



Babysitter Blues

Subtle strategies for nabbing a sitter

By Kelli Wheeler

You gotta get 'em young and studious and preferably totally uninterested in sports. You want the one who would rather write a term paper than score those Justin Timberlake concert tickets. Because if you find the one who discovers boys, high school dances, Friday night basketball games and, worst of all, love, they'll be the ones going out on Valentine's Day while you're stuck spending a romantic dinner over nuggets and fries with the kids.

Ah, yes the babysitter blues. Let's sing it together, shall we?

*Feelin' kinda frisky
Like to start it off right
Think I'll see
If I can get a sitter tonight
The neighbor kid's busy
The college girl too
Can't call Mom again
What's a kid-strapped couple to do?
Got the babysitter blues, oh yeah.*

But wait, let's say you do get a sitter. Planned way ahead because it's a big night: party, concert/show tickets, annual fundraiser or the other guaranteed date night—your anniversary. Got the newly minted teenage neighbor eager for a first gig dirt cheap. Maybe the Sac State student who figures she can study as soon as the kids are in bed. Or your faithful go-to gal—she's rarely turned you down, but it'll cost ya in the big bills.

Then you get the call. So sorry, can't make it. Sick, contagious, unexpected relative visiting, gotta finish that term paper due tomorrow. All code for "that cute boy finally called and asked me out" or "everyone who's anyone is hitting the Empire nightclub tonight and I don't have to worry about being caught there by you old fogies."

*Got on my low-cut top
Thankfully still in style
Haven't worn these pumps and push up
In quite a long while
Just got the call*

*The sitter's a no go
Frantically dialin'
But everyone says "No"
Got the babysitter blues, that's right.*

Every good, healthy marriage needs its regular date nights. But a word of caution: watch out for babysitter referrals from friends. What's wrong with a good referral, you ask? Sure it works out fine most of the time, but then it'll happen, I guarantee it. It's the race to get the good one. It's a party everyone you know is going to. It's an event all your best couple friends wouldn't miss. And the very people who referred you to your best sitter, who may have been in the lobby at the birth of your first child, are now your worst enemy. Do you RSVP first? There's no time! Pick up the phone and call that sitter before your BFF (babysitter lingo for Best Friend Forever) does!

*Got the invitation
Better make that call
A moment too late
And Cinderella's missin' the ball
But the mailman hit me
Last house of the day
"You drop the Smith kids
I'll give you twice what she pays"
They've got the babysitter blues, uh huh.*

There is that one ace up the sleeve though. The relative babysitter. If you have one at your disposal, you are the envy of parents everywhere. Want to go away for the weekend? No problem. Last second plans. No worries. Cost you more to stay out past midnight than eating at Ruth

Chris? Not a dime. If you don't have parents, childless siblings or a favorite aunt who live nearby, I suggest sending lots of adorable pictures and promising Sunday dinners for an advantageous move.

*Neighbor's got a boyfriend
Co-ed's got a fake I.D.
Too slow on referral
Won't pay \$15 an hour for three
Throw out a call to Momma
She knows how to do me right
Not only will she take 'em
But they can stay the night
Ain't singin' the babysitter blues no more!*

So in review, you can't have too many babysitters on reserve. Hoard them and collect them like a priceless Picasso collection. As soon as you hear of that teenager that moved in down the block, snap her up. Guard your best sitter with your life and instead of referring her, just give her more of your business. Pick one to overpay so you will always have a guaranteed back-up sitter. If you don't have family close by, tell them the real estate market is improving, their grandkids aren't getting any younger and you heard your in-laws are thinking of moving here (that last one should do the trick).

And finally, find that girl who wants to become a nun and put her on retainer.

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