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Tutorial: Meelap Shah

HW2: Heuristic Evaluation

Collaboration

I discussed this assignment with nobody.

Introduction

The below are fifteen comments on the Household Dashboard design at <http://web.mit.edu/lucid/www/hobag/index.html> as of April 19, 2013 at 6:30 PM.

Each comment has 3 sections:

- a. describes the problem or positive feature, using screenshots
- b. identifies the relevant usability heuristics
- c. estimate its severity

Enjoy, and have fun!

Comments

1.

a. Feature

The home page does not have any helpful information upon starting about what to do. There is no “help” link, no question mark icon, no tooltips, no popup, no tutorial, nothing. This makes it confusing as to what the point of this interface and tool is for. The “Enter Task Name” hint is helpful, but by itself does not provide enough information.



b. Heuristic

The relevant heuristic is “help & documentation” of the Nielsen Heuristics. The problem is that there is no help or documentation.

c. Severity

Major severity/

There is little help or documentation, leaving the user confused.

2.

a. Feature

The home page tries to be skeuomorphic by looking like a corkboard with postits and push pins on it. The problem is that this design ends not adding much to the usability of this interface. While the design is minimalistic, it is low in aesthetics and can appear tacky. This prototype should be high fidelity in look, but as it is the design is not appealing.



b. Heuristic

The relevant heuristics are “match the real world” and “aesthetic and minimalist design” of the Nielsen Heuristics.

c. Severity

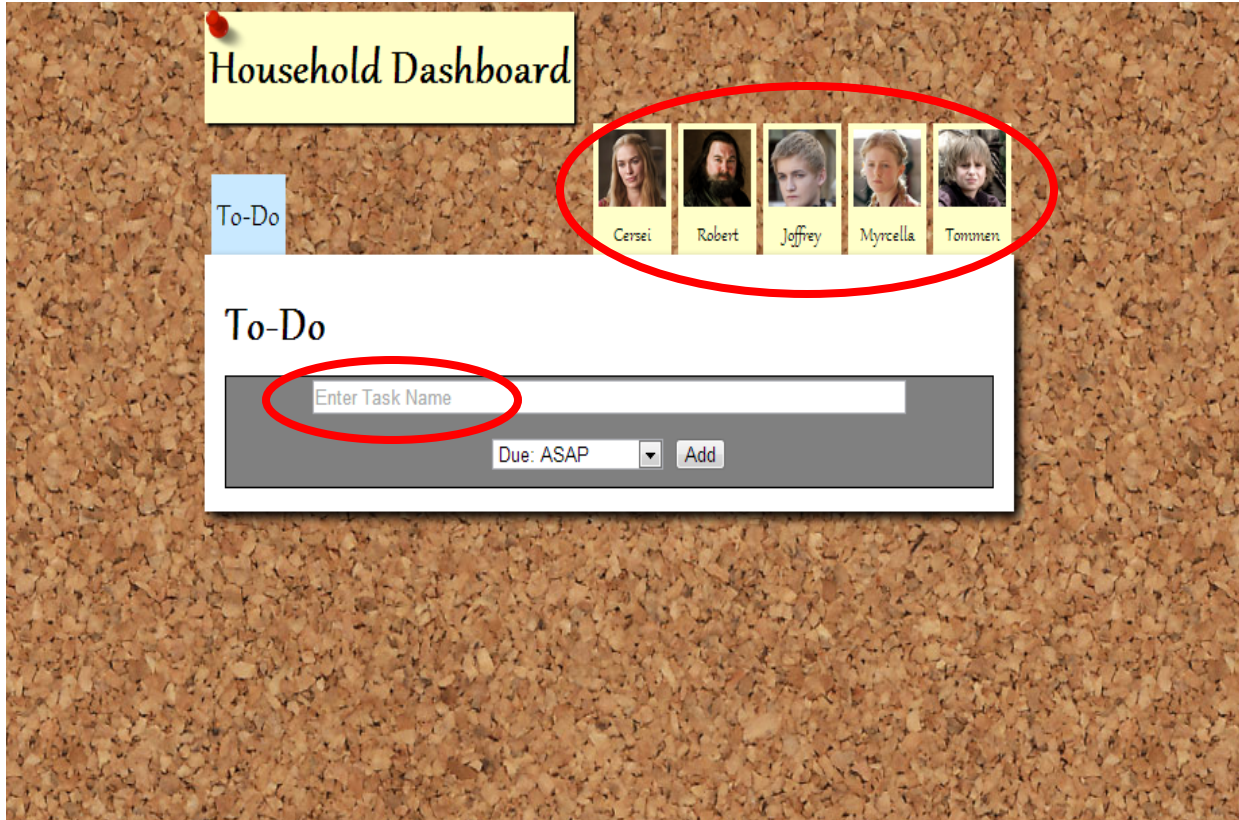
Cosmetic severity

The skeumorphic design does not add to the usability, but does not take away too much either.

3.

a. Feature

The actual layout of the homepage is good. The number of elements is minimalistic but each of them still provide useful information to the user. For example, all of the tabs are labeled and all off the family members have pictures for quick identification. The “Enter Task Name” hint helps the user understand the point of the text box and what action to take.



b. Heuristic

The relevant heuristic are “recognition, not recall” and “aesthetic and minimalist design” of the Nielsen Heuristics.

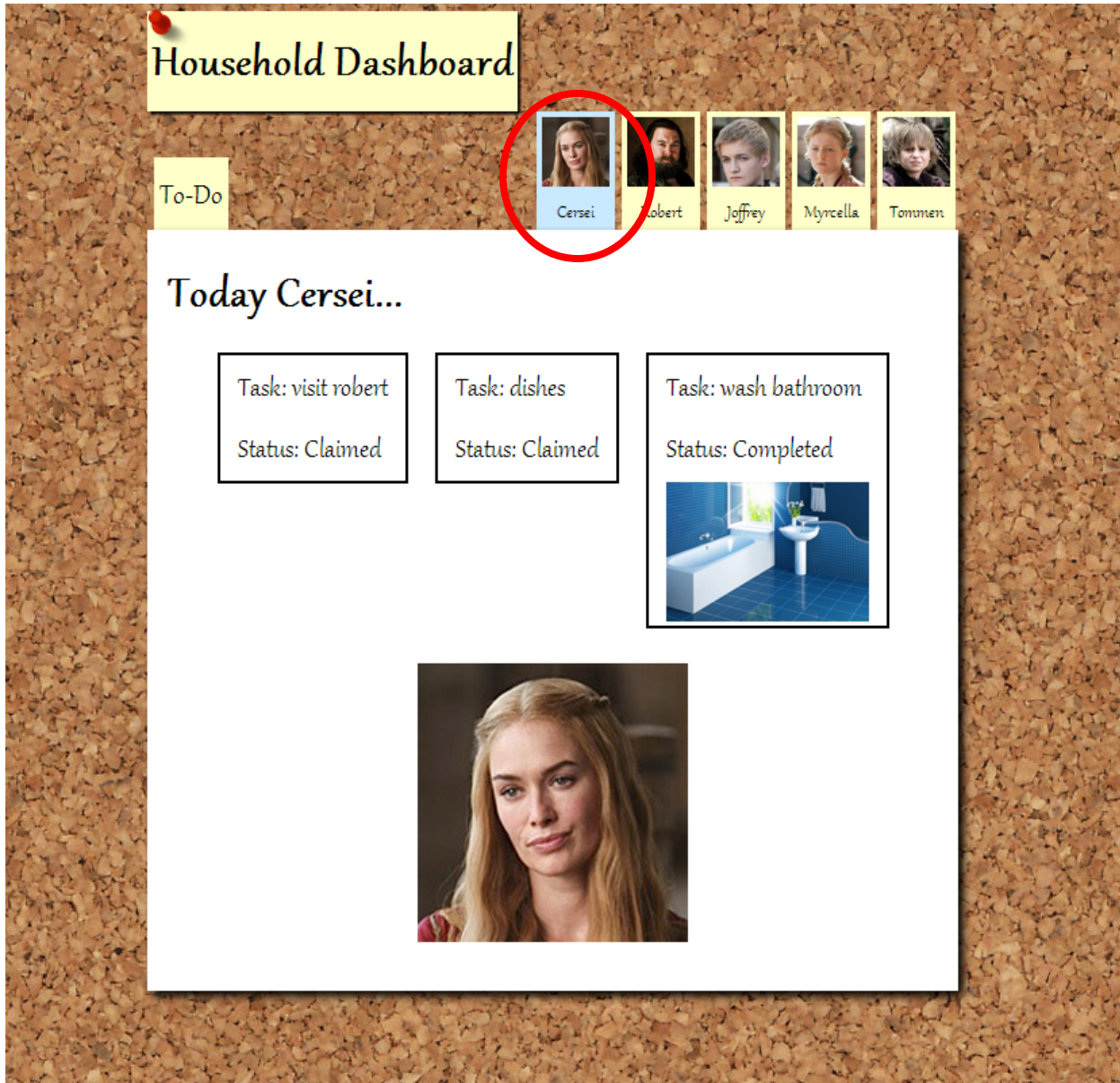
c. Severity

Good.

4.

a. Feature

The blue tab on the top bar indicates which page the user is on (for example To-Do or Cersei). This is a useful hint, in addition to the “Today Cersei...” header, to help the user understand where he is. The blue tab follows the user, providing a level of security and safety.



b. Heuristic

The relevant heuristic are "consistency and standards" and "visibility of system status" of the Nielsen Heuristics.

The blue tab appears consistently among all pages.

The blue tab shows what page the user is on.

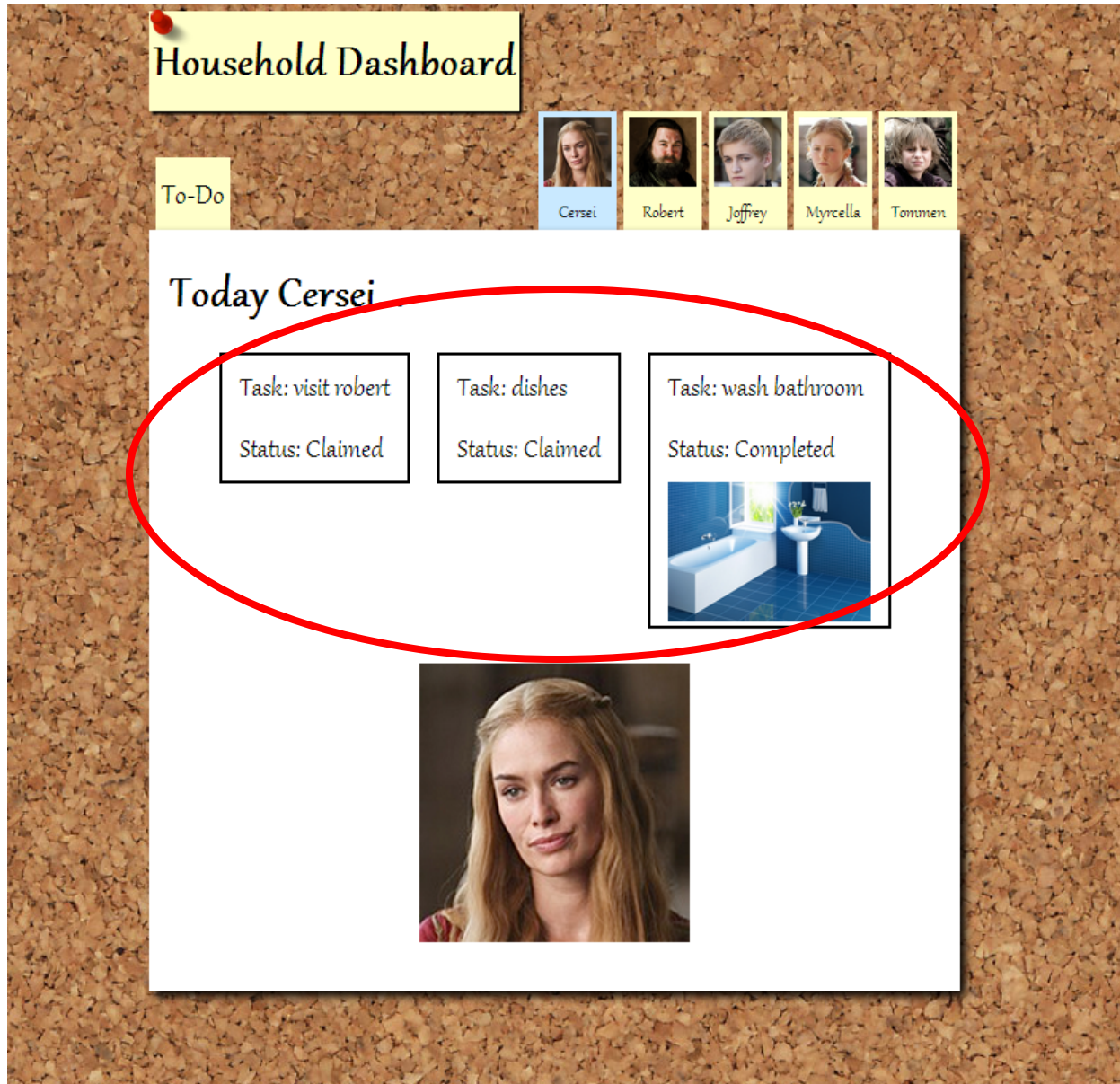
c. Severity

Good.

5.

a. Feature

The third box in the “Cersei page” shows a picture of the bathroom completed. Why is this the only one with a picture? Are pictures taken and uploaded after a task to indicate that the family member actually did the task? What about pictures before the task? Are pictures optional? Are pictures stock photos to help represent the task or actual photos by family members?



b. Heuristic

The relevant heuristic is “consistency and standards” of the Nielsen Heuristics. It’s unclear what the photos are for and when they’re used.

c. Severity

Minor severity.

The user may be confused about the photos, but it shouldn't impair task completion ability.

6.

a. Feature

On each profile, the header says "Today Robert...", but what if a user wants to see things that a family member did before today? For example, the user might want to see who did the most activities over the entire week. Or, at 12:01 AM, a user might want to see the activities for the past 24 hours, instead of "today" which is 1 minute long. It would be useful to display activities in variable time ranges. It would also be useful to sort activities by other metrics, such as category or tags.



b. Heuristic

The relevant heuristic is "flexibility and efficiency" of the Nielsen Heuristics.

The problem is that there is no flexibility in the information displayed for each family member.

c. Severity

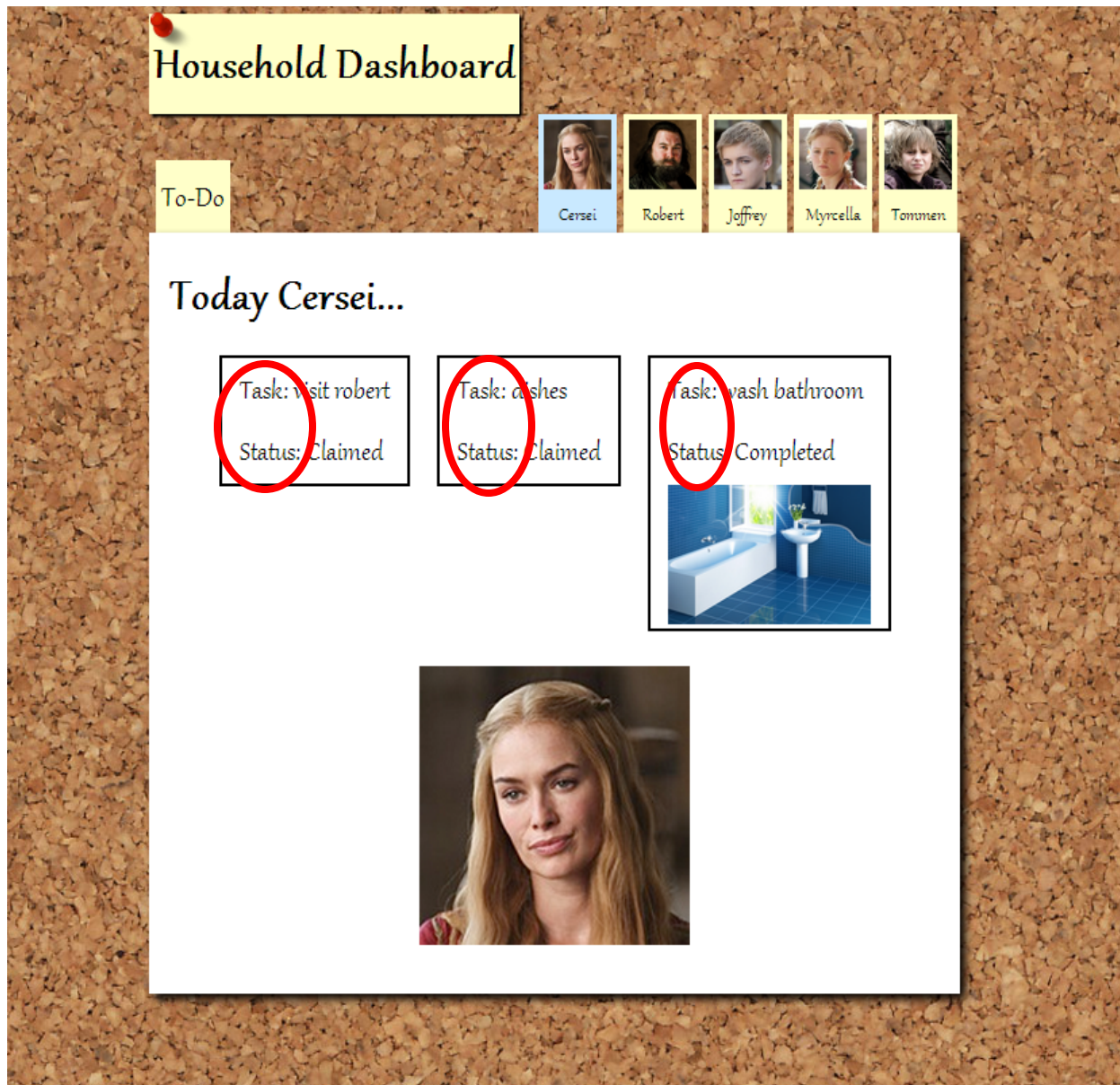
Major severity

The dashboard is still useable, but this problem limits the possible applications.

7.

a. Feature

The profile of a page lists the tasks the user has completed in distinct boxes. These boxes have sections lead by "Task:" and "Status:" These leads help the user recognize what the task and status are, respectively. This helpful feature could be improved by giving extra weight to the leads, such as bolding or font size increase.



b. Heuristic

The relevant heuristic is “recognition, not recall” of the Nielsen Heuristics.
Give greater weight to the leading labels.

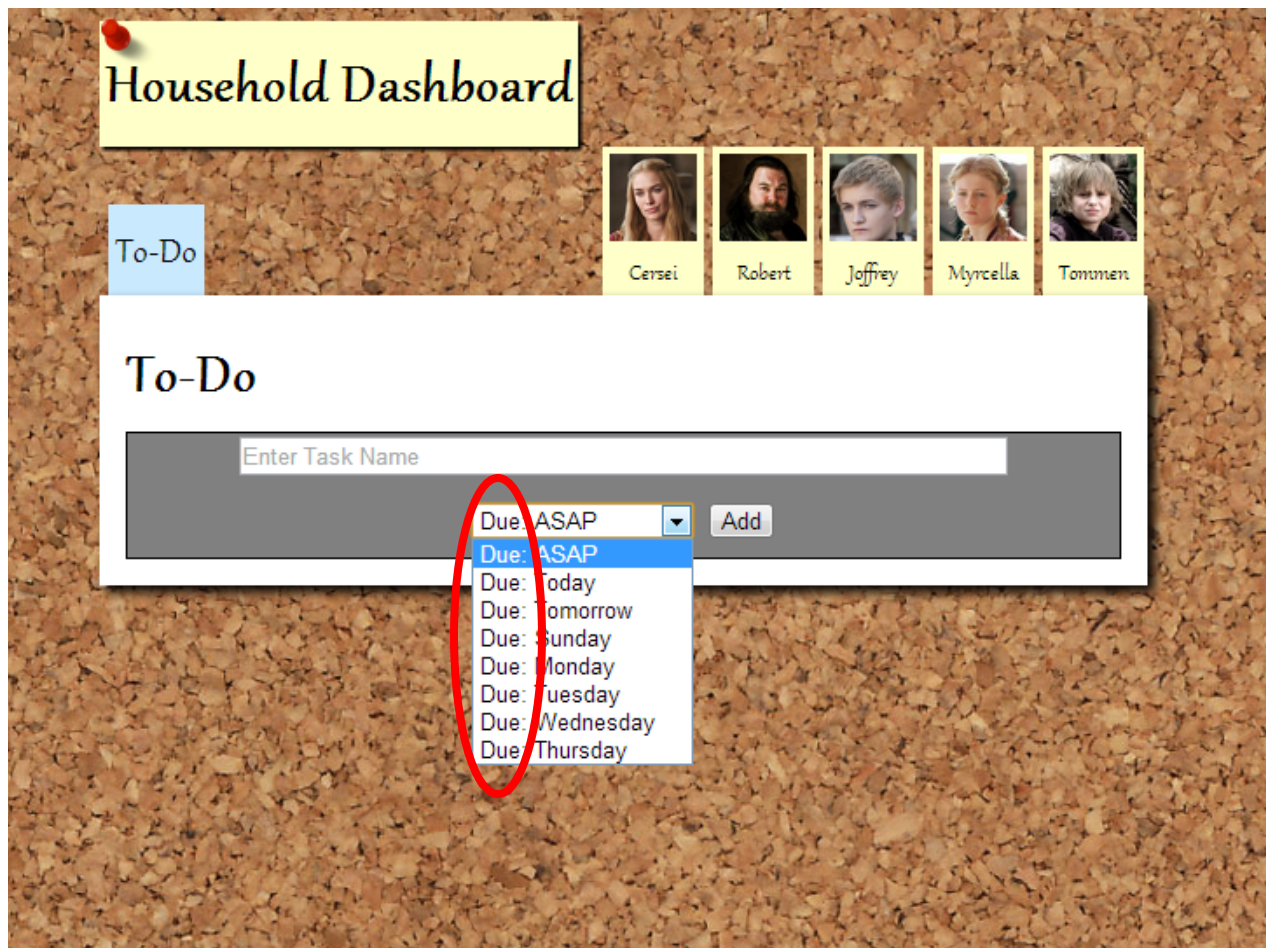
c. Severity

Cosmetic severity.

8.

a. Feature

The dropdown menu here is for selection of when the task is due. The “Due: “ at the beginning of each label is useful for recognition, but having it prepended to each label is overkill. I recommend moving the “Due: “ to before the dropdown menu.



b. Heuristic

The relevant heuristic is “recognition, not recall” of the Nielsen Heuristics.

c. Severity

Cosmetic severity.

9.

a. Feature:

When the browser's height is too small (i.e. too short), the popup box to assign a family member to a task is cut off, removing the user's ability to cancel or choose another button. The positioning and re-positioning of the popup is non-optimal, as the second screenshot shows that there is plenty of space above the popup box for repositioning.

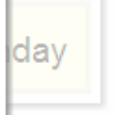
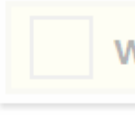
Furthermore, the user can't cancel the dialogue and, if his monitor isn't large enough, will be forced to refresh the page. I recommend either adding a "x" close button on a top corner and/or allow the user to close the popup box by clicking outside of the box. Another option is to not use a popup box at all, which appears tacky and obtrusive. Perhaps clicking on a task can expand the rectangle into the options listed in the current popup box.

Household Dashboard

To-Do



To-Do



wash dishes



Select Family Member



Cancel

I'm Working On It!

I'm Finished!



b. Heuristic

The relevant heuristic are "flexibility and efficiency" of the Nielsen Heuristics.

c. Severity

Major severity

The positioning of the boxes can be a major detractor for users with small screen sizes.

10.

a. Feature

The black rectangle of the popup is taller than the gray rectangle and goes outside of the white border.

Also, the white border needs to be taller on the bottom, for the black border to fit flush against the gray rectangle.



b. Heuristic

The relevant heuristic is “aesthetic and minimalist design” of the Nielsen Heuristics.

c. Severity

Cosmetic severity

It works, but it’s messy. The gray background is also uninspiring. Consider choosing a background to match your skeumorphic design. You can also pick another background (maybe from [http://subtlepatterns.com/!](http://subtlepatterns.com/)) though this would look best with an overall re-design.

11.

a. Feature

“I’m Working On It!” and “I’m Finished!” buttons imply that the user is selecting himself as the person being assigned to the task. However, it’s possible that the user wants to select another family member, such as a mom assigning a child a task, and is implied by the “Select Family Member” text.

Either the button text should be changed, or the user should only be allowed to select him or herself. Note that the latter would need some identification method for accurate use.



b. Heuristic

The relevant heuristic are “user control and freedom” and “consistency and standards” of the Nielsen Heuristics.

c. Severity

Cosmetic severity

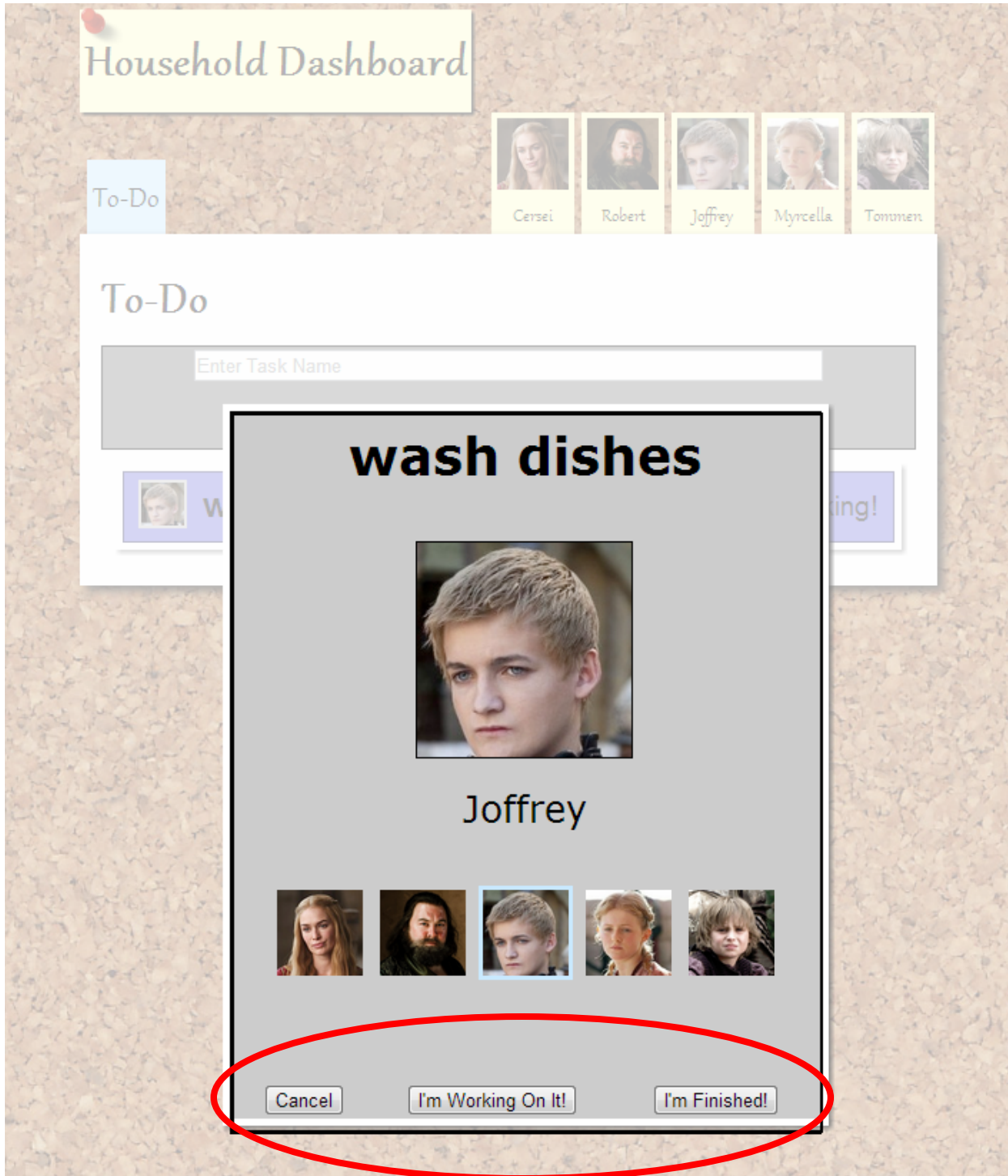
Useable, but confusing and longer learning time.

12.

a. Feature

After you assign a family member to a task, there is no way to change the task to “unassigned”.

The only option is to change it to another family member or change it to finished. It’s possible that a user accidentally assigns himself to a task and wants to remove himself.



b. Heuristic

The relevant heuristic are "error prevention" and "flexibility and efficiency" of the Nielsen Heuristics.

c. Severity

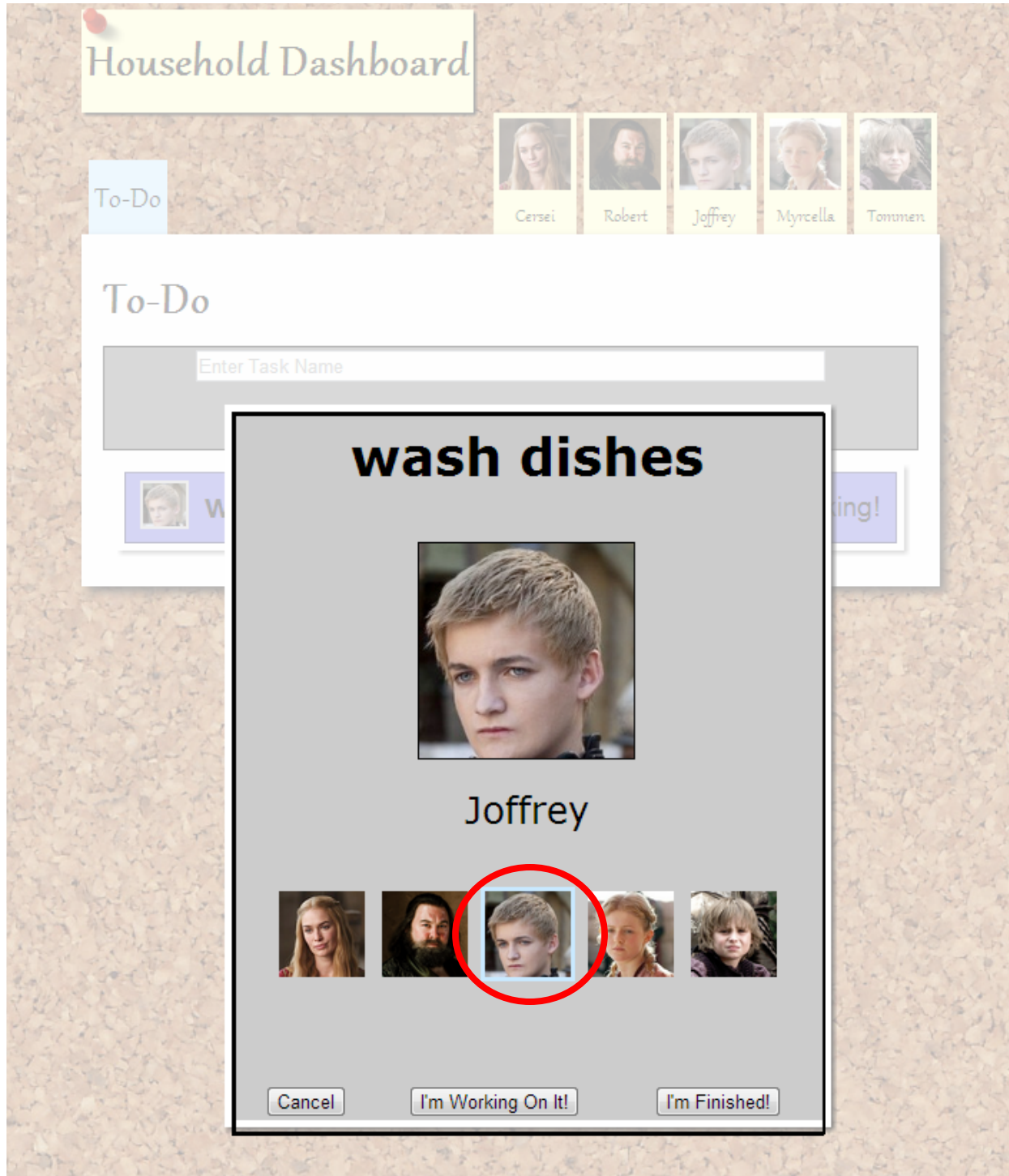
Major severity

Basic feature that's missing.

13.

a. Feature

The light blue border around the active selection is hard to see on the light gray background.



b. Heuristic

The relevant heuristic are “visibility of system status” and “aesthetic and minimalist design” of the Nielsen Heuristics.

c. Severity

Cosmetic severity

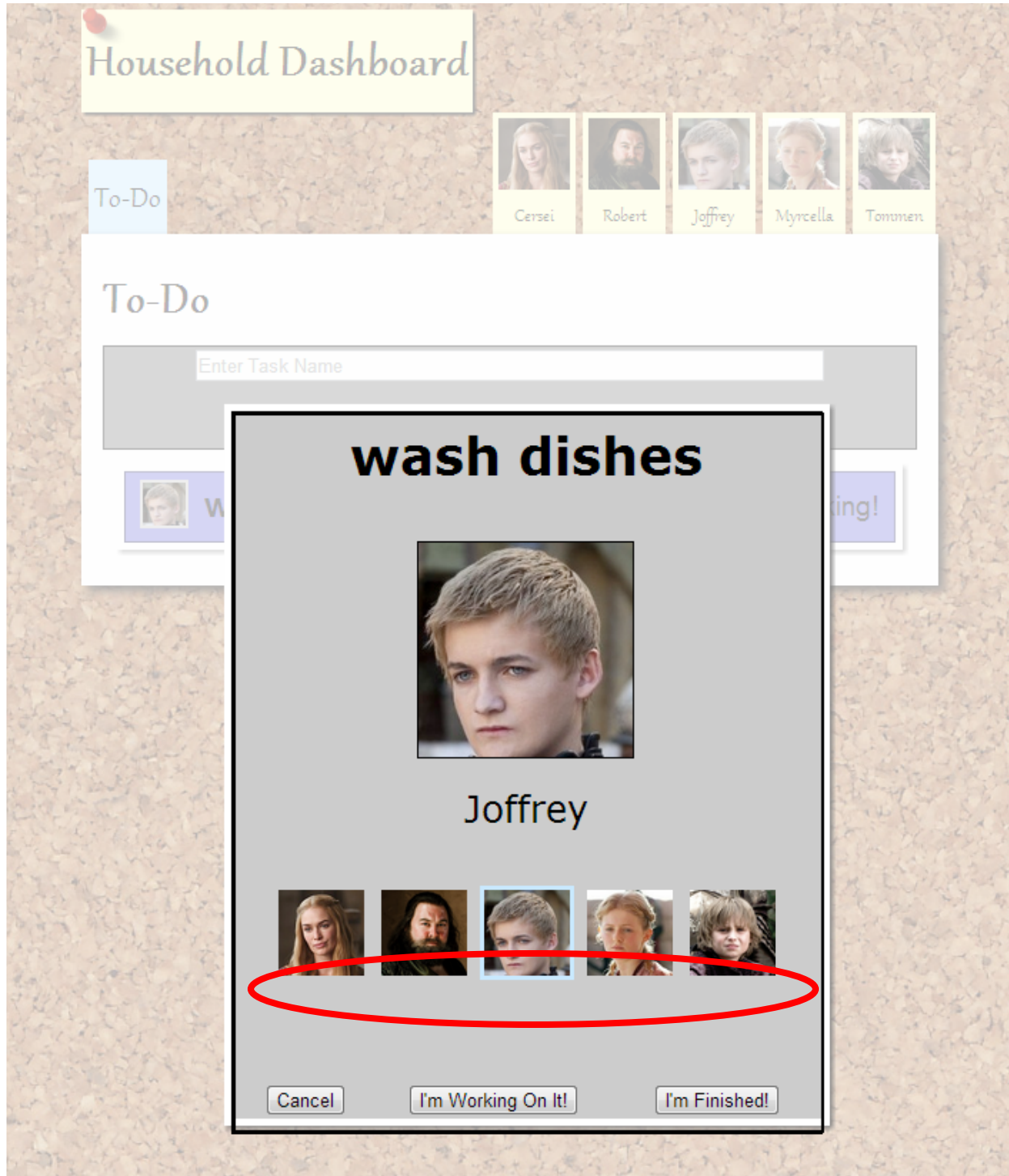
Useable due to the large picture and name above the family selection, but the blue border can be easily missed.

14.

a. Feature

There are no names underneath the portraits of the user, unlike the header bar with photos and names on the main page.

This makes it harder to select the appropriate family member, especially for new or temporary users, such as baby-sitters. It also may make it harder for screen readers to read the right name, and relies on the images having informative meta text.



b. Heuristic

The relevant heuristic is “consistency and standards”, “flexibility and efficiency”, “recognition, not recall”, and of the Nielsen Heuristics.

c. Severity

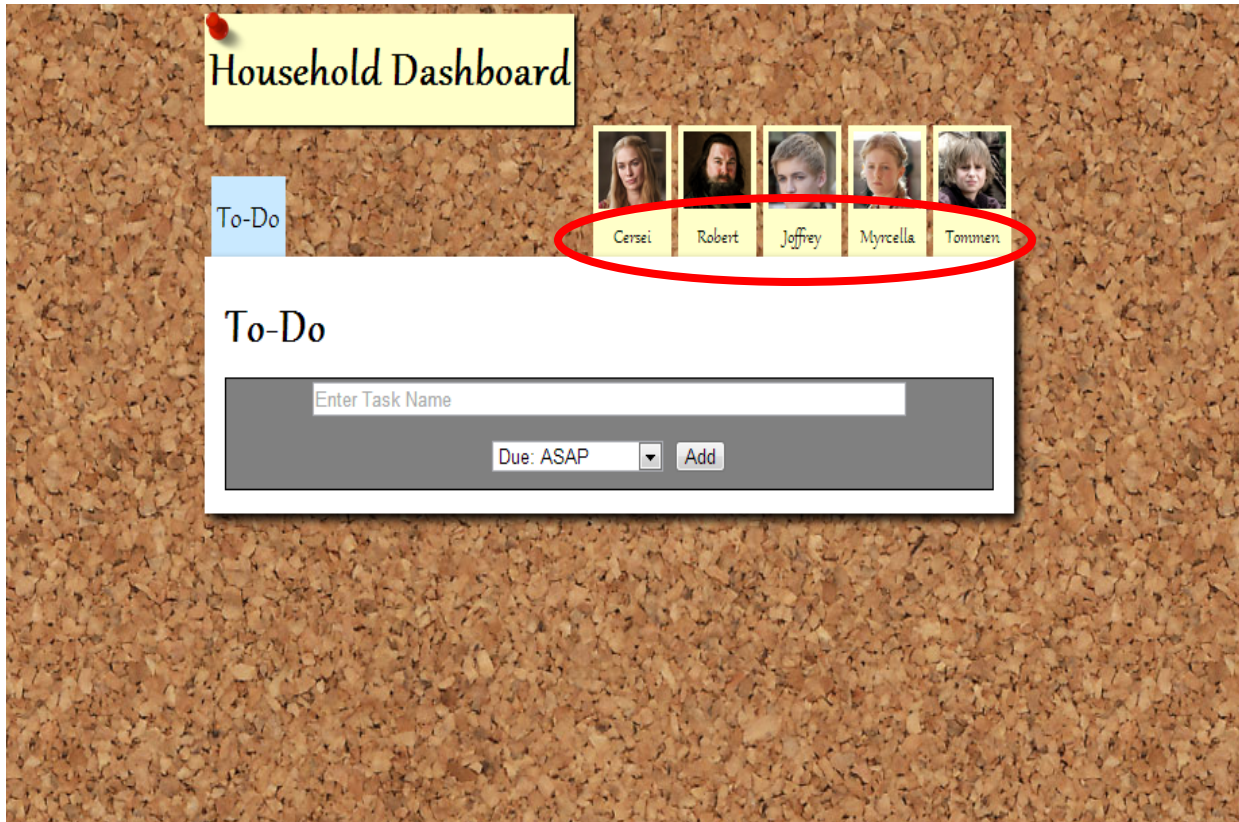
Minor severity.

The selection is useable and even intuitive to an extent, but can cause a steep learning curve, especially for new users.

15.

a. Feature

The text for the family members is hard to read when the font size is small. The font choice is readable for titles, but I recommend a more standard font for small text, such as Arial.



b. Heuristic

The relevant heuristic is “flexibility and efficiency”, “recognition, not recall”, “consistency and standards”, and “aesthetic and minimalist design” of the Nielsen Heuristics.

c. Severity

Minor severity.

Usable, but can be hard to use, decreasing efficiency and safety.

16. (congrats! you get a bonus problem)

Consider separating your main javascript from your HTML. This, along with separating CSS, helps modularize your content, presentation and behavior. Runtime shouldn't be a problem at this point.

