Dear Readers,

With the new year in full swing, here is the long awaited second issue of Crosscurrents! On behalf of the Crosscurrents team, I hope this issue finds you both healthy and happy as 2015 continues to bring on new opportunities and excitement.

Inside you’ll find fun recipes to keep you warm this winter season, interesting opinion pieces, updates on the successes of Holy Cross athletic teams, news, and much more. Be sure to fill out the trivia, read up on the achievements of multiple teachers, and learn more about what’s going on close to home and around the world. Please take a look at the articles that follow, and enjoy!

Katherine Precourt
Content Editor

An Attack on Free Speech

Charlie Hebdo, a prominent satirical French newspaper, recently published a weekly issue depicting the prophet Muhammad. Famously known for its secular and often offensive portrayals of religion and politics, the magazine upholds its right to the freedom of speech. Although representations of Muhammad and other religious figures are forbidden in mosques, this rule does not extend to depictions of Muhammad outside Muslim religious gatherings. Contrary to popular belief, many Muslim cultures, in particular the Shiites, support and enjoy images that include Muhammad, which can be found in museums and books across the world. However the fear of portraying the prophet is kept alive by religious illiteracy and Saudi Arabian extremist views on the subject.

Charlie Hebdo’s publication spurred a terror attack that shook France to its core, taking the lives of 11 Charlie Hebdo staff and one police officer and injuring 11 others. Brothers Chérif and Saïd Kouachi, who allegedly claimed to have been sent by an Al-Qaeda group in Yemen, broke into the offices, disturbed a meeting and shot the editor and cartoonist Stephane Charbonier and others in what they considered “revenge for the honour” of Muhammad.

The magazine has been targeted before, falling victim to firebombing in 2011 for its racist and insulting content. Although this does not give the assassins the right to attack Charlie Hebdo, it certainly provides fuel to the growing religious extremism fire. Hussein Rashid, religion professor at Hofstra University states. He continues by saying that violence is not the typical Muslim reaction to insulting portrayals of Muhammad. Most would try to find a “way to honor” the prophet in the face of the offensive interpretations, but the attackers used it as motive to terrorize the magazine and stir up fear in other publishing companies who support free speech.

Early Friday morning after a manhunt that spanned the days following the attack, the two brothers were found in a printing shop not far from Dammartin-en-Goele. The assassins were forced onto the roof that afternoon, where they were shot and killed. Meanwhile, armed police forces raided the kosher deli that Amedy Coulibaly occupied, the suspect for the murder of a policeman on Thursday and later 4 hostages from the store that day, releasing the other hostages and killing Coulibaly. The brothers and Coulibaly were allegedly working together to terrorize supporters of free speech and spread extremist anti-Semitic views.

A moment of silence was held in Paris with thousands of others gathered around the world to mourn the tragedy that took place in France on Wednesday, January 7, 2015.

People joined together in solidarity, armed with slogans such as “Je Suis Charlie” and “Vive La France” trending on twitter, published in newspapers and shared among mourners as a symbol for the tragic terror attack on France’s Charlie Hebdo and the support of free speech. An attendee at Place de la Republique minute of silence commented “They’ve killed 12, people… but they haven’t killed the French soul or the French people”. President Hollande remarked in a recent speech that “[t]hose who committed these acts have nothing to do with the Muslim religion”, and supported “[u]ni[ty]…[as] our best weapon”.

Why Republicans Won the Midterms and What It All Means

As anticipated, Republicans made a sweeping victory in the 2014 midterms, with a net gain of nine seats in the Senate (including Bill Cassidy’s defeat of Mary Landrieu in Louisiana’s runoff election) and thirteen in the House. They also gained in gubernatorial races; our blue state of Maryland will have Larry Hogan as her governor. This victory, which means that bills will make it to President Obama’s desk, can be attributed mainly to disapproval of Obama, but also to the stagnation of the economy, low voter turnout for the Democrats, and the failure of the “War on Women” argument.

Obama entered the oval office riding on a wave of hope, and due to his failure to reach America’s expectations, especially economic expectations, his party suffered in the midterms. According to Real Clear Politics, Obama’s approval rating is at 42%, and according to ABC News, only 27% of Americans believe the country is headed in the right direction. In 2009, when Obama took office, Gallup Polls reported that slightly over 10% percent of Americans believed the country was headed in the right direction. This number spiked to 36% percent shortly after.

continued on page 2

Do Video Games Encourage Sexism and Violence?

Pros and Cons

What's Inside

Tributes to Dominik Pettey

Into the Woods: Pros and Cons

Julia Urban ’17

Joni Ernst

From left to right: Joni Ernst and Mia Love

Short Story: Table for Two

PAGE 3

PAGE 4

PAGE 6

PAGE 8
but sunk back to 21% and stayed relatively constant there. As with President Bush, Obama could not assure Americans that he had the country on the road to improvement. Issues such as the failed rollout of the Affordable Care Act (ACA), and the way it was pushed past Congress did not help, either. Hearing Obama say “If you like your health care plan, you’ll be able to keep your health care plan, period” just before cancellations due to the ACA further pushed distrust in his administration. His handling of foreign policy, especially with the Islamic State and Russia, also did not impress voters.

However, the economy under Obama played arguably the largest part in the Republican victory. 92% of potential voters found the economy “extremely” or “very” important to them personally, and in exit polls by ABC news, about 70% of Americans believed the nation’s economy was getting worse or staying the same. The perception of a poor economy swayed voters away from Obama, and in turn, away from Democrats. For example, the amount of self-identified “moderate” voters who vote Democrat dropped 7% since 2008.

The Democrats’ loss could also be a result of a lower voter turnout. This turnout could be due to lack of confidence in the Democrat party, or because Republicans managed to connect with their potential supporters in a way that only Democrats have exceed- ed in for the last decade. Whatever the case, Repub- licans should not take their victory as a “go-ahead” by the American people to push ultra-conservative legislation. As in any wave election, the results are largely a rejection of the incumbent party, not neces- sarily an approval of the victorious party’s ideology.

One of the problems voters often find with this Republican ideology is its stance on women’s issues. However, in these last midterms, Republicans were not affected by the so-called “War on Women” argu- ment against them. In previous elections, the War on Women argument succeeded in encouraging young women to vote as a Democrat, emphasizing issues such as abortion and birth control. Every insensi- tive comment by a Republican, such as Todd Akin or Richard Mourdock (who made some extremely inappropriate comments about the situation of rape), was used to label the entire party as anti-woman. However, in these last midterms, Republicans kept away from gender politics, and focused on other issues that needed more attention. It seemed that Democrats bungled more with insensitive comments this time around, from Virginia’s John Foust implying that a woman’s motherhood is not a “real job” in order to ridicule his opponent, to South Carolina’s Vincent Shehee calling opponent Nikki Haley a “whore out the door”. Republicans also had strong female candidates, such as Mia Love, the Republican’s first female African American elected to Congress, and Iowa’s Senator-elect, Joni Ernst. Caitlin Huey-Burns from Real Clear Politics commented, when featured on Fox’s Female Power panel, “This was a big year for Republicans in terms of women candidates, but also for the group.” Also on the panel was Francesca Chambers of mailonline.com, who applauded Ernst, since “she didn’t run on women’s issues or anything like that, she ran on her strong record of military service.” Ernst can be quoted saying, “I didn’t want to hear about thephony War on Women, because I am a woman, and second, I have been to war, and this is not a war. Anytime the Democrats use that word, they should be doing it to honor our servicemen and women.” Such strong Republican candidates, coupled with insensitive marks by Democrat candidates, did not help the War on Women narrative. This narrative appeals only to a “slice” of female voters, anyway, as Amy Holmes, host of The Blaze, put it, since married women typically vote Republican. Nonetheless, Democrat candidates for the Senate, such as Colorado’s Mark Udall, still attempted to argue the case that Repub- licans are misogynists, even saying that they would make condoms difficult to buy, and he lost the same outcome greeted Wendy Davis, who ran as governor of Texas after filibustering for abortion. The War on Women narrative will almost definitely return for the 2016 elections, but Republicans have succeeded in maneuvering around it for now.

With a Congress that is no longer gridlocked, bills will end up on Obama’s desk, and he may have to break his record of only vetoing two bills. Up until the election, Obama justified his use of executive orders by claiming that Republicans are unwilling to compromise, and are therefore making the govern- ment unproductive. However, the tides have turned, and Obama will be even further challenged now that he no longer has former Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid to protect him from facing bills. Repub- licans could bungle everything for themselves, also, if they become overzealous with their victory and pass legislature deemed too partisan. However, due to Obama’s perceived underperformance as president, especially in economics, America has allowed the GOP to dominate both the Senate and the House, and has given Republicans a shot.

Honoring Our Veterans: Mr. Bascom

Margaret Mar’16

On the 11th hour of the 11th day of the 11th month in 1918, World War hostilities officially ceased. The United States originally revered this day as Armistice Day, but new ideas evolved which led to the development of Veterans Day in 1954. It is a feder- al holiday and celebrates the service of all military veterans, living and dead. There are currently 20 mil- lion veterans in the United States, 7 million of whom served in Vietnam. Last November, Holy Cross held a school assembly to commemorate the staff that are veterans and the school families with veterans. Staff that served in the military include Mr. Bascom, Mr. Kinney, Mr. Cercena, and Mr. Todd. I had the chance to interview Mr. Bascom about his service.

How long did you serve in the military and what was your role?

I served in the military for a short time- 6 years in the reserves. I went to Fort St. Houston in San Antonio Texas for my training. I was trained during the Vietnam War to be a medical service corps officer, which would allow me to help run a hospital. The Vietnam War ended so I never actually served. I feel humbled by all those who did serve. I was prepared and ready to go to Vietnam, but I never had to by the grace of God. I’m no hero, that’s for sure.

What would you consider your most memorable moment in the military?

I got to fire a lot of weapons, as an officer you have to learn how to fire the weapon. This comes in handy in physics class- projectiles, momentum, energy. It was actually enjoyable to go to San Antonio. I learned a lot. I also learned a lot about the medical profession.

What was your toughest experience in the military?

I have family in the military- brother and father. The toughest would be a part of the training. We were asked to Bivouac outside for ten days and set up like a real army, and nine out of ten days it rained. We had canvas tents. The entire football field was water, we were soaked, it was awful. We were asked to establish a global volunteer movement that creates friendships for one-to-one friendships, integrated employment and leadership development for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities” (Best Buddies Webpage). The organization has pro- grams for middle schools, high schools, colleges, and even pen-pals.

Holy Cross has re-established our Best Buddies Chapter, thanks to the new Monroe Options program, our leaders, and Best Buddies Maryland. We have a very unique Best Buddy Chapter (which is what they call the clubs) since we currently have a small Monroe Options Program which is flourishing.

Best Buddies at AHC!

You may have heard Katie Novak and myself announce events for Best Buddies at the Monday All School Assemblies. You may have noticed our table at the club fair in September, or simply recognize Best Buddies from your prior school. But, do you re- ally know about Best Buddies?

Best Buddies is an international nonprofit organization that was founded by Anthony Shriver in 1989. “Best Buddies International... is dedicated to establishing a global volunteer movement that creates opportunities for one-to-one friendships, integrated employment and leadership development for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities” (Best Buddies Webpage). The organization has pro- grams for middle schools, high schools, colleges, and even pen-pals.

Best Buddies at AHC! LUCY PASZCZUK’16

You may have heard Katie Novak and myself announce events for Best Buddies at the Monday All School Assemblies. You may have noticed our table at the club fair in September, or simply recognize Best Buddies from your prior school. But, do you really know about Best Buddies?

Best Buddies is an international nonprofit organization that was founded by Anthony Shriver in 1989. “Best Buddies International... is dedicated to establishing a global volunteer movement that creates opportunities for one-to-one friendships, integrated employment and leadership development for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities” (Best Buddies Webpage). The organization has programs for middle schools, high schools, colleges, and even pen-pals.

Holy Cross has re-established our Best Buddies Chapter, thanks to the new Monroe Options program, our leaders, and Best Buddies Maryland. We have a very unique Best Buddy Chapter (which is what they call the clubs) since we currently have a small Monroe Options Program which is flourishing.

continued on page 3
We also are a club with two presidents who love what they do. We personally love our club because we are all friends, from all different grades and backgrounds. Normally, we have around 10-15 students meet weekly. We plan social activities and look forward to becoming better friends and a better club.

Any LOTA is invited to join the club. We meet every Thursday in room 223. As a Holy Cross club we do many activities, but there are also activities that Best Buddies Organization has on their calendar.

Best Buddies has designated the month of March to learn more about the organization. We will be holding a school assembly in the month of March to help promote our mission. Make sure to be there!

**AHC Performing Arts**

**Sethan Martinez ‘18**

The Winter Dance Concert took place on the nights of November 20th and 21st. This concert included the works of all of the dance classes from the first semester, as well as the Adrenaline Dance Team.

Each class performed two dances and all classes participated in the Christmas finale. The Dance Team performed four dances including two choreographed by our very own Dance Team Co-captains Abby Mervis with her Fire and Gold, and Maya Wells with her All of Me. The concert was almost sold out on Thursday, and completely sold out for the Friday show! All performed extremely well, and the special credit should go to Miss Donna, and the Tech crew.

An anonymous source says, “The Dance Concert was a magical and inspirational night as we watched the lovely talent of our LOTA dancers.”

On Friday November 14th, the Impulse Improv Team had a performance, which an audience member described as “a night full of laughter!” The improv team did fabulously at thinking on the spot! We owe a big thanks to Mr. Placek and Mrs. Wendell for preparing and moderating both the team and the show!

**Holy Cross Basketball**

**Margaret May ‘16**

Holy Cross basketball has proven to be an exciting sport to watch this winter. And their record does not reflect the hard work of this team. They have had several close games this season, and they hope to come out on top for the rest of the season. They ventured to South Carolina over Christmas break and got 2nd place in their tournament. Recently, they played Good Counsel; although the score may say one thing, it doesn’t depict how close that game was. They did very well Holy Cross played. In the last second of regulation, senior Janae Brown scored, and the student section rushed the court. However, the basket was called back by the referees as it was a “travel.” If you want to see how controversial this call was, the video is on youtube. The new coaching staff has brought a new positive atmosphere to the team. Juniors Anna-Sophia Capizzi and Emily Moore remark, “The team has had a lot of improvement. We are a very young and inexperienced upperclassmen team. The seniors have taken on a leadership role as they have shown the new underclassmen what we needed to do. We may not have won a lot of games, but we’ve played hard.”

**Get to Know Señora Koudjeti**

**Liz Sowers ‘17**

I interviewed Señora Koudjeti, one of our new TOTAs (Teachers of the Academy). Señora is a wonderful addition to the language department and to the school. Want to know more about her? Read the interview below!

Where did you work before you came to the Academy?

I worked at Sherwood High School and 12 years in the telecom industry. I also worked on Capitol Hill for about 3 years and [for] my own company called the Spanish Clubhouse. I tutored full time for about two years. The Spanish Club did itinerate in Montgomery County and I did prep courses for the semester exams.

What classes are you teaching at the Academy?

At Holy Cross, I teach Spanish II, Honors Spanish II, and Spanish III.

What is one reason why you started teaching?

I have an MBA and when I came to America and saw how people can grow in knowledge I wanted to teach something that could help people grow and interact with other countries and people. I wanted to have a job where I could see my family more and teach my language to other people.

What do you enjoy most about AHC?

I enjoy the students. They are so polite and very kind. I feel like they want to do their best. It does not necessarily mean they get an A, but they try their hardest, which is very good.

Could you share a fun fact about yourself?

I do oil painting and I like art. I also worked for Senator Ted Kennedy in college and I have a non-profit foundation.

**Library of Virginia Literary Festival Award for Poetry**

**Winner: Mrs. Margaret Mackinnon**

Mrs. Mackinnon is a teacher that every student has to have at least once during their time at Holy Cross. Not only is she incredibly smart with a great personality, but she is also able to articulate information to her students in ways that are engaging, creative, and compelling. She has the ability to take some of the most struggling student-writers and cultivate their skills so that they are able to write some of the best essays of their high school careers.

Mrs. Mackinnon has written and published her stunning book of poetry, The Invented Child, and since then she has been getting multiple awards and outstanding reviews. The Invented Child gives readers a glimpse into the lives of artists and writers like Mary Shelley, Walt Whitman, and Nathaniel Hawthorne among others. She is noted for her ability to “paint a vibrant natural world of sensations and phenomena that constantly attracts and draws us on, and that keeps the spiritual, intellectual, and narrative dimensions of her work continually grounded in the physical world” (ImageJournal.org).

In August 2012, Mrs. Mackinnon was recognized as the Image Artist of the Month and in 2013, The Invented Child was listed on Image Update’s “Top Ten of 2013.” Her poetry has also been featured in several literary magazines and publications. In October 2014, Mrs. Mackinnon won the 2014 Poetry Prize from the Library of Virginia at their Literary Festival for her book, triumphing over the two other finalists. The Annual Library of Virginia Literary Awards are given to several exceptional Virginia authors for their literary contributions in the fields of poetry, fiction, and nonfiction, and to be selected as a winner is a tremendous feat. The judges at the festival hailed her work as a “fearless approach to an enormous variety of subjects” and commended Mrs. Mackinnon for revealing a certain “reverence for the natural world and [her] palpably natural imagery.”

**TrIBUTES TO DOMINIK PETTEY**

I was blessed to be able to go to a Gonzaga homecoming last year. He was such a sweet, thoughtful, uplifting guy. He was always positive and never failed to keep a smile on my face. I am so blessed to have him as a part of my life. He literally made an impact on so many people including myself. It is even such a shame we never got to grips with the fact that he’s gone, but I know he is always going to be with me and looking over me.

- Kathryn Graham

Dom was the happiest person I know. Not one time did I see him without the biggest smile on his face. His smile was infectious. Anytime I saw him, I couldn’t help but put on the biggest smile of my own.

For that, I am forever grateful. Wherever we were and wherever we went, Dom was a light. He was always looking out for us, asking to take pictures, cracking jokes, being his goofy self. He had the best personality.

Dom lived his life to the fullest, that’s one thing I know for sure. He always trusted his heart and that’s what always made him happy. He continues to inspire me to live in the moment. I wish he was here with all of us, but we have him looking over us now and I can feel his presence everywhere and we know he’s having the best time in Heaven.

I love you so much Dom. The squad misses you. #1inheaven.

- Megan Brown

I am so grateful that I can say I was a friend of Dom’s. He had one of those smiles that you only come across a couple times in your lifetime. Dom I miss you so much and it isn’t getting any easier to accept that you’re gone. Your life was cut short and you didn’t deserve that. I promise I won’t forget you, because honestly, I can’t even imagine ______.

- Shyleah Gnaoua

I can’t remember ever seeing Dom without a smile on his face. Really missing that smile. Love you and rest in peace, Dom.

- Liberty D’Anton

My dearest Dom,

There are so many things I want to say to you, and so many things I wish I had said. The biggest regret that I am left with is knowing that I never said them. This may sound cliché and I’m sure many people have whispered the same thing to you, but a piece of me died along with you. So many days and so many times I have thought to myself “Only Dominik would understand this,” or “I know he would know what to do” and been left feeling emptier than I ever thought.
Crosscurrents
February, 2015

I could.

Sometimes I feel myself wandering, looking for you in the corners of my mind and the people around me. I see you in a shadow, hear you in a song. We used to see you in a shadow, hear you in a song. Sometimes I feel myself wandering, looking for you in the corners of my mind and the people around me. I see you in a shadow, hear you in a song. Sometimes I feel myself wandering, looking for you in the corners of my mind and the people around me. I see you in a shadow, hear you in a song. Sometimes I feel myself wandering, looking for you in the corners of my mind and the people around me. I see you in a shadow, hear you in a song. Sometimes I feel myself wandering, looking for you in the corners of my mind and the people around me. I see you in a shadow, hear you in a song.

Katniss Everdeen (Jennifer Lawrence) is not allowed to wear her normal makeup and fashion accessories. District 13 is feeding the fire of the rebellion against the Capitol. All the districts are angry and agree to fight to death so that the districts may have freedom. Katniss, along with fellow victor Finnick Odair (Sam Claflin), want to fight to win the Hunger Games so that the districts may have freedom.

Tinket (Elizabeth Banks) is not allowed to wear her normal makeup and fashion accessories. District 13 is feeding the fire of the rebellion against the Capitol. All the districts are angry and agree to fight to death so that the districts may have freedom. Katniss, along with fellow victor Finnick Odair (Sam Claflin), want to fight to win the Hunger Games so that the districts may have freedom. Everdeen sees what has been going on in the districts and what the Capitol is doing to the people who fight back. Mockingjay is a great preview for Part 2 of the series, but many viewers will find it slow compared to the first two movies. It did not have as much action and there is barely any romance between Katniss and Peeta due to Peeta getting captured by the Capitol. It give four stars for the acting and great scenery in the film.

Entertainment & Style
Mockingjay Part 1: Has the Girl on Fire Fizzled Out?
Lily Schmidt ’15

Katniss Everdeen (Jennifer Lawrence) is back and ready to rebel in District 13. Katniss has grown to hate the Capitol and President Snow (Donald Sutherland), especially due to the bombing of her home, District 12. Her mother and sister, Prim (Willa Holland), along with Gale (Liam Hemsworth) and many other men, women, and children were rescued and are now under the control of District 13’s leader, President Alma Coin (Julianne Moore). District 13 is very different than what Katniss is used to in District 12, and is like a military base. They can only wear jumpsuits, eat at a certain time of day, and sleep in small dormitories. You will see new sides of all the people, personalities and characteristics that haven’t been revealed before, and hardly recognize them. Haymitch (Woody Harrelson) is sober and Effie was a lot of singing. Some songs seemed a little pointless or simply lacked appeal to me. However, there were still a great amount of songs that were pleasant and humorous (i.e. “The Witch’s Rap” that may remind you of Tyler Oakley or “Agony” with Chris Pine and Billy Magnussen). It was also quite interesting to see how all the fairytale elements interwove as the characters went-you guessed it- into the woods in attempts to achieve their wishes. However, throughout the movie, there was often scenes of little excite- ment or action. The movie picks up a little after the “happily-ever-after”, when the characters must deal with the consequences of their earlier actions.

Pros by Margaret Capizzi:

The movie was well done; the soundtrack brought the story to life and allowed the viewer to be dragged further into the chaotic fairy tale. Initially I was unsure about whether my younger siblings would enjoy it, but the movie proved to be appropriate and enjoyable for all ages. The bright costumes worn in the movie stood out and made it easier to distinguish which character was which. The scenery was full of vivid colors which made the movie more like a fairy tale. Although only getting 6.5 stars on IMDB, I think most would find this film enjoyable. One warning - there is a lot of singing, so prepare yourself!

Chris Pine as a prince and Anna Kendrick as Cinderella
Relient K’s MMHMM: A Review
Brittany Musser ’17

Ten years ago, pop punk band Relient K released MMHMM, its fourth album. Today, the 14-track standout is still as catchy and relevant as ever. Raging guitars, clever lyrics, and an over- all sense of fun pervade every minute of an album produced by Matt Thiessen’s 50-minute romp through the difficulties of relationships and faith. Song topics include everything from seeking forgiveness, to politics, to the monotony that can creep into daily life, to the healing that comes from hope, when all the joy and love is lost.

Pros by Margaret Capizzi:

As to be expected of a musical movie, there

Isabella
Photo courtesy of aceshowbiz.com

Isabella
Photo courtesy of aceshowbiz.com

Isabella
Photo courtesy of aceshowbiz.com

Isabella
Photo courtesy of aceshowbiz.com

Isabella
Photo courtesy of aceshowbiz.com

Isabella
Photo courtesy of aceshowbiz.com

Isabella
Photo courtesy of aceshowbiz.com

Isabella
Photo courtesy of aceshowbiz.com

Isabella
Photo courtesy of aceshowbiz.com

Isabella
Photo courtesy of aceshowbiz.com

Isabella
Photo courtesy of aceshowbiz.com

Isabella
Photo courtesy of aceshowbiz.com

Isabella
Photo courtesy of aceshowbiz.com

Isabella
Photo courtesy of aceshowbiz.com

Isabella
Photo courtesy of aceshowbiz.com

Isabella
Photo courtesy of aceshowbiz.com

Isabella
Photo courtesy of aceshowbiz.com

Isabella
Photo courtesy of aceshowbiz.com

Isabella
Photo courtesy of aceshowbiz.com

Isabella
Photo courtesy of aceshowbiz.com

Isabella
Photo courtesy of aceshowbiz.com

Isabella
Photo courtesy of aceshowbiz.com

Isabella
Photo courtesy of aceshowbiz.com

Isabella
Photo courtesy of aceshowbiz.com

Isabella
Photo courtesy of aceshowbiz.com

Isabella
Photo courtesy of aceshowbiz.com

Isabella
Photo courtesy of aceshowbiz.com

Isabella
Photo courtesy of aceshowbiz.com

Isabella
Photo courtesy of aceshowbiz.com

Isabella
Photo courtesy of aceshowbiz.com

Isabella
Photo courtesy of aceshowbiz.com

Isabella
Photo courtesy of aceshowbiz.com

Isabella
Photo courtesy of aceshowbiz.com

Isabella
Photo courtesy of aceshowbiz.com

Isabella
Photo courtesy of aceshowbiz.com

Isabella
Photo courtesy of aceshowbiz.com

Isabella
Photo courtesy of aceshowbiz.com

Isabella
Photo courtesy of aceshowbiz.com

Isabella
Photo courtesy of aceshowbiz.com

Isabella
Photo courtesy of aceshowbiz.com

Isabella
Photo courtesy of aceshowbiz.com

Isabella
Photo courtesy of aceshowbiz.com

Isabella
Photo courtesy of aceshowbiz.com

Isabella
Photo courtesy of aceshowbiz.com

Isabella
Photo courtesy of aceshowbiz.com

Isabella
Photo courtesy of aceshowbiz.com

Isabella
Photo courtesy of aceshowbiz.com

Isabella
Photo courtesy of aceshowbiz.com

Isabella
Photo courtesy of aceshowbiz.com

Isabella
Photo courtesy of aceshowbiz.com

Isabella
Photo courtesy of aceshowbiz.com

Isabella
Photo courtesy of aceshowbiz.com

Isabella
Photo courtesy of aceshowbiz.com

Isabella
Photo courtesy of aceshowbiz.com

Isabella
Photo courtesy of aceshowbiz.com

Isabella
Photo courtesy of aceshowbiz.com

Isabella
Photo courtesy of aceshowbiz.com

Isabella
Photo courtesy of aceshowbiz.com

Isabella
Photo courtesy of aceshowbiz.com

Isabella
Photo courtesy of aceshowbiz.com

Isabella
Photo courtesy of aceshowbiz.com

Isabella
Photo courtesy of aceshowbiz.com

Isabella
Photo courtesy of aceshowbiz.com

Isabella
Photo courtesy of aceshowbiz.com

Isabella
Photo courtesy of aceshowbiz.com

Isabella
Photo courtesy of aceshowbiz.com

Isabella
Photo courtesy of aceshowbiz.com

Isabella
Photo courtesy of aceshowbiz.com

Isabella
Photo courtesy of aceshowbiz.com

Isabella
Photo courtesy of aceshowbiz.com

Isabella
Photo courtesy of aceshowbiz.com

Isabella
Photo courtesy of aceshowbiz.com

Isabella
Photo courtesy of aceshowbiz.com

Isabella
Photo courtesy of aceshowbiz.com

Isabella
Photo courtesy of aceshowbiz.com

Isabella
Photo courtesy of aceshowbiz.com

Isabella
Photo courtesy of aceshowbiz.com

Isabella
Photo courtesy of aceshowbiz.com

Isabella
Photo courtesy of aceshowbiz.com

Isabella
Photo courtesy of aceshowbiz.com

Isabella
Photo courtesy of aceshowbiz.com

Isabella
Photo courtesy of aceshowbiz.com

Isabella
Photo courtesy of aceshowbiz.com

Isabella
Photo courtesy of aceshowbiz.com

Isabella
Photo courtesy of aceshowbiz.com

Isabella
Photo courtesy of aceshowbiz.com

Isabella
Photo courtesy of aceshowbiz.com

Isabella
Photo courtesy of aceshowbiz.com

Isabella
Photo courtesy of aceshowbiz.com

Isabella
Photo(352,271),(731,479)
We all love movies, so let’s see how well you know these movies!

In Peter Jackson’s the Lord of the Rings trilogies, what is the name of Frodo’s best friend?

What 1960s movie features Atticus Finch as the father of two young children in the South during the depression?

What 2014 movie followed Emmet, voiced by Chris Pratt, in saving the world from Lord Business?

What group of superheroes is led by the Wolverine, played by Hugh Jackman?

In what movie is a young Jamie Lee Curtis stalked by a serial killer as she is babysitting?

Who directed the famous thriller Psycho?

Bonus: Which well known 1980s actor was the voice of Balto in the cartoon?

What movie features Emma Stone as a high school student who is struggling to make a name for herself?

Which actress plays Will Turner’s love interest in the Oscar-winning movie Pirates of the Caribbean?

Which well known 1980s actor was the voice of Balto in the cartoon?

What 2014 movie followed Emmet, voiced by Chris Pratt, in saving the world from Lord Business?

Drizzle in a little canola oil, then toss the dough in the oil to coat. Cover bowl in plastic wrap and set it aside to rise, or save them for a midnight snack, whatever the circumstance. These versatile cookies leave room for your imagination. Don’t like raisins? Try substituting dried cranberries. Interested in experimenting with new flavors? Taste test with different types of chocolate chips or nuts. These cookies are truly fit for the olympian or couch potato in all of us, and provide perfect for the sweet tooth and health nut alike.

**RECIPE**

**Homemade Cinnamon Bread**

**Ingredients**

- 1 cup Milk
- 6 Tablespoons Butter
- 2-1/2 teaspoons Active Dry Yeast
- 2 whole Eggs
- 1/3 cup Sugar
- 1 egg 1 1/2 teaspoons vanilla 1/4 teaspoon salt 1/2 cup brown sugar 2 1/2 cups quick oats 1 cup flour

**Preparation Instructions**

Mix a little egg with milk, and smear over the smeared dough. Starting at the far end, roll dough toward you, keeping it tight and contained. Pinch seam to seal.

Smear loaf pan with softened butter. Place dough, seam down, in the pan. Cover with plastic wrap and allow to rise for 2 hours. Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Mix a little egg with milk, and smear over the top. Bake for 40 minutes on a middle/lower rack in the oven. Remove from the pan and allow bread to cool.

**Bonuses:**

- Which well known 1980s actor was the voice for Simba in the Lion King?
- Which character is a future president of the United States in the Harry Potter series?
- What movie features Emma Stone as a high school student who is struggling to make a name for herself?
- Which actress plays Will Turner’s love interest in the Oscar-winning movie Pirates of the Caribbean?
- Which well known 1980s actor was the voice of Balto in the cartoon?

Recipe created by Katherine PreCourt ’15

To tell you the truth, When I heard the name “Olympic Cookie” I had expected something hearty and healthy-looking, but I was pleasantly surprised with the final product, a delicate lace-like cookie packed with flavor. Crispy on the outside and chewy on the inside, these cookies boast a simple recipe with ingredients that blend together to create a complex taste, sure to engage the senses. With each bite comes either a burst of fruity flavor from the raisins, the rich, nutty undertones from the walnuts, or sweetness from the chocolate chips, with a subtle caramelized texture and taste from the butter. Rolled oats give the cookie substance, and brown sugar adds body and a depth of flavor. These cookies have been in my family for decades, and are perfect for the holiday season. After a long day out or a lazy day in, these pair perfectly with a tall glass of milk or a warm mug of cocoa. Bring them on a hike for a quick pick me up, or save them for a midnight snack, whatever the occasion. These versatile cookies leave room for your imagination. Don’t like raisins? Try substituting dried cranberries. Interested in experimenting with new flavors? Taste test with different types of chocolate chips or nuts. These cookies are truly fit for the olympian or couch potato in all of us, and provide the ideal fix for the sweet tooth and health nut alike.

**Ingredients**

- 1 cup butter 1 1/2 cups firmly packed light brown sugar 2 1/2 cups quick oats 1 cup flour 1 egg 1 1/2 teaspoons vanilla 1/4 teaspoon salt 1/2 cup chopped walnuts

**Directions:**

1. In a separate bowl, combine dry ingredients. Gradually add all dry ingredients to the wet ingredients, and mix together to form the dough. 2. Remove the bowl from the mixer. Stir in chocolate chips, with a subtle caramelized texture and taste from the butter. Rolled oats give the cookie substance, and brown sugar adds body and a depth of flavor. These cookies have been in my family for decades, and are perfect for the holiday season. After a long day out or a lazy day in, these pair perfectly with a tall glass of milk or a warm mug of cocoa. Bring them on a hike for a quick pick me up, or save them for a midnight snack, whatever the occasion. These versatile cookies leave room for your imagination. Don’t like raisins? Try substituting dried cranberries. Interested in experimenting with new flavors? Taste test with different types of chocolate chips or nuts. These cookies are truly fit for the olympian or couch potato in all of us, and provide the ideal fix for the sweet tooth and health nut alike.

**Ingredients**

- 1 cup Milk
- 6 Tablespoons Butter
- 2-1/2 teaspoons Active Dry Yeast
- 2 whole Eggs
- 1/3 cup Sugar
- 1 egg 1 1/2 teaspoons vanilla 1/4 teaspoon salt 1/2 cup brown sugar 2 1/2 cups quick oats 1 cup flour

**Preparation Instructions**

Mix a little egg with milk, and smear over the smeared dough. Starting at the far end, roll dough toward you, keeping it tight and contained. Pinch seam to seal.

Smear loaf pan with softened butter. Place dough, seam down, in the pan. Cover with plastic wrap and allow to rise for 2 hours. Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Mix a little egg with milk, and smear over the top. Bake for 40 minutes on a middle/lower rack in the oven. Remove from the pan and allow bread to cool.

**Bonuses:**

- Which well known 1980s actor was the voice for Simba in the Lion King?
- Which character is a future president of the United States in the Harry Potter series?
- What movie features Emma Stone as a high school student who is struggling to make a name for herself?
- Which actress plays Will Turner’s love interest in the Oscar-winning movie Pirates of the Caribbean?
- Which well known 1980s actor was the voice of Balto in the cartoon?
American Hot Chocolate with Whipped Cream

1/2 cup heavy cream

4 tablespoons plus 1 teaspoon Scharffen Berger cocoa powder.

If you don’t find this exact brand, you’ll survive

4 tablespoons plus 1/2 teaspoon sugar

2 1/2 ounces Scharffen Berger bittersweet chocolate (70 to 75 percent cacao), chopped

Large pinch of kosher salt. *Again, if you do not have kosher salt, you will be fine.

5 cups whole milk

Grated bittersweet chocolate for garnish (optional)

1. In a small bowl using an electric mixer, whip the cream with 1 tablespoon of the cocoa powder and 1/2 teaspoon of the sugar until it forms firm peaks. Set aside.

2. In a medium-size saucepan, combine the chocolate, the remaining 4 tablespoons cocoa powder and 4 tablespoons sugar, the salt, and the milk. Place the mixture over medium-heat; whisk gently. Once the chocolate melts and the cocoa dissolves, raise the heat to medium-high; whisk more vigorously to form a froth on the surface. When the mixture bubbles around the edges and seems ready to boil, remove from the heat. Do not let it boil.

3. Ladle the hot chocolate into 4 cups with some froth on each. Spoon a dollop of whipped cream on top,and sprinkle with grated chocolate if desired. Serves 4

*This remark is my commentary and not written by Mr. Fred Thompson

OPINION

Do Video Games Encourage Sexism and Violence?

Julia Urban ’17

Allegations that video games encourage violence, sexism, and poor character in general have come to the forefront of the gaming community recently, especially after the eruption of what is known as “Gamer Gate”. During this incident, what began as a protest against corruption in gaming journalism transformed into what some are calling a “culture war” over claims that video games are sexist and promote violence. Such claims criticize the games’ lack of representation of the female perspective, and have given activists a greater voice in the industry. However, the validity of these accusations is questionable, due to the lack of evidence behind them, the contradictions between them, and their trivial nature.

First of all, the lack of representation in video games is not an effect of intentional sexism, rather the product of simple economics. Producers create what consumers will buy in order to make money, and tailor the games around what is most likely to buy such products. For example, certain bath products can be marketed towards women if scented, colored, or packaged a specific way. It would be odd for a man to complain that women’s bath products do not represent his bathroom needs, because that is not what they are designed to do. In the same way, some video games are marketed specifically to men, because men are more likely to buy them. Such games include military-themed or action games, such as Call of Duty or Grand Theft Auto. In 2011, roughly 85.5% of the U.S.’s active duty force was made up by women, and throughout history, militaries have been primarily composed of men. Therefore, military and action based games often appeal more to men than women, since men more frequently play them, resulting in less female representation. To this, the opposition would claim that just as many women as men play games, or even more women than men, citing an Entertainment Software Association study. However, this study accounted only for those who had ever played video games, and not the sort of electronic game as a “gamer”, including those who have played Candy Crush or Angry Birds, even if only once. As Christina Hoff Sommers, the author of a generation of research on these findings, I think it’s great that the world of games is expanding, and that there are more women creating and playing games, but a distinction is in order. In a video that she created for the American Enterprise Institute, Sommers points to a different study to back her belief that “adult women are not the key demographic [in video games].” A UCLA study called “The American Freshman: National Norms Fall 2013” found that, for incoming college freshman who were hard-core gamers, meaning they played 20 or more hours per week, the ratio of boys to girls was 7 to 1. Therefore, action-based video games are often tailored to the male perspective, and understandably so. In the same way, male interests are often over-represented in rom-coms and romantic-comedies, because men are not the primary demographic. In the popular movie The Fault in Our Stars, two cancer patients fall in love, and the male lead tells the female lead that he cannot stop staring at her because she’s so beautiful, all on their first acquaintance. Do teenage boys realistically carry themselves with such aplomb, creating the romance that teenage girls could not stop talking about? No. In Twilight by Stephanie Meyer, an ordinary teenage girl kills her mother after she contaminated her Call of Duty game, or when Zachary Burgess went on a supposedly Grand Theft Auto-inspired stealing spree. However, in Sommers’ words, “No one has been able to establish a clear correlation” between real-life violence and video games. For someone to simply play a game in a fictional dimension, then commit a horrible crime, they must have something else in their life, perhaps a mental illness, driving them. In 2010, a substantial article was published by the Psychological Bulletin, declaring fear over the effects of video games as “much ado about nothing”. In relevant comments, “As video games have spread in popular- uly, youth crime has plummeted.” Pinpointing video games as a main source of violence within youth especially is simply a scare-tactic for sensationalizing and politicizing the issue.

Even more politicized is the portrayal of women in video games, and despite having no statistically recorded effect on gamers, and despite the fact that many video games are not created for women. A popular point is that, in action-based games, male characters always lead, or that female figures are sexualized. Christina Hoff Sommers refutes this notion, pointing out that many video games include female characters, but are far less prejudiced than men of previous generations. Popular YouTuber Maddox, who uses satire to convey his opinions on society, asked his audience, “What exactly are you criticizing women in the video game industry for? What are you wanting them to be? ‘Not being a woman?’ No. Again, no one is criticizing women’s media for, as Sommers put it, “privileging the female perspective” and “marginalizing men”, but men’s media defends against criticism constantly. Maddox does not believe that this is intentional sexism, but refers to as complaining, will help anything. While displaying pictures of women in the game industry, such as Amy Hehnig (Uncharted 2), Robin Hunicke (Journey), Jade Raymond (Assassin’s Creed 2), Kim Swift (Portal 2), he won’t change how they are portrayed in video games, they need to step up and start making video games. Men aren’t doing a good job of portraying women, and they shouldn’t be expected to.”

Many more gender-based complaints against video games exist, and again, many are trivial, or ignore the demographic for which the games exist. One of the most popular gender-politics issues is violence in specific against women. Activists who make such criticisms forget that there is immensely more violence against men in gaming. Perhaps activists do not mind the numerous male characters who are slaughtered in games, because men simply are not a priority for them. Another criticism is that female characters are scantily-clad and unproportion-ately animated, which is sexist objectification. However, even in action-based games, the men are also unproportional. The figures of all the men, at least the “likeable” characters, are meant to be ideal, not realistic. Also, by claiming that showing scantily-clad females is sexist, feminists are claiming that being scantily-clad is degrading, despite any circum- stances. This contradicts the idea of “slut-shaming”, a belief, pioneered by feminists like Laci Green (who has about 1 million subscribers on YouTube), that “slut-shaming” is wrong. Slut-shaming is defined as criticizing a woman based on the way she conducts herself, clothing-wise and through her sexual habits. Many 3rd-wave (modern) feminists believe “slut-shaming” is sexist, because it condemns a woman who they believe should express her sexuality as freely as she wishes. For example, when Kim Kardashian released photos from her nude photoshoot, and when Miley Cyrus performed her highly-controvers-
sial and sexualized performance of “Blurred Lines” at the VMA’s, Laci Green came to their defense through social media, to condemn the “slut-shaming” of both women. If, according to Laci Green and many other modern feminists, it is completely acceptable to strip naked or sexualize oneself for entertainment in real life, why does it matter how fictional women dress and act in video games? If Beyoncé can declare herself a feminist onstage at the VMA’s, shortly after singing, in nothing but a leotard, about performing oral sex in a car, what is so sexist about sexuality in men’s media? Even if the “objectification” is still wrong, activists such as Laci Green and Beyoncé must realize that they contribute to it by desexualizing others, while encouraging women to sexualize themselves. Activists also contradicted each other in their reactions to the video game Bayonetta 2. This game features a strong female protagonist created by a Japanese female character designer, and is loved by some feminists, but feminist Anita Sarkeesian called it “pernicious”. She believes this game was “created specifically for the sexual pleasure of straight male gamers” and is therefore sexist. Somemers criticizes this viewpoint since it is based on the 1975 feminist theory of the “male gaze”, which explains the admiration of the female form by men as sexist objectification. Somemers says, “spectators might be able to gaze at a woman’s body, and identify with her on a human level”. She concedes that many games feature strong female characters, but argues that this is because many men like attractive women, and asks, “Why shame them for this?”. Again, if any change is good intentions in general, but their criticisms can instead of simply complaining about what is in them. “Why shame them for this?”. Again, if any change is because many men like attractive women, and asks, “Why shame them for this?”. Again, if any change is

The anti-video game crowd seems to have good intentions in general, but their criticisms can really only be summed up in the phrase “downright dishonorable.” Yet, Sarkeesian is one of the largest players in the anti-Gamer Gate crowd, with a YouTube channel called “Feminist Frequency”, and she is arguably playing dirty. She is record saying, “I am not a fan of video games”, speaking of how particularly violent action games disgust her, then claims to love video games in a different video. She has cherry-picked specific foot-age and commented on it completely out of context, also. For example, in the game Watch Dogs, one of the main player’s missions is to shut down six trafficking rings—arguably a pro-woman and heroic act. However, Sarkeesian uses the footage from the sex trafficking ring scenario to claim that the game objectifies women. In the game Hitman (where the female player is obviously the player person-alized for attacking citizens who are not the targets). However, using footage from this game, Sarkeesian claimed that Hitman condemned the “de-sexing” of random women, even though the game is about find-ing and taking out specific targets, not female citizens who are not the target. Of course, she cares so deeply when the occasional female character is killed, but never mentions the many male characters who die in degrading ways in the game. Either she knows exactly what she is doing, or there is no issue, or she has no idea what the games are even about, and is attempt-ing to appear more educated than she actually is. She picks on trivial issues; for example, she shows footage of Koopa’s daughter (a character in Nintendo’s Mario series) and claims that this stereotyped women as over-emotional. However, in the game, Koopa’s daughter is a child—throws tantrums all the time. It is not sexist to depict that. Next, for someone who claims to encourage discussion, and uses a blog as a platform to do so, she seems only interested in hearing her own side, hav-ing disabled comments, ratings, and even statistics on all her videos. Her campaign to raise money for her video series asked for $4,000, and she received $160,000, and since she could not possibly spend that much money for the few videos she has posted, even her own fans online have asked for a little transpar-ency. She is definitely not the only activist who has posted misleading and dishonest information, but the amount of people who back her is staggering. She, who once claimed to dislike video games, was even appointed an ambassador at a gaming convention. In the end, there is little conclusive evidence that video games cause violence or bigotry, and the lack of representation for the female perspective within the games is simply an effect of not enough females playing them. To those who agree with Sarkeesian, a more effective route to ending sexism in gaming would be pursuing a career in the gaming industry, rather than beating a dead horse by criticiz-ing the games. Join women, such as Mari Shimazaki (Bayonetta) or Jade Raymond (Assassin’s Creed 2), in bringing about true and lasting change.

Jade Raymond

LITERARY SHAKESPEARE’S SISTERS: MY FOLGER EXPERIENCE THUS FAR

Brittany McKenzie ’19

The Folger Shakespeare Library loomed large against a blue DC sky. Standing in its majestic shadow on a crisp January afternoon, I wondered what I was soon to encounter within its walls.

A few months ago, Ms. Makkinnon had informed me about the Shakespeare’s Sisters Seminars at the library, a program for high schoolers interested in literature. I sent in an application and was lucky enough to be one of several students selected for the program. I knew that as a participant in the seminars, I would study important female poets and write some poetry of my own inspired by their work; yet I still had many questions as I walked into the building and made my way to the meeting room. What kind of atmosphere would the class have? What would the teachers and other students be like?

When the seminar began, I received satisfying answers.

We began Day One by introducing ourselves over cookies and tea. I bonded with the other girls in my class instantly, knowing that they shared some interest in Shakespeare. A sister is a friend, and in the circle, we bonded with the other girls in my class instantly, knowing that they shared some interest in Shakespeare. A sister is a friend, and in the circle, we

Next, we were led on a tour of the Folger. We looked at its titles, saying that this Shakespearean tropheskeen and learned about the storied history of a portrait of Queen Elizabeth. We gathered around the Voyning Text, a centuries-old manuscript full of strange codes and symbols for which cryptographers have not yet found a definitive meaning. We overlooked the Folger Theater from a balcony, stunned by its inti-mate square structure, meant to evoke the essence of an Elizabethan theater. My favorite moment was when we entered the Reading Room, where research-ers come from across the country to pore over books from the library’s immense collection. Our tour guide led us through a small, office-like space, then opened a set of double doors along the back wall and ushered us into one of the most amazing places I’ve ever seen. The room was dimly lit with high ceilings and walls made of gleaming wood. Its perimeters were lined with a series of detailed paintings depicting various scenes from Shakespeare plays, including Romeo and Juliet, Much Ado About Nothing, and Macbeth. The guided tour informed me that the Folgers — married founders of the library — were buried in the back, which was fascinating. The past and the present were evidently intertwined in this place.

Now I am several weeks into the class and have gotten used to its rhythm. Each week, we receive a packet of poetry from three different poets, along with biographical information. We then have to write a two-page reflection and a poem inspired by anything at all from the packet. In class, we discuss the poets, as well as any assertions their poems might make about gender roles, and encourage us to read our writing out loud. Later, we receive written comments on our work from Ms. Cross Davis and Ms. Roberts, which has been helpful in my journey of growth as a poet.

So far, we have studied over ten poets, begin-n ing with a segment on male writers and then perma-nently transitioning to female writers. I have read the works of a queen and a slave, and truly do I really realize the breadth of meaning and color one work can hold.

One of our most recent- and most special-activities in class was looking at and leafing through early copies of texts by authors such as William Shakespeare, John Donne, Mary Sidney Herbert, and Aemilia Lanyer. Our instructors pointed out the inscriptions scrolled in the margins of the books, highlight-ing that they had been owned by young women like ourselves. These inscriptions all followed a certain pattern: “[Woman’s name]: Her Book.” One girl had crammed the words between lines of text on the title page, satisfying the union between herself, the author, and the work; another followed them with a poem she had written herself, likely inspired by the poet whose book she was writing. Ms. Cross Davis and Ms. Roberts explained that these girls were asserting their ownership of attachment to their books, as they were proud of their connection to liter-ature in a time when the female intellect was scarcely acknowledged. This statement made me realize how powerful my passion for writing is. Generations of women before me have suffered discrimination and criticism for their right to written expression, and yet persisted in perfecting their craft; similarly, females have fought for the opportunity to study literature for years. In some parts of our world, they are still fighting.

Why all the hoop and good intentions? The answer is simple: it holds incredible power. In the words of Madeleine L’Engle, it shows us “who and what and why we are.” It can transform, it can persuade, it can illustrate, it can ignite. And so can those who choose to partake in its magic.

I am happy to be one of Shakespeare’s Sis-ters, and cherish all high school students who love to think, assert, create, and dream to apply to join the seminars next year.
A Table for Two

MARELA TILLO '15

I awake to the beautiful melody of Beethoven’s Moonlight Sonata, which fills the small space inside of the bedroom with a haunting melody. Classical music first thing in the morning always seems to gently wake my body up from the trance of sleep. It registers an ambiance of calm with which I carry with me throughout the day. Once a few other pieces by Vivaldi and Debussy have sung out from the small iPod dock, which my granddaughter programmed to start every morning at 7 o’clock, I open my eyes. It is time to start my day. I carefully use my arms to swing my legs over the edge of the bed and onto the ground. I am careful not to move the bed or make too much noise as I get ready. While still leaning against my bed for support, I pull on my slacks and dress shirt, making sure that each button correctly matches with the slit on the opposite side. Eleanor always seems to catch me if I miss this step.

I hoist myself into my chair and wheel myself over to the small dresser. Above it, hangs a beautifully crafted mirror made in Italy, which belonged to my mother. She gave it to Eleanor and me when the two of us were married and I cannot think of another gift that made her so happy. She once told me that whenever she looked at herself in it, she couldn’t help but get distracted by the reflection of our bedroom window and the beauty outside, especially during the spring. She mentioned that she finds solace in the fact that nature’s reflection is changing each day, just as human beings do. One thing about Eleanor is that she never fails to acknowledge the amazing gift of nature.

I comb my hair and try to keep any of the thin white strands from falling out. The last thing I need is a balding head. I place my comb next to the silver hairbrush set I bought for Eleanor when I was stationed in Vietnam years ago. Strands of her long, dark brown hair are stark against the cream bristles of the brush. She must have forgotten to remove these when she brushed her hair the other morning. I think about completing the chore for her, but decide against it and wheel myself out of the bedroom and into the kitchen.

The room is slightly lit by a single lamp that I often forget to turn off at night. Dark brooding shadows are cast from simple, harmless objects such as a chair and a dog food bowl. It is quite remarkable how innocent things can seem so intimidating in the dark. I pull the string of the blinds to allow sunlight to melt into the room, casting away all of the dark shadows. I take a deep breath and admire the decorations of our kitchen. The theme is the beach because it is one of our favorite places. Eleanor and I met each other at the beach, took our first family vacation to a beach, and one day hope to live on a beach. The walls are covered with wooden and canvas signs that read phrases that make me smile, like “life is good at the beach” and “just another day in paradise.”

To add to the aesthetic, our plates, cups, and utensils are beach themed as well, making a meal in our kitchen a truly realistic experience. I make my way toward the cupboards and begin to take out dishes to set a table for two. Today is my day to make breakfast. Upon clearing the table for the meal, I notice a vase with a bouquet of wilting blue hydrangeas in it. I throw them away and rinse out the vase, placing it back where it belongs under the sink.

I begin to make the pancake batter and decide that it is a bit quiet this morning. I hit the play button on the stereo in the kitchen and I am greeted by the lively sound of a Tchaikovsky concerto. I had forgotten about this cassette that I recorded on my piano years ago at the request of Eleanor. She loved the idea of a sound being frozen in time forever, able to be replayed over and over again. This is so different from memories, I think to myself; memories may fade but a recording remains in tact forever.

As the batter sizzles onto the hot pan, the wonderful aroma of Sunday morning breakfast begins to fill the house. The stack of pancakes gets higher, and I eventually turn off the stove and set the table in preparation for the meal. The music is still going and this makes me nostalgic. I begin to think of other Sunday mornings from the past, when Natalie and Matthew, our children, would chase each other around this very same kitchen. At the time I would try to ignore the screams by focusing on the music and the phrasing of the pieces. However, I now wish that I had blocked them out a little less, because I am beginning to forget what those yelps actually sounded like.

Still hoping that the smell of Eleanor’s favorite breakfast food will lure her into the kitchen, I wait, with a coffee mug and today’s newspaper in hand. I finish my pancakes and look out our sliding glass door into the yard of our next-door neighbor, Sam. He is outside pulling weeds from his garden. He must feel my eyes watching him because he eventually makes eye contact with me. He straightens up and salutes me. Seeing me eating breakfast there in my beach themed kitchen, really out of the ordinary to me, seems to bring about a twinkle of pity in his eyes. I wonder why, but all I do is wave politely back to the gentleman. He is a fine neighbor.

I decide that I will clear the table of breakfast later on, considering I have some chores I need to get done anyways. I wheel myself into the living room where my new plasma screen television seems so futuristic in a room packed with shelves of records, a record players, an antique piano, and other valuables from my past. One in particular is my Purple Heart medal, which is encased in a clear glass box hung on the wall. Every time I see that medal, I do not think of myself as brave or heroic. I try not to think of the battlefield. Instead I bring forward fond memories of waking up from surgery to the beautiful face of Eleanor. I remember thinking at the moment of the bombing that I would never see her again and that I would never be able to teach little Natalie how to play the piano. I would never be able to tell my best friend that I loved her more than anything else. That poor Eleanor would have to grow old without a husband by her side. The relief that I felt when I opened my eyes to see her smile is indescribable. Sitting in that hospital bed, I forgot all about my future that I knew would be spent in a wheelchair; all I could think about was the present which itself was the best gift I could have ever been given. I wonder if Eleanor thinks of that moment too, whenever she passes the medal in our living room. I take a mental note to ask her about it. I think that she would enjoy that conversation of reliving those memories together.

I soon decide that I should do something to keep my mind busy today, so I go to the bookshelf to pick out something to read. My favorite place to read is in our bedroom, right in front of my mother’s mirror that hangs above our dresser. It gives me a full view of the room around me and keeps the glaring sunlight out of my eyes. I grab my withered copy of Leaves of Grass and wheel myself into our bedroom. I park myself in my favorite spot, put on my reading glasses, and sink into a relaxing daze. I look up into the mirror and try to take a good look at myself. All I really notice is the outline of an old man sitting in a wheelchair. I look harder and notice the large window showcasing the newly blossomed flowers of spring. The grass is so green and is beginning to look a bit overgrown. I make a mental note to call up Jimmy later from down the street to see if he is interested in being paid for some grass cutting. I continue to look at the reflection of the scene and a huge wave of happiness overpowers me as I notice a patch of bright blue hydrangeas. Blue hydrangeas are Eleanor’s favorite flower. On the day of Eleanor’s funeral, I placed a bouquet of blue hydrangeas in her casket so she would never forget the smell.

I comb my hair and try to keep any of the thin white strands from falling out. The last thing I need is a balding head. I place my comb next to the silver hairbrush set I bought for Eleanor when I was stationed in Vietnam years ago. Strands of her long, dark brown hair are stark against the cream bristles of the brush. She must have forgotten to remove these when she brushed her hair the other morning. I think about completing the chore for her, but decide against it and wheel myself out of the bedroom and into the kitchen.

The room is slightly lit by a single lamp that I often forget to turn off at night. Dark brooding shadows are cast from simple, harmless objects such as a chair and a dog food bowl. It is quite remarkable how innocent things can seem so intimidating in the dark. I pull the string of the blinds to allow sunlight to melt into the room, casting away all of the dark shadows. I take a deep breath and admire the decorations of our kitchen. The theme is the beach because it is one of our favorite places. Eleanor and I met each other at the beach, took our first family vacation to a beach, and one day hope to live on a beach. The walls are covered with wooden and canvas signs that read phrases that make me smile, like “life is good at the beach” and “just another day in paradise.”

To add to the aesthetic, our plates, cups, and utensils are beach themed as well, making a meal in our kitchen a truly realistic experience. I make my way toward the cupboards and begin to take out dishes to set a table for two. Today is my day to make breakfast. Upon clearing the table for the meal, I notice a vase with a bouquet of wilting blue hydrangeas in it. I throw them away and rinse out the vase, placing it back where it belongs under the sink.

I begin to make the pancake batter and decide that it is a bit quiet this morning. I hit the play button on the stereo in the kitchen and I am greeted by the lively sound of a Tchaikovsky concerto. I had forgotten about this cassette that I recorded on my piano years ago at the request of Eleanor. She loved the idea of a sound being frozen in time forever, able to be replayed over and over again. This is so different from memories, I think to myself; memories may fade but a recording remains in tact forever.

As the batter sizzles onto the hot pan, the wonderful aroma of Sunday morning breakfast begins to fill the house. The stack of pancakes gets higher, and I eventually turn off the stove and set the table in preparation for the meal. The music is still going and this makes me nostalgic. I begin to think of other Sunday mornings from the past, when Natalie and Matthew, our children, would chase each other around this very same kitchen. At the time I would try to ignore the screams by focusing on the music and the phrasing of the pieces. However, I now wish that I had blocked them out a little less, because I am beginning to forget what those yelps actually sounded like.

Still hoping that the smell of Eleanor’s favorite breakfast food will lure her into the kitchen, I wait, with a coffee mug and today’s newspaper in hand. I finish my pancakes and look out our sliding glass door into the yard of our next-door neighbor, Sam. He is outside pulling weeds from his garden. He must feel my eyes watching him because he eventually makes eye contact with me. He straightens up and salutes me. Seeing me eating breakfast there in my beach themed kitchen, really out of the ordinary to me, seems to bring about a twinkle of pity in his eyes. I wonder why, but all I do is wave politely back to the gentleman. He is a fine neighbor.

I decide that I will clear the table of breakfast later on, considering I have some chores I need to get done anyways. I wheel myself into the living room where my new plasma screen television seems so futuristic in a room packed with shelves of records, a record players, an antique piano, and other valuables from my past. One in particular is my Purple Heart medal, which is encased in a clear glass box...