

The Work You Do, the Person You Are

The pleasure of being necessary to my parents was profound. I was not like the children in folktales: burdensome mouths to feed.

By [Toni Morrison](#) May 29, 2017

Illustration by Christoph Niemann

All I had to do for the two dollars was clean Her house for a few hours after school. It was a beautiful house, too, with a plastic-covered sofa and chairs, wall-to-wall blue-and-white carpeting, a white enamel stove, a washing machine and a dryer—things that were common in Her neighborhood, absent in mine. In the middle of the war, She had butter, sugar, steaks, and seam-up-the-back stockings.