

Decorator's Helper

A new glimpse into the eccentric home life of the McCoy's, with Joe the Cat and Vincent the Monkey showing extraordinary bravery under enemy fire



By RICHARD STERN

HONOR DEWITT has just finished redoing her house," Lucas McCoy said to her husband, Tim. They sat in their pleasant bedroom, which also did very well as a sitting room. Lucas sat on the bed against propped-up pillows; Tim sat in a big easy chair, and both were sipping highballs. Lucas hoped her remark sounded casual.

Tim had kicked off one of his shoes and was wriggling his toes. He must have regarded the remark as casual, for he didn't trouble to answer, but merely smiled in her direction with abstracted benevolence. The remark wasn't intended to be *that* casual, and Lucas tried again. "I saw Honor DeWitt this morning," she said. "Just ran into her by accident downtown."

"That must have been nice," said Tim vaguely. Then abruptly he asked, "Don't you think we ought to take a vacation—go away somewhere? I'm entitled to a week, you know, even though I had all that time during the summer. Sort of a bonus, because I am so brilliant and indispensable."

For the moment, Lucas thought, it would be wiser not to be sidetracked. "Honor has redone her house completely," Lucas said. "Floors—walls—wallpaper."

Tim also refused to be sidetracked. "We could take the baby with us, if you like. Or leave him here with the nurse, so it could be a vacation for you too. You've been tied down a lot since he came."

Lucas' eyes grew soft at the mention of young

Thomas, whose age could be reckoned in months and very few of those.

"I don't need a vacation from Thomas," she said. "And he's really why I think the house ought to be done over, Tim. So bad for a child to grow up in an uncongenial atmosphere."

Tim stared. "Uncongenial? Has Thomas been complaining about the wallpaper? Last time I saw him all he did was bubble and make assorted odd noises."

Lucas said coldly, "It's no use trying to make a joke of this, Tim." She sipped her highball, and Tim gulped his. The conversation had got out of hand, and Tim could think of no way to bring it back to the subject of a vacation without seeming to be an unnatural father.

Lucas was bothered by no such nice scruples. "The house does look grubby, Tim," she said. "And Honor says she's found the most marvelous man. Not expensive at all. And he's a character, Tim. Honor says we'll just love him."

Tim parted his lips—a futile movement since Lucas was now thoroughly warmed up. "Honor had such a wonderful idea." She sprang from the bed and opened a closet door. "We went together to a little place—" She backed out of the closet, carrying a large, long package, which she laid on the bed.

"This place has wallpaper at such bargains, Tim," Lucas said. "Some at *ten cents* a roll!" She opened

the package and turned from the bed brandishing a roll of paper. She spread it on the floor. It was yellow, and had green figures of small Oriental men, dancing, climbing trees, fishing, and performing all manner of unlikely activities.

Tim held his glass in both hands and leaned forward. "Was *that* ten cents?" he asked.

"Well—" Lucas began to roll up the paper. "After all, this is an original design. It was only three dollars a roll," Lucas said defiantly. She caressed the paper, which Tim eyed without enthusiasm. Cut the price by one third—Tim thought—and it would still be exorbitant.

There was a tremble in Lucas' voice now. "You just don't care," she said. "You just don't understand. I want to be proud of our house. I want it to look bright and happy for the baby—" She stopped there, because the tremble was uncontrollable. Tears stood in her eyes; emotion came easily to Lucas.

Tim spread his hands in a submissive gesture. "Look," he said. "I just asked. Good Lord, I didn't mean to cause any trouble." He looked gloomily into his highball.

Lucas smiled through the tears, bravely; she was always brave when she was winning. "It's all right, Tim, I'm sorry." She laid the roll on the bed. "We'll forget all about it."

"Now, let's not be hasty," Tim said. "After all, you run the house, and—" He stopped, won-

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Mr. Harris let out a roar. He upset the can, and the paint spread in a wave. Joe followed with punishing blows to the enemy's rear

ILLUSTRATED BY EARL BLOSSOM

dering how he had got himself into this position. Lucas turned to face him. Her eyes were shining. "Tim," she said.

Tim took a long drink, holding the glass shakily, as though he had a hang-over. "This fellow Honor found—" he said.

"Oh, Tim," Lucas said, "I knew you'd see it. He's coming Monday morning. He'll be here at nine." . . .

Later, not much later, Tim sat by the edge of the empty swimming pool, his second highball in his hand, and Joe, the McCoy cat, and Vincent, the McCoy monkey, on the grass beside him. Their bowl of warm milk and dark rum was empty. They were members of the family in good standing, and entitled to know what went on. They watched Tim and listened. Tim said, "I swear, fellows, I don't know how it happened. I never do. But come Monday—"

Joe raised his forepaw with a great display of solid imperturbability. He studied it. He began to scrub his whiskers. He said nothing.

"The stoic approach," Tim said. "All right." Vincent clambered into Tim's lap, swarmed up Tim's shirt front and perched upon his shoulder. He wrapped his tail and one small arm around Tim's neck and pressed himself close. Tim's eyes were still on Joe. "Have you ever smelled a house full of paint? Have you any idea of the confusion that'll go with it?"

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Joe said nothing. He washed on.

"You'll see," Tim said. "We'll all see, I'm afraid." He paused there. He rubbed the soft fur behind Vincent's ear with a gentle forefinger. "Monday morning. Zero hour at 0900." . . .

By fourteen minutes past ten o'clock on Monday morning—the time of Mr. Harris' arrival in a small noisy truck which dripped oil on the driveway—the entire household had been awake and churning for three hours and a half. Young Thomas, in the nursery, bore up best, squalling only occasionally when the sounds of moving furniture offended him.

Miss Henderson, Thomas' nurse, a large, rather solemn young woman, did her level best to pretend that nothing was amiss.

Cook was called upon for thrice the normal quantity of coffee, cut her finger with a paring knife and tore her apron on the corner of a partially opened drawer.

Tim worked in glum silence, pausing only once, long enough to call the office and inform his secretary and his assistant that he was taking a few days off. "Yes, you can call it a vacation, if you like," he said bitterly. Then he went back to the bedroom and rolled the dressing table over his toe in the act of wheeling it through the door.

Lucas, in slacks and a short-sleeved shirt and with her hair done up in a kerchief, was here, there and everywhere; a Joan of Arc deploying her forces

—which consisted entirely of Tim—ordering, advising, criticizing.

"If you block the hall entirely," she told Tim, "Miss Henderson and Thomas won't be able to get out of their room. You do see that, don't you, Tim?"

Tim wondered if the toe was really broken. He said, "We can feed them through the windows."

"Tim!"

"I know," Tim said. "I'll level it all off, and they can crawl over."

And then Joe and Vincent, finished with breakfast, came to investigate the confusion. "Hi, fellows," Tim said. "Remember I warned you."

"Tim," Lucas said, "they'll have to stay outside."

"We can use Vincent to carry messages." He watched Vincent disappear into the pile of furniture. Joe followed. "See?" Tim said.

"Oh!" Lucas said. She stamped her foot. "You're impossible. All of you."

Vincent reappeared, climbing hand over hand up a floor lamp. He nestled among the light globes. He looked at Tim and chattered furiously in a high squeaky voice, rising onto his hind legs and waving his small arms in broad gestures. "Fun, huh?" Tim said. "If you find my golf shoes back in there, bring them out, will you?"

It was at this point, not any too soon, that Mr. Harris arrived.

Mr. Harris was large and (Continued on page 64)

Grunt, groan and get yourself a gimmick. That's the secret if you want to be king of the torso twisters—providing, of course, your manager is a slick guy who can arrange nothing but wins

What Gives in RASSLIN'

By C. L. "STEVE" MCPHERSON

with OREN ARNOLD

This is the lowdown on the grunt game as told by Steve McPherson, who has been promoting professional "wrestling exhibitions" in key American cities for the past 20 years

IF YOU have 200 or more pounds of healthy muscles and aren't over fifty years of age, you can get interesting work nowadays in our new, mid-century American vaudeville.

You won't perform on a conventional stage but you will play to increasing millions—on television. Your fees generally will be good. You will be called a wrestler, but don't let that fool you. Wrestling today is not what the Greeks and Romans envisioned. You may have to warp your conscience a little—but no more, I imagine, than any other showman must do. And the records indicate that you will enjoy emotional stability far greater than that of the average person who watches you on the screen at the neighborhood bar, and that you will die only after a happy old age.

I know whereof I speak, because for 20 years I have been hiring your type and developing it to meet an incredible demand. I have been an entrepreneur of wrestling—call it that—in dozens of cities, including Cleveland, Providence, St. Louis, Kansas City, Wheeling, Portland, Oregon, and Bellingham, Washington. I have even staged matches in Newfoundland and Gibraltar. I have made

two fortunes in the furtherance of this type of so-called combat, and my judgment in losing both through bad investments is no worse than that of wrestling fans who buy tickets thinking they are sure to see a real bout.

Skill with half nelsons, hammer locks and such is no longer the secret of professional wrestling. A change which came rather suddenly into this ancient form of physical competition has lifted it from pure sport to pure hippodrome. Recently I sat at the ringside in what Phoenix, Arizona, calls its Madison Square Garden and watched Hollywood's "Gorgeous George" perform. George might well have been a movie idol. He entered the ring clad in a silk robe that made him look like a Chinese potentate of 1200 A.D. Accompanying him was his valet, no less, who combed back his blond curls, removed the robe, adjusted the trunks—and sprayed the wrestler with perfume!

George tangled with a character called Managoff, and between falls, Managoff "heaped opprobrium"—I quote a local sports writer—on the Gorgeous One, on the valet and—worse—on the referee. All four of them began a sort of Comanche war dance around the ring while the galleries howled. When the "opprobrium" reached an unprintable limit, the referee, a sensitive individual no doubt, awarded the match to George. Why? So there could be a return match, of course.

Gorgeous George is currently one of the most unusual attractions in sports. People turn out by the thousands to hiss and boo him. I remember talking to a boy of twelve who had walked six miles through sleet and (Continued on page 75)

The more the fans hate a grappler, the bigger the box office take—Gorgeous George, with valet (below) and in lace, satin, bleached curls and flowers (left), is a sensation



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