

THE ADVOCATE AND THE AUTHORITY

By

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7-22-2018

FADE IN:

INT. WHITE OFFICE - MORNING

In the near future -- in a SMALL WHITE OFFICE, in a typical office building, in a typical downtown, in a typical city -- THE ADVOCATE (male, 50s) sits at a CONTEMPORARY WHITE OFFICE DESK, across from THE AUTHORITY (female, 30s). The Advocate is wearing a WHITE SUIT. The Authority is thin and somewhat disheveled, in DARK-GREY SLACKS and a DARK-GREEN WAIST COAT that has a SILVER, CIRCULAR INSIGNIA on the left lapel. She looks as if she has not slept well for some time.

A LARGE WINDOW to the left of the office desk extends from floor to ceiling so that PEDESTRIANS can be seen going about their business.

There is no indication of any kind as to what takes place in this office.

The scene commences with the Authority having just settled into her seat as the Advocate looks over some documentation in a white file folder.

ADVOCATE

So, it says here that you've come for a consultation regarding a prescription for the DECISION PILL.

AUTHORITY

Yes, that's correct. Do you know how long this will take? I wasn't really told what to expect.

ADVOCATE

I must apologize for that. It really varies from person to person -- but I would guess no more than a half hour.

He smiles reassuringly.

AUTHORITY

Great.

The Advocate closes the folder and sets it aside.

ADVOCATE

Okay, let's begin. So, we're just going to have a conversation, and hopefully by the end of it, we'll be in a better place to determine whether or not the Decision Pill is a viable solution for you. How's that sound?

AUTHORITY
Sounds fine. I'm ready.

The Advocate smiles then settles into his chair.

ADVOCATE
So, how did you hear about us here
at THE CONSILIUM?

AUTHORITY
Actually, through an ATTENDANT.

ADVOCATE
Oh? Your *own* Attendant?

AUTHORITY
Yes. Well, my district's
Attendant. He was assigned to us
last year just after I was...
(points to her insignia)
... "promoted."

ADVOCATE
Not a promotion you wanted?

AUTHORITY
No. Not at all.

ADVOCATE
I see. And the Attendant could not
help you?

AUTHORITY
Not for lack of trying. It was he
who suggested I come here. He said
coming here and talking about some
kind of *black pill* had helped him
out quite a bit. He didn't really
go into detail -- just said coming
here might do me some good.

ADVOCATE
Ah, I'm glad he was able to point
you our way.

He reaches into his desk drawer.

ADVOCATE (CONT'D)
And speaking of pills... the one I
believe you seek is not black...

He places a CLEAR BOTTLE OF YELLOW PILLS onto the desk.

ADVOCATE (CONT'D)
...but yellow.

The Authority's eyes light up.

AUTHORITY

There's really a pill that can
make decisions for us?

ADVOCATE

Truth be told, we don't prescribe
many of these... I honestly can't
recall ever prescribing one.

AUTHORITY

Really? Why is that?

ADVOCATE

If I'm correct, the side effect is
particularly off-putting.

AUTHORITY

Oh?

The Advocate picks up the bottle and reads over its label
to himself, then...

ADVOCATE

Apparently, upon taking the pill,
whatever decision you've been
struggling with will be decided
for you, at which time, you will
lose your freedom.

AUTHORITY

(skeptically)

Lose my freedom?

(pauses, laughs)

What does that even mean?

ADVOCATE

However you experience freedom,
you will no longer be able to do
so.

AUTHORITY

(puzzled)

However I experience freedom? Um.

ADVOCATE

Yes. I take it you've never
thought about this before.

(laughs)

Who has, right?

He sets the bottle of pills down and leans forward, folding
his arms together upon the desk.

ADVOCATE (CONT'D)

But seriously, take a moment to
think about it now. How do you
experience freedom?

AUTHORITY
(thinks, then meekly)
I guess by doing *what* I want...
when I want.

ADVOCATE
And deciding for yourself the
direction of your own life?

AUTHORITY
Yes, I suppose so.

The Advocate leans back in his chair and glances out the office window. He looks back at the Authority without saying a word.

AUTHORITY (CONT'D)
(puzzled)
Okay... Are you saying if I lose
my freedom, I won't be able to
decide things for myself?

ADVOCATE
Well, if exercising your ability
to choose -- to decide --
qualifies for you what it means to
be free, then yes, it would seem
so.

He sighs and motions to the bottle of pills.

ADVOCATE (CONT'D)
Now do you see why we rarely
prescribe these?

AUTHORITY
(laughs)
Well, I literally have nothing to
lose, then. I haven't been able to
decide anything for myself in
ages, so... "lose my freedom"? I
can't lose what I don't have.

She looks out at the people milling about on the street.

ADVOCATE
Oh? Has this been a pattern for
you?

AUTHORITY
What? Being indecisive?

ADVOCATE
Yes.

AUTHORITY
(laughs slightly)
Unfortunately.

She looks into her lap.

ADVOCATE

So, what do you typically do,
then, when you need to make a
decision?

AUTHORITY

Well, I don't... Sometimes other
people decide for me. That's been
my *modus operandi* for a while now.

ADVOCATE

You avoid making decisions
altogether?

AUTHORITY

Yes... I guess most of the time I
just let them come to their own
natural conclusions -- let them
work themselves out.

She half-smiles then looks away.

ADVOCATE

And that hasn't worked?

AUTHORITY

(shrugs)

It works, sort of... but it sucks.

ADVOCATE

Why?

AUTHORITY

Oh, come on. You know.

(looks away)

It makes me seem weak. Makes me
feel ashamed of myself because
apparently, I can't even decide
the simplest things.

ADVOCATE

Have they *all* been simple things?

AUTHORITY

I think some of them should have
been.

ADVOCATE

And you seem weak? To whom?

AUTHORITY

People who know me. Family,
co-workers... friends...

She laughs as she shakes her head.

ADVOCATE
What's going on with your friends?

AUTHORITY
(sighs, defeated)
I haven't spoken to them in ages.
They've stopped calling, stopped
reaching out.

ADVOCATE
They have... or you have?

The Authority doesn't respond. She tries to avoid eye contact with the Advocate. She stands, approaches the window, and begins to cry softly. The Advocate simply listens.

AUTHORITY
Oh god, why am I crying? This is
so silly.

ADVOCATE
Silly?

He rises from his chair.

ADVOCATE (CONT'D)
How are tears ever silly? We are
born with the ability to cry, so
why shouldn't we from time to
time?

He removes a box of tissues from a desk drawer then joins the Authority at the window. He places a hand gently on her shoulder then offers her a tissue.

The Authority sighs then wipes her face.

AUTHORITY
I wasn't expecting to fall apart
like this. I'm so sorry.

ADVOCATE
No need to apologize. Tears often
fall freely in this space, almost
as if it were a condition to be
here.

He hands her another tissue, then sets the box down.

AUTHORITY
Thanks.

ADVOCATE
Things have been building up for a
while, yes?

AUTHORITY

You can say that again.

The Advocate observes the activity taking place outside. He remains quiet for a moment. Then abruptly...

ADVOCATE

(gestures to the people
outside)

Take a look them.

AUTHORITY

The SUFFERING? What about them?

ADVOCATE

Do you ever wonder about them?

AUTHORITY

Well yes, it's a large part of my
work?

ADVOCATE

(chuckles)

Sorry, I'm being vague. An
unfortunate shortcoming of mine...
What I mean is, they're all
obligated to be here...
paradoxically, *obligated to be
free*. We all are, right? It can be
difficult.

AUTHORITY

Yes, it can. And *free*?
(laughs half-heartedly)
Like I said, I'm not so sure I am.

ADVOCATE

No?

AUTHORITY

No. This life feels more like my
taskmaster... like I've become its
slave -- a slave to its demands --
if that makes any sense.

ADVOCATE

Hmm. I've heard people suggest
that they feel imprisoned by life,
but to feel *enslaved*? That sounds,
by far, much worse.

AUTHORITY

Yeah, it doesn't feel very good.
(looks away)
I don't really want to be here
much of the time.

ADVOCATE

I understand.

(pauses, thinking)

But if life does indeed have such power, such *authority* over you, enough so to enslave you, then what do you think it wants?

AUTHORITY

What do I think *life* wants? I'm not sure it wants anything.

(laughs)

Maybe it's a sadist.

ADVOCATE

(chuckles)

Ah, so life takes pleasure in your suffering -- keeping you in bondage?

AUTHORITY

It certainly feels that way.

The Advocate turns and walks halfway across the room. He speaks almost inaudibly to himself. The Authority watches.

ADVOCATE

If one is in bondage, then one is not free, and to be in bondage is really what it means to be a slave... so a slave is someone who is necessarily not free. But then freedom would be determined by one's circumstances, which doesn't seem --

AUTHORITY

Excuse me?

ADVOCATE

Oh, sorry. Another habit of mine -- pondering aloud.

(smiles)

But, just maybe, freedom is not something that can be determined by our circumstances. Maybe it's not a thing that can be determined at all.

AUTHORITY

So you're saying that I can't determine whether or not I'm free?

ADVOCATE

I'm just thinking that it's more likely the case that it's our experience of our circumstances

that can cause us to *feel* as if we
are *not* free.

AUTHORITY
(scratches her head)
I suppose that makes sense.

ADVOCATE
And experiences can vary.

AUTHORITY
(incredulously)
Really?

She looks outside at the Suffering.

AUTHORITY (CONT'D)
The experience of all this can
vary?
(laughs)
I don't see how.

ADVOCATE
I know it seems hard to believe,
especially in the midst of all
this tragedy.

He gestures to the Suffering.

ADVOCATE (CONT'D)
But it could be the case that how
we view our circumstances is
subjective... not objective
reality. Like the experience of
beauty. Whether or not a thing is
beautiful is in the eye of the
beholder, as they say.

The Authority considers this for a moment, then...

AUTHORITY
That seems to make sense, sure. I
mean, I suppose it's possible that
someone else might not perceive
this horror in the same way I do.

She points to the Suffering and laughs somewhat under her
breath.

AUTHORITY (CONT'D)
But if I'm not directly
experiencing freedom, but instead,
my circumstances, what then is
freedom? Surely there's some
textbook or dictionary definition
that we *all* tend to agree upon?

ADVOCATE

Yes, I'm sure an official, published definition of freedom exists, but the precondition for the validity of any such idea is not that the idea be published, nor even that the idea be accepted by the masses -- that particular precondition is determined solely by the individual who gets to decide whether an idea fits appropriately into his or her worldview, for better or worse.

AUTHORITY

So then what is freedom to you?

ADVOCATE

I'm glad you added the qualification *to you*. You should understand that these ideas of mine are just that, *mine* -- they need not be yours.

AUTHORITY

I appreciate that.

ADVOCATE

But yes...

He begins to pace around the office.

AUTHORITY (CONT'D)

...any description of freedom beyond the subjective must take into account the temporal nature of human existence. To exist as a human being is necessarily to be connected to the free flow of time. And just like time, we too are free, obligated to be so, meaning, we are non-fixed, non-determined, and always evolving. These are all ways to describe a *free* state of being. This is how I define freedom as an objective concept. It is not something that comes and goes -- it is always there. It is our *experience* of our circumstances that causes us to feel -- falsely -- that we are *unfree*. But just because we *feel* less free at certain times does not mean that freedom is absent. Just as one may experience a work of art to be lacking in beauty does not suggest that beauty does not exist.

The Authority returns to her chair and sits, thinking.

AUTHORITY
That's a lot to absorb, but I
suppose I get what you're saying.

She pauses then laughs, shaking her head.

AUTHORITY (CONT'D)
You must think I'm stupid for
calling myself a slave.

The Advocate returns to his chair and sits.

ADVOCATE
(smiles)
Hardly. I actually empathize with
you on that point. I too can
sometimes *feel* oppressed by our
current predicament.

He looks out at the Suffering.

ADVOCATE (CONT'D)
Yet, I am not a slave. And if you
accept what I've just described,
that freedom exists a priori, as a
condition of our existence, that
it is always present regardless of
whether or not you *feel* free, you
will not be able to logically make
the claim that you are a slave.
You will know that to ultimately
identify yourself as such would
not be congruent with what is true
of our human existence... that we
are -- by obligation -- free.

AUTHORITY
And what good would that do me?

ADVOCATE
If you do not identify yourself as
a slave, then you will be free to
choose another *way of being* that
is more congruent with the nature
of your existence.

AUTHORITY
Free to *choose*? But my choices --
if I have any -- seem pretty
limited.

ADVOCATE
They are most assuredly so. But a
limited set of options does not
beget enslavement. When you

consider freedom to be solely derived from the set of all possible physical actions available to you -- then yes, it makes sense that you would perceive yourself to be *unfree*. Yet our agency need not solely express itself as a physical manifestation.

AUTHORITY

No?

ADVOCATE

No. There is also what you might call cognitive -- or spiritual -- agency. It has to do with our freedom to think, to imagine, and to choose. Such cannot be taken away or limited by our circumstances, that is, of course, excluding the moment of death, or states of unconsciousness which preclude the mind of its normal functioning.

AUTHORITY

(pauses, thinking)

Okay, I get that I'm free to think and imagine anything I want at any time, but you also mentioned choice. That's the part I'm having trouble with. Even considering this "spiritual agency," I still can't see what I can choose?

ADVOCATE

You can choose *what* to think, *what* to imagine, and *when* to do so.

AUTHORITY

Ah, I kind of answered my own question, didn't I?

ADVOCATE

(grins)

The best way to answer any question, really.

AUTHORITY

But how does that help? I mean, so what? I'm free to think and imagine whatever and whenever I want. This doesn't change the fact that I'm still bound to my external circumstances.

ADVOCATE

Because you *believe* you are bound, your lived experience is that of *being* bound -- you effectively enslave yourself. But you, Authority, are the agent of that particular belief, meaning, you get to *choose* what to believe. So, as long as you *choose* to continue identifying yourself as a being wholly determined by your external circumstances, you will remain bound, whether your bindings are real or not.

AUTHORITY

You really think I'm choosing this?

She motions to the Suffering beyond the office window.

AUTHORITY (CONT'D)

Why would I?

ADVOCATE

No one has *chosen* this, Authority. We have all been victimized...

He motions to the Suffering.

ADVOCATE (CONT'D)

But this need not mean you *be* a victim.

AUTHORITY

Then how would you have me engage all this?

ADVOCATE

As I said earlier, you can choose to identify with a *way of being* that is congruent with the free-flowing, evolving nature of our human existence.

AUTHORITY

What exactly do you mean by *way of being*?

ADVOCATE

(smiles)

A *modus operandi*, of course.

AUTHORITY

You were listening.

ADVOCATE

Of course.

(smiles)

But seriously, a way of being is a kind of dynamic stance we assume, regardless of intentionality, that determines the way in which we engage the world -- our actions. It often reveals itself as the outward expression of an inward intention to connect with what we value most. It is not a label, or a title, or any kind of role. Those are static determinations brought about by context which may or may not be derivative of one's way of being. To identify with a way of being, as opposed to a determination, more intimately aligns us with the free nature of human existence, which, as I suggested, is necessarily non-fixed, non-determined, and always evolving.

AUTHORITY

(laughs)

Okay, not so sure I follow all that.

ADVOCATE

(embarrassed, laughs)

I know, I know. I can be long-winded --

The Authority leans forward and places her hand on the desk.

AUTHORITY

No, no, it's okay. It's just a lot all at once... but I sense you really do know what you're talking about. Just... maybe you could give me an example of... what did you call it? A *way of being*?

ADVOCATE

(blushes slightly)

Yes, a way of being... And an example? Sure... and I'll try to be a bit more succinct.

He laughs as he relaxes into his chair.

ADVOCATE (CONT'D)

Hypothetically, you could choose to be someone whose actions reflect the fact that you value the well-being of others. The keywords here are *action* and

value. One's way of being reveals itself through one's value-inspired actions.

AUTHORITY

Okay.

(pauses, thinking)

I think I got that, but what good would it do me to identify with a way of being such that I value the well-being of others?

ADVOCATE

You would be engaged in creating meaning in your life whereas nothing meaningful could ever come from your identification as a slave -- that act would literally be *de-meaning*.

AUTHORITY

And meaning is --

ADVOCATE

The sustenance of life. Where there is meaning there is hope, possibility.

The Authority thinks to herself for a moment.

AUTHORITY

Okay, but how am I supposed to express the idea that I value the well-being of others?

ADVOCATE

For one, you could help others who find themselves in the same or similar situation.

AUTHORITY

Sorry to keep sounding like a broken record, but *how* should I help?

ADVOCATE

You could *listen* to them. You could *relate* to their suffering by *sharing* your own. You could simply be with them in a way that does not perpetuate their experience of misery.

AUTHORITY

And this will give my life... meaning...

ADVOCATE
(smiles)
Is that a question?

The Authority laughs. A calmness seems to overcome her.

AUTHORITY
(pauses, looks into her
lap)
No. I think I understand.

She rises and again approaches the window. She speaks without facing the Advocate.

AUTHORITY (CONT'D)
It sounds like what you're getting at is that we shouldn't accept our labels, titles, or roles -- what you're calling determinations -- as who we are. That makes sense when it comes to a label like "slave" -- it's pretty much a derogatory term. But why not identify with the more positive roles? I mean, don't you identify with your role as an Advocate?

ADVOCATE
Identifying with one's role differs from referring to oneself as someone who performs the functions of said role. I *refer* to myself as an Advocate in the context of performing my job duties, yet I do not identify with *being* an Advocate. Reference, in this way, is a convention we employ in order to more economically communicate with one another. Problems can arise, though, when we confuse convention for objective reality -- when we actually come to believe that we are nothing more than our roles.

AUTHORITY
What kind of problems?

ADVOCATE
Let's take you, for example. If you come to believe that you are nothing more than the sum of the functions you perform as an Authority, you might begin to express your being in an ever more increasingly rigid way. You may come to believe that your way is the right and only way, not merely

one of several possible ways. Thus, you will become incapable of entertaining ideas or thoughts that do not rigidly support or reflect your own. Attempts at getting you to listen to reason will be fruitless. People in such a state cannot step outside of themselves to gauge the world from another's perspective.

AUTHORITY

It sounds like you're describing me.

ADVOCATE

Well, maybe not entirely. You seem to be doing rather well with listening to reason...
(grins)
...so far.

AUTHORITY

(smiles)

It also seems narcissistic. Reminds me of people who assume we follow their particular religious views or political leanings... like, without knowing the first thing about us. It's like they have no sense that other people could possibly believe any other way.

ADVOCATE

Yes, unfortunately many people strongly identify with their religious and/or political determinations rather than with any underlying way of being. They essentially allow their religious views, political affiliations, or other dogmatic stances to determine who they are, rather than allowing a way of being to inspire this.

AUTHORITY

Are you suggesting it's wrong to follow a religion or be involved in politics?

ADVOCATE

No, not at all, as long as you are certain that your values, those that drive your way of being, align appropriately with those of the organization with which you

choose to affiliate. In other words, you should not have to bend yourself or alter what or how you believe in order to align more perfectly with the particular way of being of your affiliations. Also, it helps to be aware that organizations are highly prone, if not more so than the individual, of becoming rigid in their own ways. An organization that will not entertain the idea of change simply because it has operated a certain way for millennia, well... that's one to avoid.

AUTHORITY

That makes sense.

ADVOCATE

Identifying with a determination can also cause you to become complacent. The complacent individual believes that *she*...

(emphasizes the word "she")

...has made it, that *she's* reached the pinnacle of her life's endeavors, so *she* need no longer engage the world, *she* need no longer participate in her own evolution as a human being.

AUTHORITY

(pauses)

Well, maybe that's true for her. What's wrong with being satisfied with reaching a goal -- with taking a break?

ADVOCATE

There's not a thing wrong with attaining one's goals, nor with experiencing the satisfaction that naturally goes along with doing so, so long as *she* understands that in reaching her goals *she* is not, somehow, finished or complete.

AUTHORITY

Okay, but what would happen if I...

(corrects herself)

...if *she* believed she were finished?

The Advocate rises from his chair and stands beside the Authority at the window. He crosses his arms and scratches his chin.

ADVOCATE
So, is that it?

AUTHORITY
(confused)
Is what it?

ADVOCATE
You think you are finished?

AUTHORITY
(looks at the floor)
Um, no, I wasn't talking about
myself --

The Advocate faces the Authority.

ADVOCATE
Look at me.

The Authority looks at the Advocate.

ADVOCATE (CONT'D)
(with especially precise
enunciation)
With the passing of time, you will
come to experience yourself as
less and less effective. You will
no longer actively participate in
your life, nor engage the world as
you once had -- instead, you will
believe you have stopped the
progression of time, but really
you have only given up the reins
to become its passenger. From that
vantage, you will observe the
world as it seems to pass you by,
people you once knew moving on,
carrying on, growing, leaving you
behind while you sit still,
stagnate, and drown in a sea of
your own self-imposed
self-loathing. You will wonder why
you must suffer so -- you will
castigate the universe for the
fact that you never had your
fifteen minutes. You will blame
everyone and every circumstance
for your suffering. You will
become bitter. You will come to
experience a deep passivity, a
powerlessness beyond measure, a
sense that you are no longer the

authority over your own life, but
its slave.

The Authority remains quiet. She looks at the Advocate, and puts a hand to her mouth, her eyes welling up, then...

AUTHORITY
How do you know all of this?

ADVOCATE
(smiles gently, and in a
hushed tone)
Because you live, and you breathe,
Authority.

The Authority returns to watching the activity outside. Notices a young man in glasses sitting alone beneath a chestnut tree. He seems to be deep in thought, writing in a journal of some kind. She watches him for no particular reason as he continues to think, to write. Soon, a single tear is loosed upon her cheek. She turns to the Advocate and stares at him for a moment...

AUTHORITY
I can't do this anymore. It's
become pointless, and it's making
me... ill.

She nearly falls to her knees, but the Advocate catches her and helps her regain her balance, then...

AUTHORITY (CONT'D)
(sobbing)
This decision, I can't... I know
now... it would be my end. But I
can't go on this way. I'm so
alone. Please help me.

The Advocate holds her hands in his own and simply smiles. He brushes a lock of hair from her face.

ADVOCATE
I'm right here.

AUTHORITY
I feel so powerless. What sort of
Authority could ever feel so
inept, ineffective, and incapable
of speaking her mind?

ADVOCATE
Well, let's put it this way, the
Authority who claims to have never
felt such things... is no
Authority.

AUTHORITY
But I feel this way *all* the time!

ADVOCATE

It sounds, then, that maybe change is needed. That pill, though...
(points to the bottle)
...does not promise change. Its promise is one of continued enslavement... or worse. I have a feeling you see that now, yes?

AUTHORITY

So it *can't* make this decision for me?

ADVOCATE

Taking a pill, not taking a pill... This decision of yours, whatever it may be, will be made regardless, yes? You said it yourself, these things tend to work themselves out whether or not you participate.
(pauses)
But you aren't really here to escape making a decision.

AUTHORITY

What do you mean?

ADVOCATE

You came here to escape *responsibility* for the outcome of the decision you *think* the pill can make for you. If you aren't happy with the decision, blame the pill, right? Plausible deniability? But now, Authority, you have an opportunity before you, one that promises true, lasting liberation, not momentary escape.

AUTHORITY

How?

The Advocate smiles but does not respond.

AUTHORITY (CONT'D)

(thinks)
But I don't know which way of being I would choose.

ADVOCATE

That you would consider choosing at all is a good sign.

AUTHORITY

Of what?

ADVOCATE

That you are free, not a slave --
that you are something much more
than this.

He gently tugs on her lapel, indicating her insignia. After pausing, he lets go.

ADVOCATE (CONT'D)

You are not just the Authority
over them...

He points to the Suffering.

ADVOCATE (CONT'D)

...but over your own agency.

AUTHORITY

(half smiles, wiping her
eyes)
I'm scared.

The Advocate retrieves the tissues from his desk and offers one to the Authority.

ADVOCATE

(smiles)

I would expect no less an honest
statement from someone who *freely*
chose to play a role reversing all
this...

He turns and looks out at the Suffering.

ADVOCATE (CONT'D)

...a strong sign that you are
going to be alright.

AUTHORITY

You make it sound so simple.

ADVOCATE

Then allow me to apologize. This
is no simple undertaking. We are
talking about changing your life.
Let no one ever convince
you of the existence of a quick,
one-size-fits-all fix for such a
thing. Any plan for change *must*
take your unique, individual
experience of the world into
account. Hence, I'll not simply
tell you to choose a way of being
and have you be on your way. I
would be doing you violence, and
that is not my way.

AUTHORITY

But you offer a pill that promises
a "quick fix."

ADVOCATE

Yes, I do *offer*.

AUTHORITY

(thinks)

Ah, yes. You mentioned you
couldn't recall ever prescribing
one.

ADVOCATE

Mhm.

AUTHORITY

(pauses)

So, my district's Attendant... the
man who encouraged me to come here
to the Consilium, to speak with
you, did he take that black --

ADVOCATE

(shakes his head)

Even if there were such a thing --

AUTHORITY

No, I had a feeling it was too
good to be true.

The Advocate cocks his head to the side, seemingly
surprised.

ADVOCATE

So why did you come?

AUTHORITY

I needed... I don't know, I guess
I needed... this. Whatever this
is... or was.

ADVOCATE

It was what you needed, that's
all.

AUTHORITY

(sighs)

So what do I do now?

ADVOCATE

You begin.

AUTHORITY

Begin?

ADVOCATE

Yes, you begin to nurture that spark growing inside you...

He gently taps her chest.

ADVOCATE (CONT'D)

...by holding on to the idea that you are not a slave, that to be a slave is an impossibility. You become curious... curious about a new way of being, one that will house that spark so that it can become the flame that ignites your passion, that drives your re-engagement with the world, that reintroduces you to the *authority* you are over your own life.

AUTHORITY

Are you using that term in the *conventional* sense... to refer to my role?

ADVOCATE

(smiles)

You've paid attention. But no, I speak of the authority of that woman inside you, the authority to determine for herself what is right and true for herself. She needs no Decision Pill to decide such things. I think it's high time to become reacquainted with her, wouldn't you agree?

AUTHORITY

Yes, please yes.

She smiles through tears she cannot hold back.

AUTHORITY (CONT'D)

But I'll need help. This is all new to me.

ADVOCATE

Yes, you will indeed need help. For now you have my attention, but soon you will not need it. I think you'll be surprised to find how people will be drawn to you once you start to re-engage the world. And those friends, the ones you left behind -- I have a feeling -- will be more than willing, even excited, to re-engage with you.

AUTHORITY

How can you be so sure?

ADVOCATE

Because you live, and you
breathe...

He lifts her chin, smiles, and looks into her eyes. She
returns his gaze.

ADVOCATE (CONT'D)

...that's all. You live and
breathe, Authority.