



Garner (in Atlanta July 25) has been spending downtime with friends.

DATING THE NANNY

So close to home: **Jennifer Garner** and **Ben Affleck's** sitter tells friends she's in love with him

BY SARAH GROSSBART

It was a piece of gossip too juicy not to share. Seated at the glass-top bar in Santa Monica steakhouse Boa July 14, a pretty, blonde twentysomething told her friends all about her latest love interest. He's tall, dark and handsome, she said, and he happens to be a two-time Oscar winner going through a messy divorce. Once she let it slip that she was dating none other than Ben Affleck, the beauty couldn't stop gushing about him. "She was saying he was really cool and humble and chill," says a fellow diner. "She was like a giddy high school girl who's sleeping with the quarterback — and no one else knows."

The secret is out now. *Us* can exclusively confirm that Affleck's new flame is 28-year-old California native Christine Ouzounian — a woman he and estranged wife Jennifer Garner hired as a nanny for

ON THE COVER: FROM LEFT, ADRIANA M. BARRAZA/WENN.COM; CRIFEK6/GO. DURAN/FAVE/NET.PIC. INSETS: CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: WCP/BRUCE/FAMELYNET PICTURES; PAK/ARM-CSS; NYC BYRON PURVIS/ADMEDIA/SIPA USA; SPLASH NEWS; FROM LEFT: SEVA IAN/WKMG-CSS; PABLO/FAMELYNET PICTURES



Ouzounian and Affleck took his daughters on a shopping trip May 24 in L.A.'s Pacific Palisades.

LATE NIGHT AT BEN'S



On July 17, Ouzounian, driving Affleck's Lexus, keyed in the security code to his L.A. pad (left). "He was clearly happy to see her," says an eyewitness of the actor (center), who accepted a bottle of champagne.

their three kids this spring. Weeks into the gig caring for Violet, 9, Seraphina, 6, and Samuel, 3, Ouzounian and the actor, 42, developed an attraction, a source tells *Us*. "They would hang out without the kids," explains the source. "And they were very flirty." (A rep for Affleck tells *Us* "all allegations of a romantic relationship are baseless and untrue." Ouzounian couldn't be reached for comment.) Then in the midst of a secret 10-month separation, Affleck and Garner, 43, had yet to announce the end of their 10-year marriage. When they did June 30, Ouzounian was there for Affleck. Literally. That was her in the Bahamas with Affleck and Garner and their kids during their post-breakup vacation. But her time in paradise was cut short when Garner saw something that confirmed her long-held suspicions Ouzounian was more interested in Affleck than she was in babysitting. Says a Garner insider, "She sent both Ben and the nanny home."

Though Ouzounian lost a job, the source says she felt she gained a potential long-term boyfriend. Affleck continued to pursue her, says the source, with texts, emails and carefully arranged meet-ups. Throughout his time in Atlanta, where his kids are living with Garner while she films *Miracles From Heaven*, the *Batman v Superman: Dawn of Justice* star has found ample opportunities to fly back to L.A. Ouzounian was seen July 14 at the Hotel Bel-Air — the five-star Los Angeles resort Affleck had used as a home away from home in the final days of his marriage. On July 17 she even made a late-night visit to his L.A.-area



rental, spending two hours with her former boss. "She says Ben really, really likes her," says an Ouzounian pal. "They've even talked about living together. She's saying this is true love."



Affleck and Garner had a tense moment July 3 in the Bahamas.

AN INNOCENT BEGINNING

When Ouzounian arrived at Garner and Affleck's \$17.5 million spread in L.A.'s Pacific Palisades this spring to join their staff of nannies, it was just another gig. An employee at a high-end Beverly Hills nanny agency that boasts about representing "professionals of the highest caliber," her initial impression was "that Ben and Jen were both cool," says the pal. "She liked Jen." But she *really* liked Affleck. Soon, the A-list actor-director and the Arizona State University communications grad were finding excuses to spend time alone without the kids. "They'd go grab food or something," says the pal. "They were always laughing and having fun."

That spring, Garner was flying back and forth from Montreal to film her comedy *Nine Lives*. Yet she was around enough to take notice of Affleck and the nanny's lingering glances. Used to keeping a close watch on Affleck, the actress grew suspicious, says the Ouzounian pal.

HE'S HAVING A RUFF TIME

Now who's in the doghouse? Affleck arrived in Atlanta July 20 via a private jet carrying precious cargo: a golden retriever puppy the kids had adopted in L.A. "Ben knows he has let the family down," explains an insider close to Affleck and Garner. "It's a way to show the kids how much he loves them." With custody still to be determined, according to a source, Affleck is taking every opportunity to shine as Mr. Mom. On July 25, he spent the day at Atlanta's Ice Cream Festival with Garner and their three kids, posing for family photos and getting a temporary tattoo with son Sam. The next day, he and Violet stopped by a pet store to buy supplies for the new arrival. "Violet chose chew toys," says an onlooker. "Ben was sweet with her."

Affleck (July 20 in Atlanta) adopted the rescue dog with the girls.



FROM LEFT: NCC (4); MIAMIPIX/SB/MF/FAMELYNET; O. DURAN/GRIFR66/FAMELYNET/IC

Garner wasn't concerned enough to fire Ouzounian, but she began lashing out in subtle ways, says the pal: "She'd be like, 'Oh, why don't you ride in the back?' Or, 'Go fold the kids' clothes.'" And then there were the more overt measures. The pal says Garner filled out a poor performance evaluation with Ouzounian's agency: "She said she wanted her to spend less time with Ben and focus more on the kids."

But being on the receiving end of Garner's ire only drove Ouzounian closer to Affleck. For months, the actor had been navigating his own frosty relationship with his estranged wife. "They would be so passive-aggressive and dismissive of each other," says an Affleck insider of the duo's interactions. "At one point, Jen left to go work out and Ben actually sighed with relief." Having a shared enemy in Garner only strengthened Affleck's bond with the ex-sorority girl. "Ben started defending Christine," says the Ouzounian pal. After each of the nanny's tense run-ins with Garner, Affleck "would pull her aside to talk and build up her self-esteem," says the friend. "He became even more involved with Christine. And that's when stuff started happening."

The budding twosome began to hit relationship milestones. The Ouzounian pal says they shared their first kiss after Garner turned in her harsh evaluation. And their first couples' getaway came just days before Garner and Affleck officially announced their split. When gambling buff Affleck was invited to a Las Vegas poker tournament the weekend of June 26, he arrived with Ouzounian as his plus-one. (An Affleck source insists she went as part of a group to help with a charity auction.) Says another insider of the weekend, "It was a romantic trip."

▶ JEN FINDS OUT

All the while, Ouzounian remained on Affleck's payroll. Though Garner had her doubts about the Santa

Monica-bred stunner, she trusted her enough to have her join the family on her 4th of July getaway to the Bahamas. The trip had been arranged as a way to keep the kids out of the spotlight when news of the divorce broke and, says a source, "Jen asked Christine to come along." It was there, on the scenic island of Great Guana Cay, while Ouzounian was watching over Violet, Seraphina and Samuel, that Garner learned her lingering suspicions about Affleck and the nanny were true. "Everything came to light," says the Garner source. And Garner saw red. Following a fight with Affleck, she forced him back to their L.A. spread. The glum-looking actor was seen boating to the mainland July 3. His girlfriend was sent further adrift, says the source: "Jen fired her." (The Affleck source says she "voluntarily" quit her position because there were "too many employees.")

Affleck did his best to help Ouzounian out — even penning a reference that her friend dubbed "a love letter." Recalls the pal, "It said she had the most loving personality and she was so great with the kids. Trust was brought up too." But the note didn't fly with Garner. "She had her people edit it down," says the friend. "It ended up saying she was a subcontracted employee and she did these duties."

Ouzounian's time with Affleck was far from over. The dad was focused on being with his kids in Atlanta, yet he took pains to make sure Ouzounian's life was going smoothly



as well. He gave her the keys to his three cars for her to use (her ride of choice: his Lexus sedan) and kept in constant touch via email and text, says the Ouzounian pal. When he could get away, he'd hop a jet to L.A. for some face time. On July 17, the duo arranged a get-together at the house he's renting from Brooke Shields — conveniently located down the street from the 3-acre spread he shared with Garner.

CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT: AKM/ESI; RAY TAMARA & FILMAGIC; DAVID FISHER/REX USA; TAYLOR HILL/GETTY IMAGES; CHIP/FAMENET PICTURES

The exes took the kids to an ice cream festival in Atlanta July 25.



“THIS WASN'T THE STRAW THAT BROKE THE CAMEL'S BACK. THE BACK WAS ALREADY BROKEN BEYOND REPAIR.”

A GARNER SOURCE

Shortly after 10 P.M., an onlooker spotted Ouzounian pulling Affleck's Lexus up to the five-bedroom pad. After expertly keying in his gate code, she stepped out of the car bearing a bottle of champagne. "Ben walked out just as she was pulling in," says the onlooker. "He had a giant smile on his face. They were gazing into each other's eyes."

To Ouzounian it was the look of love. The pal says Ouzounian

admitted they've shared those three little words. "She says he sends her texts and emails saying that he loves her," says the friend. "And she's definitely in love with him." According to the nanny, Affleck has even floated the idea of them living together, says the friend: "It's crazy, but she says they're talking about cohabiting."

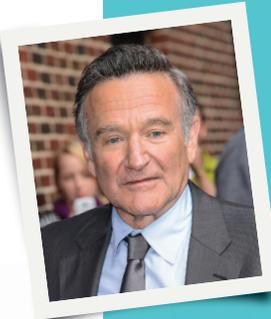
IN FOR THE LONG HAUL?

Still, the friend cautions Affleck hasn't committed to househunting just yet. The morning after their two-hour date at his rented house, he told Ouzounian he wasn't ready to announce their relationship. Instead of getting cold feet, says the friend, he explained that he's worried about her privacy.

"He's telling her she's so sweet, he doesn't want to see her torn apart in the public eye," explains the friend, noting that the actor dispensed his assistant to her house to pick up the keys to his car July 18. "He was saying they need to be more careful and he doesn't want her to get hurt."

A rebuffed Ouzounian has taken to playing hard to get, says the friend: "She's pulling away a little bit." But she can't bring herself to give up on the relationship entirely. "They're still talking to each other," reveals the pal, who says Ouzounian was even wearing one of Affleck's cashmere sweaters on a recent outing. "She's trying to be realistic, but she's in love."

Garner, meanwhile, is enraged. "Christine was in their home and around their kids, so she finds it ridiculous that he chose to do this," says a source. "But Jen isn't really surprised given all the s--t she's seen him do." For Garner, says the source, this is just another thing to get over. Says the source, "She's just glad she's moving on from the marriage and Ben's antics."



ROBIN WILLIAMS

In his 1998 Oscar speech, the late comic called son Zak's caretaker Marsha Garces "the woman who lights my soul on fire." They divorced after 19 years in 2008.

JUDE LAW

The actor issued a public apology to then-fiancée Sienna Miller in 2005 after tabloids discovered his affair with ex-wife Sadie Frost's nanny Daisy Wright.



ETHAN HAWKE

"There were never any scandalous thoughts," the dad of four says of Ryan Shauhughes, who he reconnected with after his 2003 split from Uma Thurman.



ARNOLD SCHWARZENEGGER

The actor fathered a son with long-time employee Mildred Baena. She gave birth just five days after his unsuspecting wife Maria Shriver's 1997 delivery.

