

**ONE WHITE CROW**

A play in two acts

by

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**[EXCERPT]**

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ACT ONE

In the darkness, We hear the sound of the theme music for the television show: MAKING CONTACT. It slowly rises as the MAKING CONTACT logo appears and glows ever more brightly against a dark back drop. We hear applause and then JUDITH KNIGHT'S voice saying:

JUDITH (V.O.)

Thank you! Live in the light! Live in the light! Thank you!

(Her words echo and trail off. Then both the music and the MAKING CONTACT logo suddenly GO OUT.)

LIGHTS COME UP on a table in front of a dressing mirror, representing JUDITH KNIGHT'S dressing room. JUDITH is seated there, opening a jar of make-up remover. TESS enters.

TESS

Judith Knight? Hi, I'm Teresa O'Neill. Tess.

JUDITH

Yes, right on time. Sit down. You don't mind if I...  
(referring to her make-up removal)

TESS

No, go ahead.

JUDITH

Personally I hate wearing this gunk. But my producer says I look washed out in people's homes if I don't.

TESS

Tools of the trade.

JUDITH

Apparently.

(beat)

I'm ready to begin, if you are.

TESS

(she sets up a tape-recorder)

May I?

JUDITH

Yes, by all means. It keeps things accurate.

TESS

(turning on tape-recorder,  
speaks into it)

Profile, Judith Knight, Interview one. Just to be clear, Ms. Knight, we have agreed that you or your publicity team will not be given any questions in advance to prepare, nor will you be allowed to edit your answers or the article that results. Is that correct?

JUDITH

Yes.

TESS

All right...

(beat)

Let me ask the obvious question first. Why, given your usual reticence toward the press, are you finally agreeing to a profile?

JUDITH

Well, I figured it was time.

TESS

Time?

JUDITH

To set the record straight.

(beat)

When that article came out in *Our World*...

TESS

Yes. Pretty critical of you.

JUDITH

I'm used to that. There are always going to be folks out there who doubt me. What bothered me about that article is what it said about the people who come to me.

TESS

Right. That they are--

JUDITH

Feeble-minded idiots who don't know the truth from a hole in the ground.

TESS

Yeah, I guess that was the gist.

JUDITH

Look, what I do... it's not a science. I'm off target plenty of times. But when I hit, they can tell. And I can too, by this look they get in their eyes. This: "Oh my God..."

It really *is* my mother, or my brother, or my wife." That moment is like an epiphany. The article was looking to make people question *that* moment.

TESS

What you're describing sounds pretty subjective.

JUDITH

Just because something is subjective, does not mean it didn't happen. Besides, their experience is based on information I give them. Details only they would know. This isn't blind faith we're talking about. I give them validations, evidence.

TESS

I'm not sure it's the kind of evidence that would hold up in a court of law.

JUDITH

You're right. It's anecdotal. It is not forensic or reproducible.

TESS

There are those who would argue that people who are grieving would give anything to hear from someone they've lost.

JUDITH

Yes. And that puts them in a vulnerable state. Making them easy pickings for a "con artist" like myself.

TESS

That *is* the argument.

(A beat, The two women stare at each other a moment, then TESS clicks off the tape recorder.)

TESS

Off the record. Can I just stop you here?

JUDITH

Sure.

TESS

I don't get this.

JUDITH

What?

TESS

After years of playing hard to get, you finally agree not only to an interview, but an in-depth profile.

JUDITH

Right.

TESS

Well leaving aside the sudden turnaround... why me?

JUDITH

Ah.

TESS

Wouldn't you want someone a little more friendly toward this sort of thing? Truthfully, this is the last kind of assignment I would generally take. If the editor hadn't twisted my arm...

JUDITH

She twisted your arm?

TESS

When your office made it very clear this exclusive was to be written by me or no one else, well, yes. She wasn't exactly going to let me walk, and see you give the interview to another magazine. Although honestly, if you hadn't agreed to my conditions...

JUDITH

I'm sorry you're here under duress. But I requested you for a very good reason.

TESS

Which is?

JUDITH

(beat)

I don't need to preach to the choir. I've read your work. You ask the tough questions. But you also have this ability to get inside other people's skin, even when you don't intend to. And because of your personal biases, you will know how to speak clearly to other skeptics out there.

TESS

And this is why you asked for me?

JUDITH

Yes.

(beat)

Well... not entirely.

TESS

What? What do you mean?

JUDITH

Look. ...I think it would be better for you if we left a few things unsaid, for now.

TESS

Better for *me*? What are you talking about?

JUDITH

It'll all become clear. I promise. If you just give me a little time.

TESS

Time?

(beat)

No, I'm sorry. It strikes me that you're just doing what we agreed in advance you wouldn't.

JUDITH

What's that?

TESS

You're manipulating the process.

JUDITH

I'm not.

TESS

It doesn't surprise me. I knew you agreed to my conditions too easily.

JUDITH

That's not it at all. I just don't think you're ready to--

TESS

To what?

JUDITH

Look... I'm just asking you to be patient for just a little while. It'll all become clear.

TESS

(beat, stares at Judith,  
evaluating)

Right.

(She starts to gather her things)

JUDITH

What are you doing?

TESS

I'm leaving.

JUDITH

What?

TESS

You'll have to find someone else to do this profile.

JUDITH

But I can't.

TESS

Why? Why not?!

(JUDITH does not answer)

Okay. If that's how you want to play it.

(TESS starts to exit)

JUDITH

All right!

(TESS turns back to her. Beat)

I asked you to do this because of your father!

TESS

What?

(beat, realizing)

Oh. I get it. You thought that would make me more open to what you do.

JUDITH

That's not it.

TESS

Well, let me tell you something. I may miss him, but that doesn't mean I would turn against everything he taught me by suddenly going soft in the brain! Do you know what he thought about people like you?

JUDITH

Yes. I've read all his books.

TESS

Well then why in the hell would you think I would feel any different?

JUDITH

I didn't think you would feel any different. It's your...

(hesitates then)

...father who does.

TESS

What?

JUDITH

Your father came to me, Tess.

TESS

Excuse me?

JUDITH

This profile is *his* idea.



TESS

Oh no... Oh no, no, no, no, no, no.

(TESS grabs the tape recorder and puts it back in her briefcase.)

JUDITH

Hear me out, would you?

TESS

This is not what I signed up for.  
(she starts to put on her jacket)

JUDITH

And you think this is what I wanted? To be interviewed by someone who's convinced, before she even meets me, that I'm a fraud?

TESS

Then why do it?

JUDITH

Because Spirit can be damned persistent.

TESS

Spirit. You mean my father, my *dead* father.

JUDITH

Yes.

TESS

I'm out of here.

JUDITH

All right. But do me a favor before you call your editor. Give it a day. Think about it. If I'm getting this guidance, it's because there's a reason for it.

TESS

I don't believe for one minute you are getting guidance. From my father or anyone.

JUDITH

Twenty-four hours, that's all I ask.