plan, and... Well, I'm not really sure what the second reason is. But there *is* one.

I wake up to beams of sun, cutting across my face. I can still hear the rattling of the oaks, but I don't feel hollow. Not anymore. I don't know why that changed. My hand hurts.

I roll out of bed, just like an old house cat. My floor is dusty and has been ever since my sister moved in.

I wake up early for Saturday. Yawning, I stumble into the bathroom to brush my teeth, wash my face, etc. Then, I bounce into the kitchen, hoping that SHE isn't there.

Nope, she is. She is silent. Her hair is a messy tangle, and her eyes look dry. She has a cup of orange juice in her hands.

How could I carry out my plan? It is supposed to be a surprise!

I'll just have to wait. I walk into the hallway, illuminated by bright early morning light. I stand, silent, listening for the creak of a chair, or her footsteps. Finally, I hear her feet slapping the fake-wood tile like a duck, and then the creak of the front door.

I run to the refrigerator, then the pantry, gathering supplies. Then, I bake. I stir the batter until my arms feel raw. I hear someone walking up behind me. I jump. It is just my dad. Relief.

“G'morning” he says cheerfully. “I'm going to the store. Do you need any-

thing?”

I think about it for a second. “Nope.”

“Okay, then. Don't burn the house down while I'm gone,” he says as he steps out the front door.

It is funny, in a sick way. But, we cannot afford to lose another house, in the most literal sense. Not to fire, or anything else. Especially not the weather. Not again. I turn and wave to him. “Bye!” I call out. The door closes, and I continue baking.

The next day, I give her the cake. I have to say, I've got some great baking skills.

She folds her arms. That is something I've noticed her doing lately. “What's this for?” she asks, frowning. But, she's not angry. You can tell with my sister if she is angry simply by the tone of her voice.

“I don't know. I guess... You need it.” I answer.

She lets her arms unfold. Her lips slowly start to curve upward. Finally, she is starting to feel less like snow. More like... rain. Still unpredictable. But, more pleasant. At least she is not a hurricane, right?

It's been a few months. Maybe about 4 since she moved in. She still lives with us, but she has recovered fast. Recovered from losing her house, and most of her money. And I couldn't do a single thing about that. But she is almost ready to buy an apartment.

This is a happy ending, right?

Not exactly. She has recovered, but a gap remains between us. Although not a canyon anymore, there's still a tiny ravine separating us. It constantly fills with rain, eroding its edges. But, because of some other unseen, unknown force, the gap is not getting any bigger. It is getting smaller. At this point, that is unchangeable.