

ATTORNEYS AT LUNCH

By

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FADE IN:

1 INT. COLLEGE DINING HALL - DAY

MASTER:

OPEN ON MAN IN A SUIT (BEN WITHERS), hungrily shoving undercooked cafeteria food down his throat. He stops gorging for a moment, checks his watch, and takes a gulp from his giant beverage. He looks around, frustrated, then looks to the NEWSPAPER next to his plate.

MEDIUM:

Ben at the table, picking up the paper to read the headline. A YOUNG MAN (ELI) walks up to the empty chair across from Ben - he appears to be well-dressed, normal, but we see nothing from the chest up, and neither does Ben at first.

ELI
Mister Withers?

BEN
Mm?

ELI
Um, I'm Eli. We spoke on the phone?

BEN
(dismissive)
Right, Eli. Hello. Sit down.

OVER THE SHOULDER:

From Eli's POV. While we can't see his face, it is VERY CLEAR there is something over his head.

ELI
I gotta say, I thought it was kind of weird meeting you here for a job interview...uh, but that's not to say I'm ungrateful for you saving me the trip across town. I just -

BEN
(still not looking)
I'm not one for formal interviews, Eli. One of the first things you'll learn working for me is I like to play thing fast and -

Ben looks up at Eli.

REVERSE SHOT:

He sees for the first time that ELI IS WEARING A RED SPIDERMAN MASK along with his normal clothes.

BACK TO ELI'S OTS:

Ben is still staring, mouth agape.

REVERSE SHOT:

Eli tilts his head slightly, confused.

ELI
Uh...Mister Withers?

TWO-SHOT:

BEN
(completely bewildered)
Uh...huh. What, uh...what did you say your name was?

ELI
Eli. Elijah Spaderman.

BEN
Uh-huh. Who put you up to this?

ELI
Put me up to what?

BEN
Oh, come -

Ben gestures at his own face, miming some kind of mask action, then points at Eli.

BEN
Elijah *Spider-Man*?

ELI
Spaderman. With an 'A'. It's German. Used to be Von Spaderman.

CLOSE UP:

BEN
(sarcastic)
Really? It's German? Used to be Von Spaderman?

CLOSE UP:

ELI
 (nervous)
 Did I...did I do something wrong?

MASTER:

Ben rolls up the newspaper and gets out of his chair. He takes one final gulp from his drink and sets the cup down on the table.

BEN
 Tell you what, (air quotes)'Elijah'
 - you want to have a serious job
 discussion, you have my number.
 This...this stunt? Not working for
 me.

CLOSE UP:

ELI
 Stunt...? I don't...

MASTER:

BEN
 Call me when you're done playing
 dress-up.

Ben walks away, leaving Eli confused, looking himself over - something wrong with his clothes?

CUT TO:

2 EXT. COLLEGE PARKING LOT - DAY

Ben is walking across the lot to his car when his phone rings. He sees the number belongs to his FIRM PARTNER, DOUG LENNON, and answers.

BEN
 Hey, Doug!

DOUG (O.S.)
 Don't you 'Hey, Doug' me, you son
 of a bitch. Did you pay the rent?

BEN
 Uh...what?

CUT TO:

3 INT. DOUG'S OFFICE - DAY

Doug spins his chair away from his computer to meet to the camera in a CLOSE UP.

DOUG

The rent! The rent! The money we give the crazy Turkish lady down the block every month to keep the power on at the office!

4 EXT. COLLEGE PARKING LOT - DAY

Ben finds his car, looks for his keys.

BEN

Yeah...about that. I've been thinking...

DOUG (O.S.)

Christ.

BEN

A legal clinic in the middle of a bankrupt town during a recession? That location is a disaster, Doug. An angry mob waiting to happen.

5 INT. DOUG'S OFFICE - DAY

Doug chews on a pencil.

DOUG

Ben...

6 EXT. COLLEGE PARKING LOT - DAY

Ben finds his keys, unlocks the door, and enters his car.

BEN

We should just work out of your office until this economy business blows over. You know, pinch pennies and all that.

DOUG (O.S.)

I am not going to host pro bono pity parties in my living room.

7 INT. DOUG'S OFFICE - DAY

Doug sorts through a mess of papers.

DOUG

I'm already up to my neck in all this housing violation crap you keep sending me. The last thing I need is a near-homeless grandmother giving me the stink eye for remodeling my kitchen.

BEN (O.S.)

You're really going through with that?

DOUG

(yelling)

It's Italian marble, Ben! You don't second guess Italian marble!

8 INT. BEN'S CAR

Ben puts Doug on speaker, sticks the phone in a cup holder.

BEN

I guess you don't. Listen, I gotta go. This interview thing was a bust.

DOUG (O.S.)

What happened? He didn't show?

BEN

No, he showed up. Guy's a total nut, though. Came in dressed up like it was Halloween.

DOUG (O.S.)

We need someone to organize this crap, Ben. All right? I didn't go to Yale to sit around alphabetizing index cards.

BEN

Uh-huh.

DOUG (O.S.)

Listen, get the rent money. If you hurry you can catch Missus Kilic before she checks out for the night.

BEN
I hear you.

DOUG (O.S.)
Really? Because I didn't hear -

BEN & DOUG
(in unison)
I will get the money, Douglas.

DOUG (O.S.)
That's my boy. Remember, lunch at
the Imperial, tomorrow.

MONTAGE:

(Note: Credits will be laid over this to serve as the
opening for future episodes)

Ben driving through a rough part of town as the sun goes
down - more shops boarded up than not, going out of business
signs everywhere except for food. Diners, pizza places, fast
food joints are all going strong.

9 EXT. BANK ATM - NIGHT

After parking his car, Ben walks past a MAN IN A WINTER COAT
and slides his card through the bank reader to unlock the
door. He goes in, uses the ATM, and comes back out to find
the man sitting on the front of his car.

BEN
Hey!

Ben hastily walks over to his car, upset.

BEN
Hey, get off the car!

Just as he comes within arm's length, the man in the winter
coat stands, and POINTS A GUN at Ben.

MAN IN COAT
I want your money.

BEN
Hey, man, relax...

MAN IN COAT
Gimme your money.

Ben hands over his wallet.

BEN
Go ahead, buddy. Take it.
Just...relax. You want my watch?

MAN IN COAT
I don't want your damn watch!

The man in the winter coat snatches Ben's wallet, and goes through the contents, all the while keeping the gun pointed at Ben's chest.

BEN
Listen, man, take it all. I don't care. Just let me walk away -

MAN IN COAT
I take what I need!

The man takes a few bills from Ben's wallet - forty, fifty dollars - and tosses it on the ground. He backs away from Ben, and ducks into an alleyway. He is gone before Ben can turn after him.

BEN
(in shock)
Jesus.

Ben returns to his car, pale and shaking.

10 EXT. OFFICE BUILDING - NIGHT

Ben sits in his car, stupefied by the night's ordeal, parked outside of his own office. He sits frozen until the landlady MRS. KILIC, walks by, an EVICTION NOTICE in her hands.

BEN
Shit!

Practically falling out of the car, Ben rushes to the landlady's side with the money in hand.

BEN
Missus Kilic! Missus Kilic, it's me!

She SPINS, squealing, and whips out a CAN OF PEPPER SPRAY, releasing a thin mist Ben barely avoids.

BEN
Jesus, lady!

MRS. KILIC
Ah, the baby lawyer. I thought you
were a rapist!

BEN
No. No, Missus Kilic, I'm not a
rapist. I'm here to pay this
month's rent.

MRS. KILIC
This month's rent? This month's
rent was due two days ago, baby
lawyer.

BEN
I know, I know, and believe me, I
appreciate your patience. I've got
it right here, see?

She perks up, tempted by the fluttering bills in Ben's hand.

MRS. KILIC
Yeah? Seven hundred cash?

BEN
Seven - well, no, not exactly seven
hundred.

Kilic's half-smile fades; she's heard this before.

MRS. KILIC
Not exactly, eh?

BEN
(smiling)
I'm a little short...but what do
you say we leave it at six-fifty
and I'll pay you the difference
with next month's rent?

MRS. KILIC
Oh, next month's rent? When I get
it in July? No, I'm thinking it's
best you go now, baby lawyer.

BEN
Wha - you can't just keep us out.
All our casework is in there!
Important legal documents!

MRS. KILIC
I will have my husband come by
tomorrow afternoon to let you in,
collect your things.

BEN

We have a client tomorrow
afternoon! We need to prepare!

Kilic is already marching down the sidewalk to her own home,
leaving Ben holding the crumpled eviction notice and his
not-exactly seven hundred dollars.

MRS. KILIC

Prepare at home! Easy commute! Bye
bye!

11 INT. DINER - DAY

TWO-SHOT:

Doug sits across from Ben, chewing an omelet in between
words.

DOUG

(chewing)

She kicked you out?

BEN

Us. She kicked us out.

DOUG

Do you have any idea how long it
took me to find that place? It's
the only building around for miles
that isn't infested with rats
and...and snakes and shit!

BEN

There are no snakes here. Anywhere.

DOUG

Don't change the subject! We have
twelve hundred - twelve *freaking*
hundred - hours of community
service left, and now we don't have
an office to do them from. You
screwed us. You screwed us,
Benny-boy!

BEN

I know. I know!

DOUG

Now, we got a guy that's gonna be
waiting outside that building in
two hours. His name's Marvin

(MORE)

DOUG (cont'd)
Powers, he's a mechanic. Laid off,
losing his kids to CPS. How are you
going to fix this?

CLOSE UP:

Ben doesn't answer immediately. He looks around, pokes his
food...

BEN
I'll take care of it.

TWO-SHOT:

DOUG
You'll take care of it? Like you,
like you took care of the rent?

BEN
I'll take care of it, Doug. Go
home. Okay?

CLOSE UP:

Doug locks eyes with Ben, swallows the last bite of his
omelet, and angrily gulps his coffee.

BEN
Okay.

TWO-SHOT:

Doug stands up, gathers the client's paperwork, and dumps it
on the table in front of Ben.

DOUG
There you go, buddy. Take care of
it. I'm gonna go home and polish my
kitchen counter. Maybe watch some
Ellen.

BEN
She's great, isn't she?

DOUG
I'm more of an Anderson Cooper guy.

12 EXT. OFFICE BUILDING - AFTERNOON

Ben pulls up to the building again, gets out with a handful of papers to find a man in an ill-fitting suit standing at the front door.

BEN

Sorry I'm late, Mister Powers.
Traffic's a real...

The man turns around, and Ben immediately recognizes his face as that of the MAN IN THE WINTER COAT. The papers fly out of his hands as he relives that moment again - and the man seems to as well, overcome with fear and shame.

MARVIN

Now, w-wait, I...I didn't mean...

Stiff, almost robotic, Ben ignores the man and returns to his car, pulls out of the spot, and drives away.

13 INT. BEN'S CAR

Ben rides in silence, speeding away, getting as far as he can from the man that nearly shot him over fifty dollars the night before. When he has at last reached a suitable distance, he begins to loosen up, almost tearing up.

BEN

Shit.

He pulls over. Thinks hard about what he's about to do - it's a mistake. It's got to be.

BEN

Shit.

14 EXT. OFFICE BUILDING - NIGHT

Marvin is leaning against the building when Ben pulls up and rolls down the passenger side window. They exchange looks, and the door clicks unlocked.

BEN

You hungry?

15 INT. DINER - NIGHT

Ben walks over to a booth with a tray of burgers, fries, and drinks, where Marvin waits, trying to disguise the hunger in his eyes.

BEN

You look hungry. Couldn't fit a meal into last night's itinerary?

MARVIN

My son, Bobby...he's got asthma. I was gonna get his medicine yesterday afternoon, but the insurance expired. I...I just needed enough to get him a refill.

BEN

Where's your wife, Marvin?

MARVIN

Heart attack. Died two years back. Her family up and left, too. Just me and the boys.

BEN

Your boys know what you do at night?

MARVIN

Now, you listen here - I am not proud of what I've done. I'm not. But I damn sure would do it again if my baby needed it. Now, I didn't hurt anybody. I told you, I -

BEN

Take what you need. Right, I remember. What about the gun?

MARVIN

That's Bobby's. It's an old BB gun he found in the yard a few years back.

Ben SMILES.

BEN

That's some fine acting.

MARVIN

I minored in theater arts.

BEN

You went to college?

MARVIN

Culinary school, three years.
Dropped out when their mom died. My
cousin got me a job at the auto
body shop he worked in. You know,
just until this economy thing blows
over, 'til I could get things back
together...funny how things always
start that way, huh?

BEN

Yeah.

16 EXT. CRUDDY STREET - DAY

Ben and Doug walk together, chili dogs and Slurpees in hand.

BEN

So I put in a good word for him at
the Imperial. Short order cook's
not the happiest ending, but it
beats losing your home and kids.

DOUG

Our hobo dad turns out to be some
kinda master chef. Freaking diamond
in the rough.

BEN

So?

DOUG

So what?

BEN

Aren't you going to congratulate
me? I saved that guy's family.

DOUG

No, I'm not gonna congratulate you.
You lost our office! What are you,
nuts?

BEN

Actually, I've been thinking.

DOUG

Oh, here we freaking go...

BEN
...I think I've got a solution to
this whole office thing.

DOUG
Yeah, what?

Ben pulls a business card from his wallet, hands it to Doug
- it reads

ATTORNEYS AT LUNCH

LEGAL ADVICE & ITALIAN ICE

Located at The IMPERIAL DINER

DOUG
(reading the card)
Attorneys at Lunch...legal advice
and Italian ice? What are you
smoking?

BEN
Hear me out - it's a nice space, we
know the owners...

DOUG
We eat there, Ben!

BEN
Exactly! What better way to earn a
client's trust than to break bread
with them?

DOUG
Break bread - what are we,
baptizing them?

BEN
That's...that's not even...look, I
already talked to them. We see our
clients there, as long as everybody
orders something to eat, it's cool.

DOUG
Oh, so, basically, you've created a
scenario where, in addition to
helping homeless crazies file
claims against Martians sending
signals into their brains, you've
got me running a soup kitchen out
of our favorite lunch spot.

BEN
Basically, yeah.

Having lost his appetite, Doug throws his chili dog in the garbage. They start walking back to their cars.

DOUG
Wonderful.

BEN
I knew you'd think so.

DOUG
Oh, I hired that Spaderman guy.

BEN
You what?

DOUG
Yeah. Hired him. He's our new intern.

BEN
Seriously?

DOUG
Yeah, he's a nice guy. Friendly, neighborhood...guy.