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Lunch Bag Bob Risks All

[Jack Israel](#)

It was starting to rain. I was cutting through Philadelphia's Rittenhouse Square on my way to Suburban Station when whom should I see sitting forlornly on the usual miserable bench but Bob "Lunch Bag" Black.

"It's raining, buddy," I said. "Why don't you take cover?"

"Raining?" Bob replied abstractedly. "I was just coming up with some entrepreneurial ideas, now that I'm unemployable. Wanna hear?"

How could I refuse? I sat down beside him, holding my breath and my umbrella.

"One is cemeteries. What with the aging population. All you need is an acre and a lawn mower. Maybe not the mower. I passed a shaggy cemetery the other day in Manayunk. The sign said, 'Rick's Memorial Gardens.' I liked the informality."

"Sounds like a pet cemetery."

"Funny you should say that, 'cause my other idea involves pets."

"How's that?"

"I have five pigeons as pets, and I've named them after the big five CPA firms: Art, KP, Coop, Ernie, and DeShaun. Say, last week, when I was feeding them, a squirrel fell out of this tree and almost killed me! Sounded like a sand bag splatting on the ground. I thought it was dead but it gets up and saunters away like it wants me to kiss its furry ass. Then, a few minutes later, the stinker falls again. This time it limps, like Chester in "Gunsmoke." The point is, pets get sick."

"That's news?"

"Wait. After it rains, a puddle forms on the pavement here, on top of all my peanut shells. Art and KP fight to get at the peanut water. They flap and claw and screech but never land a punch. It's a cockfight, but with nerd birds. After all, they're named for accountants. As soon as it rains, Coop roosts on that branch over there and waits for the fireworks--the voyeur!"

"So, the idea?"

"Pet beverages, endorsed by veterinarians. A vet swears that some disgusting concoction tastes like Coke or Pepsi to Rover or Kitty, yet it prevents hairballs, heartworm, bladder infections, and fleas. You'd make a killing."

"Don't they sell that already?"

"Nope. I checked out a mega-pet store. I told the clerk I wanted a birthday treat for my cat, something to drink besides water, and the guy gave me a look. You should see that place. They've laid out lavish buffets: simulated meatballs, chocolate-herring mousse, chicken-kidney fricassee. It may come to that for me, you know. But it's not cheap."

"Here's an idea," I offered "How about pet *restaurants* ?"

"Think about it," Lunch Bag responded with a touch of scorn. "The 'diners' would go after each other's food and then after each other."

"True," I agreed.

"You have any pets?" asked Lunch Bag.

"No. My wife won't allow it."

"Does she work?"

"She's a homemaker."

"A good one?" Bob asked.

"I don't know," I replied thoughtfully. "How can you tell?"

"Do a *peer review* on her."

"What's a peer review?"

"In the CPA business, you have a competing firm come into your firm and report to the authorities whether you're doing things right. Sort of like inviting your worst enemy to stab you in the back."

"Why do they have them?" I asked.

"Too many unexpected bank failures back in the eighties," Bob shrugged.

"I had one done on my wife."

"How did it work?"

"I was surfing the net and found a web site called spankingclean.com. Had a photo of a bunch of babes in spandex waving broomsticks. I figured it was S&M. Actually, they're militant home economists offering to evaluate how you keep house, for a few hundred bucks. Like a wife audit. So I had 'em show up unexpectedly one morning at seven. A school day, too, because I wanted to see whether my kid was getting a good breakfast or whether the wife was shoving pop tarts down his throat. You see, it's like a white-glove test, but it covers financial and nutritional angles as well. . . is she using coupons, does she get the best values?"

" So, how'd she score?"

"Lousy. She only comes within 40% of maxing out on coupons. The kid was deficient in vitamins A and C. As for cleaning, the usual places were never touched, like toothbrush holders and behind the toilets. Also, we had a mouse."

"Why didn't she refuse?"

"It would mean she had something to hide."

"She must've been furious."

"What did I have to lose?"

This is the second of Jack Israel's ongoing Lunchbag-Bob series.



[Another Pam Winters cartoon](#)

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