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**Jake's  
Adventures**

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(August 19, 2005) (Aug. 19, 2005) *He's Back!* After a three-year hiatus to clear his thoughts and get his head together (?), Metro's Jake Satin-Jacobs is back with another chapter of his life's adventures – and this time he's battling some pesky raccoons! – *Bill Heard, Editor*

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**They Came From the Canyon:  
A Homeowner's Horror Story**

By JAKE SATIN-JACOBS

I've concluded – after a great deal of deliberation and intense consideration – that raccoons make wonderful hats.

The story actually began a year ago. Some creature made its way into the space between the ceiling of our downstairs bathroom and the floor of the upstairs office. We could hear animal scrambling sounds, but were never really sure what it was. At first, we thought it was birds that had started nesting in the bathroom vent, but the sounds seemed not very birdlike.

I spent a couple hours sitting in the bathroom in the dark with a stethoscope hanging around my neck, waiting for the creature to move. I'm German; I wanted to know exactly what I was dealing with. And finally it began to move around. I stood on the toilet seat, put the stethoscope cup to the ceiling and listened.

In retrospect, I have to admit that I expected to hear it say something, perhaps, "I'm a squirrel," or more appropriately, "You're a squirrel." I concluded that it was an animal, a big animal. It needed to be trapped and removed.

This was not my first experience with invasion by creatures of the forest.

**Annoying, but cute**

A few years ago, we experienced our first raccoon visitations. We live in a canyon, so it was not unexpected. A family of six would enter the laundry room nightly through the cat door, eat what was left of the cat's food, muddy up the cat's water and leave. It was annoying, but kind of cute and it made us feel close to nature in a way Angelenos

seldom do.

We tolerated it. . .until the avocado incident.

The nasty little scumbags had apparently tired of the simple cat food diet. Their cravings brought them to the kitchen, up onto the kitchen counter and into a bag of avocados.

I can tell you without reservation that raccoons LOVE avocados. There were avocado pits and rinds and green goo all over the white tile. But, worst of all, apparently high on avocado pulp and cat food, they had made their way up the white carpeted stairs to the second floor of the house.

When I saw their little green handprints on the white carpet the next morning, I went quite mad. I considered buying a rifle, then a shotgun. My anger escalated with each paw print I cleaned. I decided I didn't want to kill them; I wanted to torture them. I wanted to force them to sit in front of the TV and watch, "Growing up Gotti," or listen to Mahler or spend a day with my mother-in-law. I wanted them to suffer.

But then I got calm and I got a trap. I trapped and transported to nearby Debs Park, without torturing – although I must admit I spoke unkindly to all of them – the entire family of six. And, as some of you might have predicted, they all either found their way back or sold their franchise to another equally invasive raccoon family.

### **Excluded from the 'club'**

Surrendering to the rural nature of our urban canyon location, we got an electronic cat door that permits entry only to animals wearing special magnets. They may never have had to endure a Wagnerian opera or an episode of "The Surreal Life," but at least they knew the humiliation of not getting past the velvet rope at their favorite "club" because they weren't dressed properly. And I had a trap.

So when the second invasion occurred, I was armed. The trapping took only one night. In the morning, I found a medium size, unpleasant smelling raccoon in my trap. I transported it immediately to a park in South Pasadena. I released it and bid it a fond farewell.

"And if you ever come near my \$%#&& house you stinky ##%\*&^\*\*, you better be armed, 'cuz I ain't ^\*\$%^@ messin' with you next time!" Even at my advanced age, I occasionally get a little flash of testosterone and can make hollow threats with the best of them.

Looking less than intimidated, the raccoon sauntered off into the trees.

End of story – or at least one would have hoped.

There were still sounds in the ceiling. Smaller sounds, sad sounds, then finally screaming, hungry sounds. Raccoon baby sounds.

Suddenly, I was the Nazi officer in "Sophie's Choice." I was the Mengele of raccoondom. I had done something that even the most forgiving god will not overlook: I had separated a mother from her children.

### **He had no choice now**

I did everything I could to find a raccoon rescue organization. As it

turns out, no one in Los Angeles wants to rescue raccoons. I was appalled, but I had no choice. I was compelled to seek the services of an EXTERMINATOR.

I waited for the exterminator, expecting him to pull up in a hearse, dressed in black and with a Snidely Whiplash moustache. As it turned out, he was just some big-bellied guy named Ray in a dirty white T-shirt and blue Sears work pants.

Ray told me he would have to cut through the ceiling to retrieve the terrified, hungry babies.

"Cut my ceiling?"

"Yep. No other way."

"Can't you just find out where they came in and crawl in there and get them?" I asked.

Ray looked down at the place where his sweaty shirt didn't quite meet his pants. He looked back at me. "I don't think I'm gonna fit."

The downstairs bathroom is one of two ceilings in the house I had painted with an intricate mural. I stared at Ray, open-mouthed.

**Ray wasn't an art lover**

Ray had limited patience and I sensed he was not an art lover. "You got thirty seconds to decide: Screw up the pretty picture or live with dead raccoons in your ceiling. What's it gonna be?"

I nodded and my head dropped onto my chest. As I left the room, I heard Ray rev the saw. I went to find aspirin and, when I returned, Ray was standing in a pile of plaster dust with a pail full of raccoon babies. He sneered at me and headed for his truck.

I called after him, "You'll take them to a raccoon rescue place, won't you?"

He made some sort of grunting sound that I will always remember as, "Of course . . . and sorry about the ceiling."

It was this tear-stained emotional landscape upon which I stood when, a few weeks ago, I heard my wife say, "I heard something in the kitchen ceiling. I think it's raccoons."

- Next week – Part Two

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