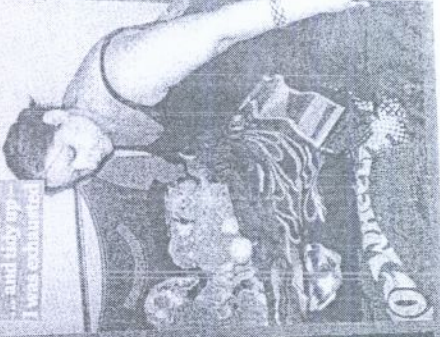
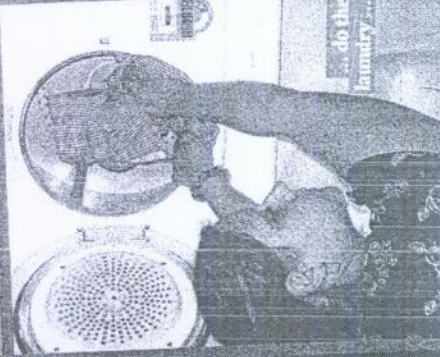


All I did was scrub the house...

My job was 24 hours, seven days a week



BRANDY

The shrill buzz of the alarm clock woke me up. I lifted my head wearily to check the time. It was 6am. I'd only had two hours of undisturbed sleep.

"Dale, wake up," I said to my husband, rolling over to the other side of the bed. It was November 2009, and Dale and I had been married for four years.

I cared for our sons, Mason, two, and Noah, six months, and our dog Elvis, a Maltese terrier.

"It's Sunday, it's my day off," Dale replied huffily.

Yawning, I got out of bed while Dale started snoring. Recently, the moment I lay Noah in his cot he cried, so I'd been rocking him for hours without a break.

"When do I get my day off?" I muttered.

I'd given up my job as a customer relations executive after Mason's birth and become a full-time mum.

I loved it, but it could be overwhelming at times.

Working full-time seemed easier than being a mum.

Dale, a truck driver, got the weekends off and every day after he came home from

work he switched off and relaxed using his Wii or watching a DVD.

I never got any time off. That morning, I had to get the kids ready for their play date around at my sister Shana's house.

It took me an hour just to bath the boys.

As I chased Mason about the house to change his nappy, Noah crawled out of the cot and split his brother's juice everywhere. By the time I'd cleaned up and made them breakfast, I was run ragged.

At Shana's I stopped for a quick chat.

"You look tired. You shouldn't have driven," Shana, 25, said.

"I couldn't waste money on cabs," I replied.

When I returned home, I took in the mess.

A trail of storybooks, toys, clothes and wet towels littered the house. Obviously, I was the one expected to tidy up everything.

Cleaning it, I noted with annoyance that Dale was still in bed asleep.

It was 9am.

Writing a list, I checked off all the things I had to do.

Dale was entertaining friends so I had to prepare lunch for four extra guests.

Then, when the kids came back, we were having my nieces and nephews over. What if I don't make lunch? I thought. It'll cost \$120 for pizzas for all of us.

I brushed the notion aside, knowing Dale wouldn't like spending money like that. Suddenly, I realised everything I did around the house had a price. So I called Shana

Obviously, I was the one expected to tidy up everything

with an idea I'd had.

"I'm fed up," I said. "I've decided I'm going to quit being a housewife."

"What?" she asked.

"I'm going to charge Dale market price for everything I do around the house," I explained. "Or I won't do it."

I reasoned that if I returned to paid employment, I would have to hire someone to do my "job" at home. That

TV

Daniella knew exactly how to get her husband to appreciate her



person would obviously be paid, so why shouldn't I?"

"Go for it, Daniella," Shana said with a laugh.

So for the rest of that Sunday, I secretly kept a list of everything I did.

On Monday morning, I decided to give Dale one last chance.

"Can you help me with the boys' breakfast?" I asked.

"Sorry, hon, I'm running late," he said, hardly lifting his eyes from the newspaper. That was it. I'd had enough.

Determined, I started to keep count and time all the chores I did that week.

Getting the boys ready in the morning would cost \$23.50 an hour, the same rate a nanny would charge.

As I shoved Dale's shirts into the washing machine, I noted that a dry cleaner would charge \$5 to launder a shirt and \$3.50 to iron it.

Dusting and vacuuming came in at \$69 a week for three hours work.

Walking down the aisles of the local supermarket, I realised I could hire a personal shopper to get our groceries for us.

So, back home, I looked

up Dial An Angel on the internet.

"They charge \$59 for two hours plus 95 cents per kilometre from your house to the shops," I exclaimed.

That was more than I earned as a paid employee.

It was so expensive and I'd been doing all of it for free for years!

By the end of the week, my list was two pages long.

That Sunday morning, when Dale got up, I gave him the bill for \$1237.60.

Scanning the list of chores, he glared at me. "What's this?" he asked.

"I'm fed up with being everyone's servant," I said. "I'm charging you for my services from now on."

"You can't do that," he gasped in amazement.

"Watch me," I said calmly. "If you don't pay, you can look after the kids yourself."

He knew I meant business when he found the kitchen in a mess, the boys running riot and no breakfast ready.

So he apologised.

"I'm sorry," he said. "I took you for granted."

"I promise to help around the house," he added.

"Good, but if you don't keep your promise you'll

have to pay me," I replied.

The next morning, as he sat down for his cuppa, he saw me scribbling in my book.

"I'll help make the kids' brekkie today," he offered.

Trying not to smile, I watched as Dale struggled to get everything done.

My plan was working. Dale even helped me wash the dishes afterwards. Maybe he was going to change.

I still wrote down the price of everything I did that week to make sure he kept his word, and he did.

Now, Dale is so much more thoughtful.

He shares the red-eye shifts, settling Noah in the dead of night and he helps me bath the boys.

I love being a mum and never seriously expected to be paid for it.

All I wanted was for Dale to appreciate how much hard work it was.

I think other mums should follow suit. Nothing will make your hubby pay attention more than waving a hefty bill under his nose!

Daniella Hobbs, 24, Melton West, Vic.

DANIELLA'S WEEKLY BILL

- Getting boys dressed: \$23.50 an hour is a nanny's average rate, five days a week = \$164.50
 - Cleaning the house, vacuuming (cleaning done for three hours minimum, once a week)
 - Childcare: Two kids, five days a week at \$69 = \$690
 - Laundry: \$5 per shirt, five days a week = \$25
 - Ironing: \$3.50 per shirt, five days a week = \$17.50
 - Grocery shopping: \$69 for two hours
 - Taxi service: Every day driving the kids around at least 10km to drop off or pick them up from play dates, 10 x five x \$1.68 per kilometre = \$84
 - Pet care: \$36.60 per visit (once a week)
 - Gardening: \$72 for two hours (once a week)
- Grand total: \$1237.60

Daniella put her husband's bill together using costs that are charged by companies in her local area and through Dial An Angel (1300 721 111).

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\$6000

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