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Calvin And Hobbes Revenge Of The Babysat

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Calvin and Hobbes, the beloved comic strip by Bill Watterson, stands as a timeless masterpiece of wit, imagination, and profound insight into childhood and human nature. Among its many memorable story arcs, "Revenge of the Babysat" holds a special place in the hearts of fans. This multi-day sequence, which originally appeared in newspapers in 1994, encapsulates everything that makes the strip brilliant: Calvin's boundless creativity, his adversarial relationship with authority, and the tender—if often exasperated—dynamic with his babysitter. In this comprehensive article, we will delve into every aspect of the Calvin and Hobbes Revenge of the Babysat saga, exploring its plot, characters, themes, artistic choices, and enduring legacy. Whether you are a longtime fan or a newcomer to the world of Calvin and Hobbes, this deep dive will reveal why this storyline remains a standout example of comic storytelling.

The Setup: Calvin's Eternal Struggle with Babysitters

To fully appreciate the "Revenge of the Babysat" arc, one must understand Calvin's long-running conflict with babysitters in general—and with one particularly formidable teenage sitter in particular. Throughout the strip, Calvin's parents frequently hire a babysitter named Rosalyn (sometimes spelled Roslyn) to watch over him. Rosalyn is no pushover. She is a smart, resourceful, and relentlessly patient high school student who has learned to anticipate and counteract Calvin's every scheme. Her catchphrase, "I am going home in an hour, and I will collect my ten dollars whether you behave or not," perfectly frames the transactional yet tense relationship. Calvin, of course, views any babysitting session as a war of attrition, a chance to outwit an adult—or at least make her life miserable. The "Revenge of the Babysat" arc takes this ongoing guerrilla warfare to its logical and hilarious extreme.

The Story: A Day of Chaos and Comeuppance

Part One: The Declaration of War

The arc begins on a deceptively calm note. Calvin's parents announce they are going out for the evening, and—predictably—Rosalyn is coming to babysit. Calvin grumbles, but he has a secret plan brewing. He has prepared a series of elaborate traps and psychological tricks designed to drive the babysitter to despair. Watterson masterfully depicts Calvin's overconfidence as he explains his strategy to Hobbes, the tiger. Calvin believes that this time, he will break Rosalyn's composure and win the eternal babysitter war.

Part Two: The Siege Begins

Rosalyn arrives, already one step ahead. She confiscates Calvin's toys, limits his television privileges, and sets ground rules. Calvin retaliates by releasing a jar of spiders he has collected, flooding the bathroom, and hiding the TV remote. The strip captures the escalating absurdity: Calvin ties a string across the stairs, sets a bucket of water above the door, and even stages a fake emergency using a tape recording of sirens. Each panel

showcases Watterson’s genius for visual comedy—the expressions on Rosalyn’s face shift from annoyance to steely determination to a knowing smirk. She often appears calm while Calvin unravels, a reversal of typical child-vs-adult dynamics.

Part Three: The Turning Point

In the climax of the arc, Rosalyn catches Calvin in the act of his most ambitious stunt: he has rigged a giant net to drop on her. But Rosalyn is too quick; she grabs Calvin and ties him to a chair. Now it’s her turn to exact revenge. She calmly explains that she will leave him tied up until his parents return. The panels show Calvin’s expression shifting from defiance to panic. Hobbes looks on sympathetically, but even he cannot help. The final strips of the arc show a subdued Calvin admitting defeat—temporarily. The sequence closes with Rosalyn collecting her ten dollars and leaving, while Calvin mutters about next time.

Themes: Power, Imagination, and Consequences

The Balance of Power

At its core, "Revenge of the Babysat" is a story about power dynamics. Calvin represents the child’s desire for autonomy and control in a world ruled by adults. Rosalyn embodies the adult world’s necessity for order and responsibility. Watterson skillfully avoids painting either side as purely good or evil. Calvin’s antics are genuinely funny and stem from a creative mind, but they also have real consequences. Rosalyn is strict, but she is fair and never cruel. The arc shows that while Calvin can dream up incredible schemes, ultimately, he must face the results of his actions. This theme of accountability is one reason the strip resonates with readers of all ages.

Imagination vs. Practicality

Calvin’s imagination is his greatest strength and his greatest vulnerability. He envisions himself as a rebel fighter, a mad scientist, or a master spy. In "Revenge of the Babysat," his plans are elaborate and creative—spiders, tripwires, fake floods. Yet Rosalyn’s practical approach consistently wins. She uses logic, experience, and sheer persistence. The arc subtly suggests that while imagination is precious, it must be tempered with an understanding of reality. Watterson never dismisses Calvin’s creativity; he celebrates it, but he also shows that there are times when you cannot escape the consequences of your choices.

The Role of the Babysitter

Rosalyn is a unique character in the Calvin and Hobbes universe. She appears only in babysitting scenarios, but she is one of the few recurring humans who can match Calvin’s energy. In "Revenge of the Babysat," she is portrayed as a combination of weary veteran and shrewd tactician. She has clearly dealt with Calvin many times before, and she has learned to adapt. Her dialogue is filled with dry humor: "I’ve been studying you, Calvin. You always try the same tricks." This characterization elevates her from a mere foil to a memorable character in her own right. The arc also touches on the broader experience of babysitting—the mixture of responsibility, frustration, and occasional amusement that comes with watching energetic children.

Artistic and Narrative Mastery

Visual Storytelling

Bill Watterson’s art in "Revenge of the Babysat" is particularly striking. The strip’s usual detailed backgrounds and expressive characters are amplified. Watterson uses a variety of panel sizes to control pacing. The initial panels are wide, showing the living room set for battle. As the conflict intensifies, the panels become tighter and more chaotic, with motion lines and exaggerated facial expressions. The final sequence, where Calvin is tied to a chair, uses a series of close-ups to capture his frustration and Rosalyn’s calm triumph. Watterson’s ability to tell a story through art alone—without relying on heavy text—is displayed here in full.

Use of Color (In Collections)

While the daily strips were black and white in newspapers, the Sunday color versions (often included in collected volumes) add a new layer. The "Revenge of the Babysat" arc originally appeared as daily strips in black and white, but later collections like "The Days Are Just Packed" present them in full color. The hues—muted greens, blues, and browns—enhance the mood. Rosalyn's red hair and Calvin's yellow sweater become visual anchors. Watterson's watercolor-style coloring gives the scenes a timeless quality, making the chaos feel both frantic and artistically controlled.

Dialogue and Wit

The dialogue in "Revenge of the Babysat" is crisp and natural. Watterson avoids overwriting; each line serves a purpose. Calvin's boasts ("This time, I've got a foolproof plan!") are undercut by Hobbes's knowing responses ("You said that last time."). Rosalyn's retorts are sharp but not mean-spirited. The banter flows effortlessly, balancing humor with genuine tension. This is a testament to Watterson's skill as a writer—he can make a simple conversation between a boy and his babysitter feel like a dramatic showdown.

The Legacy of "Revenge of the Babysat"

Fan Favorite

Among Calvin and Hobbes storylines, "Revenge of the Babysat" is frequently cited as one of the most memorable. Fans appreciate the escalation, the clever traps, and the satisfying conclusion where Calvin gets his comeuppance. It is often included in "best of" lists and has been referenced in pop culture. The arc's popularity stems from its universal appeal: anyone who has ever been babysat or been a babysitter can relate to the power struggle.

The End of an Era

It's worth noting that "Revenge of the Babysat" appeared relatively late in the strip's run (1994, only a year before Calvin and Hobbes ended). This adds a bittersweet quality. Watterson was at the peak of his craft, producing some of his most tightly plotted and visually rich work. The arc stands as a reminder of what the comic world lost when Watterson retired the strip in 1995. Fans often wonder how many more brilliant babysitter battles might have been drawn if Calvin and Hobbes had continued.

Cultural Impact

The babysitter trope in Calvin and Hobbes has influenced countless other works. The "Revenge of the Babysat" arc is a perfect example of the "child vs. sitter" narrative. It has been referenced in TV shows, memes, and even academic discussions about childhood and authority. Rosalyn herself became an iconic minor character. The arc also reinforces the strip's broader themes: that growing up involves learning to accept responsibility, and that sometimes, despite your best efforts, the babysitter always wins.

Lessons from the Arc

For Parents and Babysitters

The arc offers humorous but genuine insights. Babysitters can learn the value of preparation, patience, and firmness. Rosalyn succeeds because she remains calm and consistent. She does not stoop to Calvin's level of chaos; she rises above it. Parents might also glean something about the importance of trust. Calvin's parents trust Rosalyn implicitly, which allows her to enforce rules effectively. The strip suggests that a united front between parents and sitters can handle even the most creative child.

For Children (and Grown-Up Children)

Calvin's defeat is not cruel; it is fair. He learns that actions have consequences. The arc does not preach, but it subtly encourages readers to think before acting. One of the strip's enduring strengths is that it never talks down to its audience. The laughter is genuine, and the lessons are woven into the humor. "Revenge of the Babysat" teaches that while it is fun to dream up wild schemes, you must be ready to face the music when they

backfire.

Conclusion

In the rich tapestry of Calvin and Hobbes, "Revenge of the Babysat" stands out as a masterclass in comic storytelling. It brings together all the elements that make Bill Watterson’s work beloved: razor-sharp dialogue, expressive artwork, relatable themes, and a perfect blend of humor and heart. The arc is a reminder that even in a world of snow goons, time machines, and cardboard box transmogrifiers, some battles are universal—like the eternal struggle between a mischievous boy and his determined babysitter. Whether you laugh at Calvin’s ingenious traps, cheer for Rosalyn’s unflappable resolve, or simply enjoy the ride, "Revenge of the Babysat" remains a timeless gem. It captures the spirit of a childhood where every day is an adventure, and every babysitter is a worthy adversary. For fans old and new, this storyline continues to entertain, inspire, and remind us why Calvin and Hobbes will never go out of style.

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