

Feet On the Ground

a romantic comedy



Cantara Christopher

Feet On the Ground by Cantara Christopher

INT. WILCOX THEATER/STAGE - DAY

CLOSE UP

on the face of an lovely ingenue-type actress in her early 20s, NINA. She is in rehearsal, overacting the character "Nina"'s final speech in Chekhov's play The Seagull.

NINA (stagily, grandly) "Now I am a real actress. I act with exaltation, I am drunk with joy, I feel that I am wonderful. I know now, Konstantin, that for us, whether we are writers or actors, it isn't fame, or glory, or any of those things that are important. It is the strength to carry on. To carry on and have faith. I have faith and my life is no longer so terrible, and when I think of my noble calling, I fear nothing in the world."

Suddenly we hear behind her a loud crash.

PULL BACK TO:

Nina, in street clothes, stands on a small stage which is set for Act IV of The Seagull (the sitting room of a 19th century country house in Russia). A LEKKO lamp lies smashed on the floor between her and an actor, KEVIN, in his mid-20s, also in street clothes, who is playing "Konstantin". The Actress and the Actor, shocked, stare at the lamp.

KEVIN Holy shit!

The actress looks up toward the hanging lights, a wide smile of delight on her face.

NINA (in rapture, as if answering a marriage proposal) Yes! Oh yes!

CARD: "THREE MONTHS EARLIER"

INT. RODEO DRIVE RESTAURANT - DAY

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ALICE BARNES, a naturally attractive actress of 60 who was once typecast as an "airhead" à la Goldie Hawn or Suzanne Somers, is having lunch with an obviously wealthier, more expensively-dressed man in his mid 60s, LEW GREEN.

LEW You know, sixty is the new fifty.

ALICE That's what my friends tell me.

LEW So tell me, Alice. What are your plans?

ALICE Well, I suppose I'll go back home, maybe rent a movie... Bergman. I think I'll celebrate tonight with a cheery film by Ingmar Bergman.

LEW I mean in general.

ALICE You know me. You don't plan your life—

ALICE AND LEW —you live life.

LEW Yeah yeah. That's always been your problem.

ALICE Lew—

LEW As long as I've known you, you've had your head in the clouds. Didn't I always tell you, you have to have a plan. You have to have a dream and grab onto that dream. You never did. And now look at you.

ALICE Thank you.

LEW No, you're beautiful. You're as beautiful as the day I met you.

ALICE Oh, just shut up. You were going to tell me how Carly is. Didn't you have some news?

LEW News? No, no, Carly's great.

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ALICE And—?

LEW And that's it. Carly's great, we're happy. Everyone's happy.

ALICE I'm glad.

LEW She knows about this lunch. She says happy birthday.

ALICE Right back at her.

LEW This is your day, Alice. And seeing as this is your special day, I want to give you something.

ALICE Lunch is fine.

LEW I'm gonna buy you a car.

ALICE Don't buy me a car.

LEW Okay. Where's your car?

ALICE In the shop.

LEW (disbelievingly) Yeah, right.

ALICE Thanks anyway.

LEW You live in Los Angeles, you don't have a car, you don't have an agent. What the hell are you still doing here?

ALICE I have an agent.

LEW Bernie is dead.

ALICE He was my friend!

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LEW Bernie's been dead for three years and you haven't worked for three years. What, you thought he was looking down from heaven and putting the woo-woo on casting directors to call you?

Alice shrugs.

LEW (continues) You won't let me help, will you? I could've gotten some hungry little munchkin to rep you. For crying out loud Alice, how do I end up being the bad guy?

ALICE You're not the bad guy.

LEW When I started to make money you could have sued me for more alimony. I begged you to sue me.

ALICE People don't do that kind of thing! You're the father of our son!

LEW Look, what are you doing. Do you want to work?

ALICE This is my life. It's all I've ever known.

LEW But what do you want? Honey, what is it that you actually want? (tenderly) You don't have to tell me. But at least you've got to be able to tell yourself.

ALICE What I want... This is crazy. I guess what I want is for my life to begin all over again.

LEW Well, see, honey, nobody in the world gets that. Nobody.

ALICE Present company excepted I'm sure, Mister Third-Time's-the-Charm. Look, this was a mistake. I wasn't feeling so cheerful when I got up this morning and you're certainly not helping. Thanks for lunch anyway. See you next year. If I make it to sixty-one.

She gets up and exits the restaurant.

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LEW (calling after her half-heartedly) Alice...

After she leaves he shrugs; she's done this before.

EXT. RODEO DRIVE RESTAURANT/OUTSIDE - CONTINUOUS

Alice stops on the sidewalk; a beat as she thinks.

INT. RODEO DRIVE RESTAURANT - CONTINUOUS

Alice re-enters and walks back to the table. Lew is in the middle of eating.

ALICE All right. Here's what I want. I want to direct *The Seagull*.

LEW *The Seagull*.

ALICE You know. The play. By Anton Chekhov.

LEW Yeah, I know Chekhov. So is it showing somewhere?

ALICE No, that's the point. I would like you to—

LEW Oh, oh, I get it. You would like me to produce a Chekhov for you. Done.

ALICE You will?

LEW Sit down and stop looming over me. It reminds me of our divorce.

She sits.

LEW Listen. I will gladly bankroll a production of your little play.

ALICE There's a "but" coming.

LEW But—I will not produce it.

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ALICE You're a producer.

LEW Come on!

He reaches into billfold, takes out a card and gives it to her.

LEW Here. Go and see Kate.

ALICE Ah. Bluebeard's second wife.

She takes the card without looking at it.

LEW Don't call me Bluebeard. All of you, all of you always get everything I have to give. Now, eat your coho salmon like a good girl and let's celebrate.

She smiles at him girlishly.

INT. ALICE'S APARTMENT/LIVING ROOM - DAY

A small cheap Hollywood apartment, simply furnished, that reflects much of Alice's life: theatrical posters, colorful throws and scarves, souvenirs, a couple of minor awards, photos of friends, family and theatrical casts on the wall.

Alice comes in with mail—one letter—and an aluminum take-home container from the restaurant; she goes into the kitchen and puts it in the fridge. Then she comes out and opens the piece of mail. On the envelope the return address is printed, "Lawrence Green, DDS." She opens the envelope and takes out a tasteful Happy Birthday, Mom-type card and opens it.

INSERT:

Written on the card: "Thought you could use this". There's a folded check.

Alice opens the check, reads it, and smiles wistfully.

EXT. KATE'S HOUSE/FRONT - DAY

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Next afternoon. Alice is at the door; she rings the bell.

INT. KATE'S HOUSE/LIVING ROOM - DAY

A medium-sized but richly and artfully furnished home in the Hollywood Hills.

KATE FIRESTINE, a handsome woman in her early 40s dressed in a fabulous muumuu, is sitting on the sofa side by side talking to Alice while a man, also in his early 40s, sloppy in appearance—faded plaid shirt, cargo shorts, flip-flops—but still appealing, is going around unobtrusively watering the plants. This is JIMMY.

KATE Lew was right to send you to me. It's been much too long since you and I have touched base.

ALICE We travel in different circles. I totally understand.

KATE And I do do that sort of thing you're talking about, producing little shows here and there. I always enjoy helping out young writers.

ALICE This is, however, Chekhov.

KATE That's wonderful. No one does Chekhov anymore.

ALICE It's been a dream of mine to direct *The Seagull* as long as I can remember.

KATE And it sounds wonderful. Just wonderful. But here's the thing. I'm off to Paris tomorrow for three months.

ALICE Oh.

KATE (cheerfully) Oh, darling, don't worry. We'll make this work. I'll find you somebody. Jimmy! How would you like to produce *The Seagull*?

JIMMY (nonchalantly) Sure.

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KATE Well, that's settled. I've got to go upstairs and finish packing. Alice, it was so wonderful to see you again.

She squeezes Alice's arm in a friendly way.

KATE Let's have lunch when I get back.

ALICE Um... Okay...

Kate gets up and leaves. A beat, then Alice, sighing, gathers up her scarf and handbag. Jimmy notices her.

JIMMY Hey, where are you going?

ALICE Please, don't let me take you away from your job. I'll let myself out.

Alice gets up and heads for the front door. Jimmy puts down watering can, goes to her.

JIMMY Wait a minute, you can't leave now. Didn't I just become your producer?

ALICE Seriously?

He wipes his hand on his pants and extends it to her, she shakes it.

JIMMY Look, let's start this right. I'm afraid we weren't formally introduced. I'm James. Mehta. But you can call me Jimmy.

ALICE Jimmy.

JIMMY I'm actually a writer. I'm staying in Kate's guesthouse.

ALICE Ah. Alice Barnes.

JIMMY I thought I recognized you. I remember you from that TV show, it was a couple years ago...

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ALICE Years and years ago, you mean.

JIMMY Yeah, I was just a kid, but you were great as that ditzy weather girl.

ALICE Thank you.

JIMMY Can I walk you to your car?

ALICE I'm...um...just going over to the bus stop.

JIMMY Let me drive you to the bus stop.

INT. KATE'S CAR - DAY (TRAVELING)

There are female touches (tissues in a flowery dispenser, for example) making it evident that it's Kate's car.

Jimmy is driving down the road.

JIMMY I can't believe you walked all the way up this hill.

ALICE The housekeepers do it every day.

Alice looks out the passenger window.

ALICE (continues) Look, there's one now. You know, we should give her a lift.

CUT TO:

a HOUSEKEEPER, a mature Latina woman in uniform, now in the back seat.

HOUSEKEEPER Gracias. Muchas gracias.

JIMMY Look, this is ridiculous. You and I should have time to talk. Why don't I just drop her off at the bus stop and drive you home?

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ALICE You know, in all fairness, if you're going to drive me home you ought to drive her home too. (to Housekeeper) ¿Dónde vives, señora? Nos conduzca de regreso a casa.

HOUSEKEEPER Ah, si si, gracias! El Sereno.

JIMMY (to Alice) Where's El Sereno?

EXT. FRONT OF HOUSE, EAST LA - DAY

The car is pulling away from the curb in front of the very modest house. From the sidewalk the Housekeeper is waving to Jimmy and Alice.

EXT. TACO STAND, EAST LA - DAY (LATER)

Alice and Jimmy are sitting at a table, finishing tacos and sodas.

JIMMY ...Because here's the thing. The reason Nina falls in love with Trigorin isn't because he's rich or sexy or even good-looking. It's because he's a writer. Pure and simple.

ALICE That's just a writer's wish fulfillment.

JIMMY No, really. All the productions I've ever seen get this wrong. They always put in these pretty boys who look like they can't string two words together. Now, the great Stanislavsky who played the first Trigorin—

ALICE You know your play.

JIMMY—he was a real dogface. But when he played Trigorin, the women were all over him.

ALICE And you know your theater.

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JIMMY The Seagull is one of my favorite plays. Not that I was a theater major or anything... I was in computer science. Back about ten, fifteen years ago I was the budget director for research and development in Cupertino. And then the Silicon Valley thing went bust and I was out of a job...

ALICE So is then when you started writing?

JIMMY That's when I got serious.

ALICE What kind of things do you write?

JIMMY Well, last year I published my memoirs. No, this is not like all those others. My memoirs are actually true.

ALICE You must have had a fascinating life.

JIMMY Yeah, well, someday I'll show you my book. But right now we have more important things to discuss.

ALICE Shoot.

JIMMY I've decided to take this on. Right now I'm stuck on the project Kate and I are working on together and this might be the thing to stimulate the creative juices.

ALICE As long as you feel you can handle it.

JIMMY Well, hanging with Kate I picked up a lot about how theater runs in this town.

ALICE Good.

JIMMY You know, it's almost summer. I think it wouldn't be hard to find a nice little theater where you can do the whole thing, casting, rehearsals, all the way right up through the run...

ALICE Great. Let's go find one.

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JIMMY And you say getting the cash upfront is not a problem.

ALICE Lew Green is paying, remember.

JIMMY So the sky's the limit.

ALICE Just as long as you remember, this is not about the money.

EXT. WILCOX THEATER/FRONT - DAY

The theater has a plain front with a notice, "The Seagull - Role: Nina - Auditions 10-2" taped to the door.

INT. WILCOX THEATER/STAGE - DAY

MONTAGE:

One after the other we see, but not hear over the music cue, a few seconds each of 4 or 5 ingenue-type actresses in their early to mid-20s auditioning, while in the front row, Alice and Jimmy take notes. The last actress is MAYA CHING, a very serious-looking girl in her early 20s.

INT. WILCOX THEATER/AUDIENCE - DAY

Alice and Jimmy are seated on the aisle in the front row. The actor onstage, KEVIN (who we saw as the "Konstantin" in the opening scene), is finishing his audition. Maya, now the stage manager, is upstage with a clipboard.

ALICE Kevin, thank you. That was wonderful.

KEVIN Thanks! It felt really good.

ALICE Maya, make sure we've got his contact information.

MAYA Yes, Ms. Barnes.

ALICE Just Alice will do, dear.

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Kevin goes upstage to Maya where they talk in a low volume as Maya writes on her clipboard while Jimmy and Alice lean toward each other.

JIMMY (confidentially) I think we've found our Konstantin.

Kevin exits the theater through the front entrance.

ALICE Yes, definitely. I can see him as Konstantin. You know, this is turning out to be great.

JIMMY Of course this leaves—

ALICE Nina. Yes, yes, I know.

JIMMY Maybe you're being just a tad picky. We start rehearsals next week.

ALICE Nina is the linchpin of the play. She is the Seagull. She has to exude something special, a sort of radiance, an etherealness...

JIMMY Look, why don't you leave it to me? I'll just pick out the hottest one who auditioned...

ALICE (with good humor) Shut up.

Lew enters from the front entrance, goes over and pecks a kiss on the top of Alice's head.

LEW Hey doll.

ALICE You're slumming.

LEW I was in the neighborhood.

JIMMY Lew! My man!

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LEW (distantly) Hey, how're you doing.

MAYA It's two-thirty, Ms.— I mean Alice. Can I call a break?

ALICE Of course, dear. Don't forget, we see the Paulinas at three and the Shamreyevs at five.

LEW Can I talk to you in private?

ALICE Sure. How about the lobby?

LEW Yeah, fine.

Jimmy watches her as she exits with Lew.

INT. WILCOX THEATER/LOBBY - CONTINUOUS

ALICE Shoot.

LEW Well, you're being very businesslike.

Maya enters lobby and walks toward front door.

MAYA I'm going to go out for lunch. Can I bring you back anything?

ALICE No dear, thanks.

MAYA How about you, sir?

ALICE Oh Maya, this is Lew Green. He's our special angel.

Maya extends her hand and Lew shakes it.

MAYA How do you do, Mr. Green. It's a real honor. I can't tell you how thrilled I am to be a part of this production.

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LEW My pleasure.

MAYA (to Alice) Well. I'll be back in just a few minutes. (to Lew) Nice to meet you, sir.

Lew looks Maya up and down appreciatively as she exits.

ALICE She's very serious.

LEW But nice.

ALICE After her audition she looked so depressed, I didn't have the heart to send her away so I made her stage manager. And everyone's understudy.

LEW You've always been very generous. I think that's one of the things about you that's rubbed off on me.

ALICE So what is it you need to see me about?

LEW I...have this girl.

ALICE (exasperated) You are such a cliché, you know that?

LEW No no, hear me out. She's really good. And I know for a fact that you haven't got a Nina yet. In fact it's perfect. Her name is Nina.

ALICE No, no, absolutely not. (a beat as she thinks) All right. She auditions.

LEW Of course.

ALICE Like everyone else.

LEW Of course!

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ALICE I suppose we could squeeze her in today. So where did you stash her?

Lew pulls out a DVD from his pocket with a flourish.

LEW She's a little shy around people.

ALICE That's perfect, a shy actress. You know you don't audition off a demo, this is the theater, you need a three-dimensional reference—

LEW Just take a look.

ALICE And she'll have to work with us in person anyway. If I decide. If. We're an ensemble cast, not The Belle of Amherst...

LEW I note all your misgivings. Just take a look. You won't be sorry.

ALICE I won't?

LEW And she's all yours all the way to October. October I have her locked for my next M.M.A. picture in the Philippines.

ALICE M.M.A.?

LEW Mixed martial arts!

Holding out the DVD, Lew strikes a martial arts pose. Alice takes the DVD but looks very put-upon. Lew puts his hands on her shoulders reassuringly.

LEW Honey, listen to me. This is a good actress. I think she's got something very special and I think you're just the director who can bring it out.

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ALICE I appreciate your trust.

LEW Whatever you might think of me, I'm doing this as a favor to you.

ALICE A favor.

LEW Um-hm.

ALICE To me.

LEW Believe it.

ALICE I make no assurances. I will not compromise this production.

LEW Just take her out and give her a spin.

ALICE Why am I not surprised you said that?

INT. ALICE'S APARTMENT/LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

A few hours later. Alice and Jimmy are seated on the sofa, watching the DVD. The sound is heard low under their conversation.

JIMMY You know, she's not half bad.

ALICE (sardonically) Of course she's not, she's Lew Green's new little playmate. (seriously) No, I'm sorry. She is pretty good. I suppose she deserves better than being some action hero's bikini babe.

Jimmy picks up the DVD sleeve and pulls out a folded piece of paper which he unfolds and skims; it's her resume.

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JIMMY Hm, local kid, graduated Hollywood High, twenty years old, a magical age... Drama classes at L.A. Community. Of course. Looks like she's done some good work. Some stage, no films yet. But always the lead. (slyly) I wonder why that would be?

ALICE I believe her resume.

JIMMY She's a child. A playacting child.

ALICE I don't know about that. I think she can handle the role.

JIMMY Look, don't say yes to this just because you think you have to. Let me rephrase that. If you think you have to say yes, don't kid yourself it's for any other reason than quid pro quo.

ALICE No, no... I have a hunch about her. At least I think I do.

JIMMY What, you think she's got that same "ethereal" quality that makes Nina the Seagull so special? That makes her a goddess of art? I think this may be where you're getting it more or less wrong.

The DVD ends and ejects. Jimmy gets up to take it out of the machine, puts it and the resume back in the sleeve and lays the sleeve on top of the machine.

ALICE Getting what wrong?

He walks idly around the room, looking at Alice's theatrical posters and photographs, handling her awards.

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JIMMY About Nina the Seagull, Chekhov's Nina. You know in my opinion I don't think she's really so special. It's not like she's hiding her light waiting to be miraculously discovered. This is not American Idol.

ALICE Okay...

JIMMY Nina is actually a very ordinary girl with unrealistic dreams of fame and glory.

ALICE Dreams fed by the shallow actress Arkadina and her even shallower lover, Trigorin the writer.

She sees that he's holding one of her awards.

ALICE (continues) Excuse me. That's very fragile.

He puts it down.

JIMMY But maybe that's the point. That the Ninas of this world have to stick with the Arkadinas and the Trigorins of this world. When Nina is forced to become an actress on her own, just another plain old hardworking actress, it breaks her.

He sits down again.

JIMMY (continues) And you know, this just occurred to me.

ALICE What?

JIMMY Are you...using this production to somehow to recapture some sort of triumph you had when you were young?

ALICE No, Nina was never my role. I've never been in The Seagull. It's just a very special play for me.

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JIMMY Because of Nina.

ALICE It was the first play I ever saw. It made me want to get into acting.

JIMMY Because of Nina. Come on, admit it.

ALICE What's the use? Why don't we just agree to disagree?

JIMMY (grudgingly) Sure. Agreed.

ALICE Besides, she's got the role, hasn't she?

JIMMY Um...can I ask you, is that what broke you two up?

ALICE What, Lew and his never-ending harem? That and other things.

JIMMY You know, Kate and I are just colleagues. We're not a couple.

ALICE All right.

JIMMY I don't want you to get the wrong idea.

ALICE Of course.

A beat as Jimmy looks at her meaningfully. When Alice doesn't reply, he looks at his watch.

JIMMY Well, it's getting late...

ALICE So, home to your lovely colleague.

JIMMY Well, home to her lovely home. I should email her in Paris where she's off buying pretty things.

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ALICE You won't be lonely. You have her plants.

They stand up facing each other, then Jimmy takes Alice by the shoulders, draws her close and kisses her on the forehead.

JIMMY Better rest up and take your vitamins. You've got a great run coming up.

ALICE A great run, barring disasters.

JIMMY Never look for disaster, because it'll always come looking for you.

ALICE I'll wear my lucky scarf.

INT. WILCOX THEATER/STAGE - DAY

The first reading. Alice is sitting with Maya on one side of her, Jimmy on the other, while upstage are all the Cast members, most prominently Kevin ("Konstantin"), TOM ("Trigorin") early 50s, MARCIA ("Masha") mid-20s, and JEAN ("Arkadina") early 40s, seated in a semi-circle, scripts in hand. One chair in the center, a script on the seat, is vacant. Impatience is in the air.

ALICE Maya, what time is it?

MAYA Half-past.

ALICE Well. I suppose we've waited long enough. Whoever is missing I suppose we can catch up to speed a little later on. Well, here we are on the first step of what is going to be a wonderful journey of discovery.

TOM Hear hear!

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ALICE This is a play, I'm sure, that's close to all our hearts and some, but not all of you, have already been in one production or other of *The Seagull*... I found a good translation, very modern... It is a subtle play, but you'll find all the clues you need for your character right there in the text.

Somewhat noisily NINA (who we saw as "Nina" in the opening scene) enters from the theater entrance. She is followed by a big burly man in his early 30s, YURI.

NINA Hello everybody hello, I made it!

JIMMY (to Alice) Should we applaud?

Alice smiles wryly but shushes him.

ALICE Cast, I'd like you all to welcome Nina Costa. Our Nina.

Nina comes up to the stage and starts to introduce herself to each cast member while Yuri sits down in the audience.

ALICE Yes, well, yes... Wait a second, just wait. Young man. Young man, do you have any business here?

YURI (thick accent) I am Yuri.

NINA Oh, you don't need to worry about him. Yuri's my bodyguard.

ALICE Your bodyguard. (half to herself) Well, Lew is taking no chances, is he?

NINA (imperiously) He may stay.

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ALICE I beg your pardon, Ms. Costa, the decision is not yours to make. Yuri, if you can keep very quiet and not get in the way you may stay. You might even enjoy it. We're doing a play by one of your own countrymen. The Seagull. Chekhov.

YURI The Seagull...? Ah, "Chaika!" Da, da. Chekhov. I love Chekhov.

ALICE Well, that's good. Cast, let's get started.

NINA I'd like to make a speech.

ALICE Really, there's no need for that.

NINA (intensely) I would just like to say that already I feel completely at home in this beautiful theater with all you wonderful people, doing this wonderful play. This is the greatest play in the world.

She points at each person in turn.

NINA (continues) And you, and even you, Alice Barnes, are the greatest actors in the world. Really. That's really true. (presses her heart) Don't you feel it here, deep down, inside?

Reactions from the Cast range from bemused to amused.

ALICE Um, yes, of course. Is there any other observation you'd care to share with us?

NINA No, that's all.

ALICE Good. We'll go from first line to last line, no breaks.

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Nina goes to the empty seat, picks up the script, and sits.

ALICE It's a beautiful summer day on a country estate in Russia.

Nina sighs dramatically.

ALICE To the left is a little makeshift stage built by the estate's workmen. Because tonight, for the entertainment of the guests, a play is going to be performed...

INT. WILCOX THEATER/STAGE - DAY

MONTAGE:

A few seconds each of 4 rehearsal scenes, which we do not hear over the music cue. With Alice directing from upstage we see Nina with Marcia, Nina with Jean, Nina with Tom, Nina with Kevin. Yuri is always present in the front row, always expressionless as he watches.

INT. KATE'S HOUSE/LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Jimmy, in an expensive dressing gown, is on the couch in the living room, a bottle of fine wine and a filled glass on the table, which he takes sips from while writing on his laptop.

JIMMY (reading aloud) "Hey, Katydid. Just got back from watching rehearsals and everything's going great. Thanks for letting me use your address book. I couldn't have put this thing together without your list of contacts, your designers, publicity people, et cetera et cetera. Producing this play is turning out to be a fun experience even if the production itself isn't much of anything. Nobody you've heard of is in it. Tell me about all the new paintings you bought. Wish we could be in Paris together, hint hint. Say hello to Jean-Claude and Genevieve for me. Miss you. Jimmy." Right... Send.

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He presses the send button.

INT. BAR NEAR THEATER - NIGHT

A couple of days later, after a late rehearsal. Alice, Jimmy, Tom, Kevin, Marcia, and Jean are all enjoying beers and each other's company at a table. Kevin and Marcia, obviously a couple, are sitting side by side. The banter is very loose.

TOM ...and that's how I got the lead in Hamlet.

KEVIN That is one crazy story.

JEAN Tom, you have to stop with your tall tales. The young ones are starting to believe you.

ALICE Yes Tom, there's already a lot of drama out there. We don't need it in our lives.

TOM No, it's true! It's all almost absolutely true!

JIMMY I mean, this is L.A. Look at all the drama that's already around us.

JEAN Yeah. Read the paper.

JIMMY Swindlers in our boardrooms, foreign gangsters on our streets, insane movie starlets in our humble little theaters...

MARCIA You're talking about Nina.

ALICE No, no. I won't hear anything bad about her.

TOM Yeah, we need her...

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ALICE She may be a little distant, a little arrogant, she might come in late from time to time.

TOM She's nuts.

ALICE But once she gets down to it she really gets into the role.

MARCIA Well, from what I've seen, she is pretty intense, I'll give her that...

JEAN She gives me the chills.

TOM Like I said, nuts.

JEAN It's like she thinks we're all in her own world, like we were part of her drama...

KEVIN I like her. I think she's fascinating.

MARCIA Hey!

She playfully swats him.

KEVIN Well, I have to connect with her at some level, don't I?

JEAN And what about Yuri?

TOM Oh. (in accent) Yuri.

MARCIA I'll tell you, having someone like Yuri watching us is one of the strangest experiences I've ever had in the theater.

JIMMY Yuri is just one of those minor concessions we have to make to keep a production running smoothly.

Feet On the Ground by Cantara Christopher

TOM And you're doing a fine job.

JIMMY Thank you.

TOM But this isn't your usual gig.

JIMMY No actually, I'm a writer.

TOM Oho, something I might have read?

JIMMY Do you read? Does anyone read anymore?

TOM I challenge that insult.

JIMMY Oh all right. I did write one book about a year ago. A sort of memoir-slash-advice book on romance.

TOM Wait a minute. I do know you.

JIMMY The jig is up.

TOM You did a reading at The Climax Bookshop. My ex-girlfriend when she was still my girlfriend made me take her. Tell them the title. Go on, tell them.

JIMMY Well, it was called... Four Thousand Women I Have Known.

Everyone except Alice "ooohs".

MARCIA "Known" in the Biblical sense.

JIMMY Yes.

Everyone except Alice "ooohs" louder.

Feet On the Ground by Cantara Christopher

JIMMY Don't let the title fool you. It actually contains some deeply considered feelings about man-woman relationships. I changed all the names, of course.

ALICE Well, I would hope so.

JIMMY It made the rounds of the publishing houses for about a year, but nothing came of it. So I published it myself.

JEAN Did it make money?

JIMMY No. But I made a lot of friends.

TOM I'll bet.

JIMMY That's how I met Kate Firestine, by the way.

JEAN That's the major leagues, my boy.

KEVIN Kate who?

JEAN Firestine. You know, the Firestine Museum in Malibu... The Firestine Foundation...

KEVIN Wow. That's her family?

JIMMY She was there at one of my readings and we hit it off. She offered to help me turn it into a screenplay.

ALICE And you've been together ever since.

JIMMY As colleagues, yes.

MARCIA (figuring) You know...that's nearly two hundred women a year for your entire adult life.

JIMMY Okay, so I exaggerated a little...

Feet On the Ground by Cantara Christopher

TOM "A man must write as he feels, as best he can."

JEAN Thank you, Boris Trigorin.

TOM And thank you Alice, for giving me the opportunity to finally play a role I've been dying to play my whole life. How about a toast?

ALICE Oh please, don't toast me.

TOM Well, who then, Lew Green?

ALICE No no, not Lew Green. He already gets enough gratitude.

JEAN How about Anton Chekhov?

TOM All right then, Chekhov.

They raise their glasses and toast, "To Chekhov!" with Kevin chiming in "Aye aye, kepten".

EXT. SIDEWALK NEAR BAR - NIGHT

An hour later. Alice and Jimmy are walking to Kate's car.

JIMMY Alice, I swear I was going to tell you.

ALICE Tell me what?

JIMMY It just didn't seem so important.

ALICE Is this about your book? Oh, don't worry about it.

Feet On the Ground by Cantara Christopher

JIMMY I am worried. I'm worried you're going to get the wrong impression. Look, I will admit to a little sensation-mongering to get the book out there. But my book, really, my book is a group portrait of all the formidable women in my life and not, as you might think, some sort of spermatic tabulation. It is a celebration of life, of love, of—taking chances with your heart. I take it very seriously.

They stop in front of the car.

ALICE I don't care. It's not my business.

JIMMY I guess it's not.

ALICE No, it's not. You say you're "colleagues" with Kate—

JIMMY Well we are.

ALICE And so are we. So please don't put me in this position. Please don't.

JIMMY What position?

ALICE The position where I have to say I don't care about what you write or who you write about or why.

JIMMY Why shouldn't you care? Because you think it's a tell-all about cheap casual sex?

ALICE Well, is it?

JIMMY No, it's about love.

ALICE With that title?

JIMMY It's a rotten title, granted. I was trying to be intriguing, sell a few copies. Come on, you're not a prude.

Feet On the Ground by Cantara Christopher

ALICE You're missing the point. Women of my generation—

JIMMY Oh, women of your generation—

ALICE Women of my generation considered sex a private personal thing. Which probably means we're out of sync with the rest of the world—

JIMMY It means you're a beautiful woman with a beautiful soul. I know I don't think like the usual guy. I think a man should fall in love with every woman before he goes to bed with her. Take her whole being into account. That's the theme of my book. It's been the joy of my life.

ALICE There are rehab centers for that kind of joy, sonny.

JIMMY Look, I will admit it. I will admit that the variety of my relationships has pretty much consumed my time and I'm the first to say it, I'm not getting any younger. And don't you say what you're about to say.

ALICE What?

JIMMY That I'm young enough to be your son.

ALICE Well you are!

JIMMY An empty cliché. That means nothing and you know it. Because deep in your heart you know you're just trying to find any excuse not to deal with what's happening between us.

ALICE I refuse to continue this conversation.

JIMMY I suppose you're going to want to take the bus home now.

Feet On the Ground by Cantara Christopher

Alice looks up and down the dark street.

ALICE No, give me a ride.

JIMMY Fine.

They open their doors.

ALICE I may be crazy but I'm no fool.

INT. WILCOX THEATER/STAGE - DAY

MONTAGE:

Scenes 5-6 seconds long, which we do not hear over the music cue, of flirtatious encounters happening between Tom and Marcia, Jean and Tom, Kevin and Marcia, Kevin and Nina.

INT. WILCOX THEATER/STAGE - DAY

A couple of weeks after the Cast get-together in the bar. Nina is on stage while Alice and Yuri sit in the audience somewhat apart from each other. Kevin enters carrying a dead seagull.

NINA ("NINA") "Konstantin! What has happened?"

He flings a dead seagull at her feet.

KEVIN ("KONSTANTIN") (intensely) "I was cruel enough to kill this seagull today."

Nina picks up the dead seagull.

NINA (laughing) This seagull?

KEVIN Oh fuck.

Feet On the Ground by Cantara Christopher

He breaks into laughter. Nina, still laughing, comes over to him and hugs him, he hugs her back.

INT. WILCOX THEATER/AUDIENCE - CONTINUOUS

Yuri crosses his arms and glares at them. Alice notices Yuri's reaction.

EXT. ALLEY NEAR PARKING LOT NEAR THEATER - DAY

The next day. Kevin has just left his car and is about to cross the alley when a black SUV appears out of nowhere and comes straight at him. He looks up with sudden alarm.

INT. WILCOX THEATER/OFFICE - SIMULTANEOUS

The office is empty. The phone rings and rings. Finally the answering machine comes on with the theater's pre-recorded message (male/female voice):

ANSWERING MACHINE

"Hi, you've reached the Wilcox Theater, where the classics of yesterday meet the stars of tomorrow. This month we're pleased to present to you that perennial stage favorite, Anton Chekhov's The Seagull. Tickets go on sale August 15. At the sound of the tone, please leave a message."

JIMMY (ON MACHINE) "Alice, are you there? I can't seem to reach you at home, you don't answer your cell, you're not answering my emails. So I thought I'd get you between rehearsals. Call me when you get a chance. Oh yeah, this is Jimmy, your producer, by the way."

Sound of hanging up.

Feet On the Ground by Cantara Christopher

INT. WILCOX THEATER/STAGE - DAY (LATER)

Alice and Nina are alone on the stage, rehearsing. Yuri is in the audience.

ALICE I can't imagine what's holding up Kevin. He's usually very punctual.

NINA Should I go over my speech again?

ALICE You know, you can only fine-tune so much. When Kevin finally gets here, I want you to pretty much keep this tone, keep this pace, and hit the highs where I told you to. And be beautiful. Be...ethereal.

Yuri rises, stretches and groans loudly. Alice turns to him.

ALICE Isn't she beautiful, Yuri?

YURI Yes. Beautiful girl. My princess. I love her so much.

He starts to exit.

ALICE You aren't leaving us?

YURI Bathroom.

ALICE Behind the curtain and to the left. Your left.

YURI I know. I know where is everything.

Yuri exits.

ALICE (to herself) Of course you do.

NINA You know, Yuri's the one who told me about the dacha houses in the countryside.

Feet On the Ground by Cantara Christopher

ALICE A dacha is a house in the countryside.

NINA In Russia. Just like in this play!

ALICE Yes.

NINA A dacha in the middle of a beautiful summer day. Isn't that just the most romantic thing you've ever heard?

ALICE (humoring her) Yes. Yes it is.

Kevin enters from the front. His pants are ripped, his face showing scrapes.

ALICE You're half an hour late.

KEVIN God Alice, God I'm sorry. I should have called.

He climbs on stage.

KEVIN (continues) I was almost run over.

ALICE What!

A loud flush is heard. Yuri re-enters and sits back down in the audience.

KEVIN It was the craziest thing. I was walking through the alley near the parking lot a few blocks away when this car came barreling out of nowhere.

ALICE Oh my God.

She looks him over carefully.

NINA (amazed) You poor dear!

Feet On the Ground by Cantara Christopher

KEVIN I'm all right, Alice, I'm all right. It missed. I'm only late because I hit the pavement and it took me a few minutes to get back up and get my head together... I'm telling you it was this huge black monster, a real Tony Soprano kind of car... I could have sworn it was aiming right for me. I mean, if it had wanted to kill me I really think it would have.

Yuri chuckles.

ALICE You find this funny?

YURI I have many brothers.

ALICE All right, that's the limit. That is the very limit. (to Kevin) Do you need to go to the hospital?

KEVIN I'm fine. I just want to work on the scene.

ALICE Forget about the scene. Just forget about it. I think we can call it a day. Just—go home. Go home and take care of yourself. You too, Nina. Take your...bodyguard...and go wherever you go and take it easy. Maya will call you with the revised rehearsal schedule. I'll be in the office.

INT. WILCOX THEATER/OFFICE - DAY (LATER)

Alice enters, agitated. She picks up the telephone and presses a number.

ALICE (INTO PHONE) Lew Green, please. Tell him it's Alice Barnes and that it's an emergency. (pause as she waits) Lew? Wait a second, my hands are shaking. I'm putting you on speakerphone.

She does.

Feet On the Ground by Cantara Christopher

LEW (ON SPEAKERPHONE) Alice, is that you?

ALICE Lew. My God, Lew!

LEW What is it? Did something happen to Larry?

ALICE No, this isn't about our son. This is about you and another one of your lousy dirty tricks.

LEW What are you talking about?

ALICE I'm talking about your so-called employment policies. Don't you do a background check on these people?

LEW What people?

ALICE Especially people in charge of watching over your little flower of Filipino action films. Where do you recruit, with the Russian mafia?

LEW What people? What are you talking about? Is this about Nina Costa?

ALICE Of course this is about Nina Costa.

LEW Is she all right?

ALICE Yes, she's fine.

LEW So who are we talking about?

ALICE We're talking about that bodyguard you hired to protect her! He's taking his job just a little too seriously, you know what I mean? That lunatic—

LEW Wait, wait—

Feet On the Ground by Cantara Christopher

ALICE (overlapping) That lunatic just tried to kill one of my actors! Well, him or one of his (accent) "brothers"... I guess it's all in the family...

LEW Alice, slow down. What bodyguard?

ALICE What do you mean, what bodyguard?

LEW I never hired a bodyguard.

ALICE You didn't?

LEW Is that what you think? You still think I'm some big control freak, that's what you think?

ALICE (subdued, realizing) ...So, he was just some guy then?

LEW (laughs) Yeah, looks like! So the little scamp has a boyfriend. Well, if you want my opinion, you should ask him to leave.

ALICE Of course I should ask him to leave. He just tried to kill one of my actors.

LEW So he's the jealous type. (pause) Alice, are you there?

ALICE Yes, I'm here.

LEW You all right?

ALICE I'm all right.

LEW Did you really think I was playing housie-housie with some little munchkin? Especially when Carly is pregnant?

Feet On the Ground by Cantara Christopher

ALICE What— Carly's pregnant?

LEW That's what I was going to tell you at lunch on your birthday. I just found out that morning. You could have knocked me down with a feather when she told me. It wasn't like we planned it or anything.

ALICE (warmly) A surprise package.

LEW But I didn't have the heart to tell you at lunch. I mean, it was your special day.

ALICE Oh, Lew... Congratulations.

LEW You mean that?

ALICE Of course. Everything's starting all over again for you.

LEW I'm not meshugenah. Nothing ever goes the same way it did.

ALICE But it's a brand new life. Are you happy?

LEW Of course I'm happy! I wanna buy everyone in the world a big present. You know, I never cheated on you when you were pregnant. You know that.

ALICE I know.

LEW I mean, okay, okay, I admit it, there were other times later... But nothing that meant anything, you know, a little harmless fun... (tenderly) Look, do you really want to know why you and I broke up?

ALICE Why?

Feet On the Ground by Cantara Christopher

LEW Because I couldn't be the person you wanted me to be.

ALICE What kind of person did I want you to be?

LEW Like you. (pause) Alice, are you there?

She nods.

LEW (continues) Are you nodding?

ALICE (with emotion) Yes, I'm nodding.

LEW So you got it straight now. Nina Costa was a favor to you.

ALICE Yes.

LEW I just wanted you to be fair and take a look at her. You didn't have to use her. No strings were attached.

ALICE Yes.

LEW I thought she might be the type you were looking for. Of course, I probably should have warned you that she's a little nuts...

ALICE (laughs) I'll say.

LEW Not nuts like you. She acts it out more.

ALICE That's your kind of girl, Lew.

LEW Look, do you need a hand? I could send someone over there to help you politely get rid of that boyfriend...

ALICE (more lightheartedly) I think we can deal with it.

Feet On the Ground by Cantara Christopher

LEW So we're good now.

ALICE Yes, we're good.

LEW Now you call me if there are any more problems like this. You can't expect artists to do all the work.

ALICE I will. Goodbye, Lew.

LEW All right then.

There's the sound of a click as Lew hangs up. Then Alice notices the flashing red light. She presses the message recorder and listens.

JIMMY (RECORDING)

"Alice, are you there? I can't seem to reach you at home, you don't answer your cell, you're not answering my emails. So I thought I'd get you between rehearsals. Call me when you get a chance. Oh yeah, this is Jimmy, your producer, by the way."

INT. DONUT SHOP - NIGHT

Alice and Jimmy are at a table having coffee.

JIMMY So, Yuri the lethal bodyguard just turns out to be Nina's lovesick puppy dog.

ALICE It would seem that way.

JIMMY But he's not coming back.

ALICE It's been taken care of.

JIMMY You should have let me take care of it.

Feet On the Ground by Cantara Christopher

ALICE Well, I didn't take care of it myself. I took the coward's way out, I called Maya. She is, after all, the stage manager. I didn't tell her about Yuri's men attacking Kevin, because Kevin said he doesn't want it getting back to Marcia that he might have had anything going with Nina. Which he swears to me is not the case anyway.

JIMMY And you believe him.

ALICE Right now backstage intrigue is the least of our problems. I had Maya simply call Nina with the new schedule and tell her, oh by the way, make sure not to bring your boyfriend to rehearsals again, because it's just not the policy of our theater.

JIMMY And?

ALICE She said Nina sounded pretty understanding. In fact she apologized for any inconvenience Yuri might have caused.

JIMMY That's some understatement.

ALICE I told Maya to be very polite. We still might have to walk on eggshells around this guy, if and when he ever shows up again.

JIMMY Like when we open to the customers.

ALICE Oh my God, he probably is some kind of crime lord or something. Some kingpin with gangster brothers with no necks...

JIMMY He can't be a complete lunatic. He said he loves Chekhov.

ALICE I'm serious.

Feet On the Ground by Cantara Christopher

JIMMY So am I.

ALICE They'll burn the theater down with all of us in it.

JIMMY Just relax. We're insured.

ALICE All I wanted was to direct one good production of *The Seagull*. Just to do it. Just to see if I could do it.

JIMMY I never doubted you could.

ALICE Just to leave something I could walk away from with my head held high.

JIMMY Walk away— Wait a minute. What are you talking about? You're not thinking of leaving town, are you?

ALICE "Tomorrow I must take the third-class train to Yelets. And there in Yelets, the cultured businessmen will pester me with their attentions..." No, show business is a young woman's game, Jimmy. I am simply worn out.

JIMMY You? You're younger than springtime.

ALICE I just turned sixty. I'm sixty years old in a town where my kind is no longer wanted or needed. And my kind is certainly not going to be revered or cared for, once our time has passed. And I think my time has passed, Jimmy.

JIMMY You're just saying this to drive me away.

ALICE You know how to flatter a girl.

Jimmy smiles, takes her two hands in his palms up and kisses them deeply. Alice looks at him with tenderness.

Feet On the Ground by Cantara Christopher

INT. ALICE'S APARTMENT/BEDROOM - NIGHT

Alice and Jimmy are lying in bed together contentedly.

JIMMY What are you thinking about?

ALICE The future. No, actually, the past.

JIMMY Don't think about the past.

ALICE No, you're right. What are you thinking about?

JIMMY Writing another book.

ALICE "Four Thousand and One Women I Have Known."

JIMMY Don't. It was a terrible title in the first place.

ALICE Terrible idea.

JIMMY I guess the world doesn't need another book about some guy's crazy love life.

ALICE Yes, it's been done.

JIMMY How about you, what were you thinking about?

ALICE Don't take this wrong. Lew.

JIMMY Of course not.

ALICE I don't really mean Lew. I mean being married. I miss being married.

JIMMY Is that a hint?

Feet On the Ground by Cantara Christopher

ALICE I'm not that old-fashioned. I'm not saying we have to go legitimate or anything. But people shouldn't have to get used to talking to themselves all the time.

JIMMY Hey... I'll talk to you.

ALICE I'll listen.

They embrace. The phone rings. Alice picks it up.

ALICE Hello? Maya? What time is it? Oh my God, you're right. I should have been there half an hour ago for the rescheduled rehearsal. What? What? Yes. Yes. I understand. No, no, don't call Jimmy, I'll call him and he'll come pick me up. We'll be there in twenty minutes.

She hangs up the phone.

ALICE (continues) That was Maya at the theater. She says to come over right away. The police are there.

INT. WILCOX THEATER/LOBBY - DAY

Two L.A.P.D. detectives, LATIMER and ANDREWS, are waiting with Maya as Alice and Jimmy enter.

MAYA Oh Alice, this is—

They show their IDs.

LATIMER Lieutenant Latimer, L.A.P.D.

ANDREWS Sergeant Andrews.

JIMMY Sergeant. Lieutenant. I'm the producer, James Mehta. How can I help you?

Andrews show them a photo.

Feet On the Ground by Cantara Christopher

ANDREWS Have you seen this man?

ALICE (nodding) Yuri.

LATIMER Right. His name's Yuri Groshenko.

JIMMY Groshenko. I know that name. It's been in the news.

ALICE Aren't they that Russian crime family?

LATIMER We've been working with the F.B.I. to determine their whereabouts. They're wanted on federal charges.

ANDREWS Yuri's the brother. The baby brother.

ALICE He's been hanging around here the past few weeks.

ANDREWS We know.

LATIMER We've had him under surveillance.

JIMMY I get it. You think he can lead you to his brothers.

ANDREWS We're not at liberty to say any more.

JIMMY (to Alice) They want to grab them all at once.

ALICE I see. Well, he's not here now. We sent him away.

LATIMER And why is that?

JIMMY He put a hit out on one of our actors.

LATIMER And?

Feet On the Ground by Cantara Christopher

ALICE Well, he didn't succeed! Maya, has Yuri been around today?

MAYA No, there's just Konstantin, Nina, Masha, Arkadina and Trigorin.

ALICE (to Latimer) We're doing *The Seagull*. By Anton Chekhov.

LATIMER I see.

ANDREWS I hate Chekhov.

Latimer looks at him askance.

ANDREWS (to Latimer) Well, nothing ever happens!

MAYA (to Alice) You weren't here so I just went ahead and let them rehearse.

ALICE That's good. Thank you, Maya.

A crash from the stage is heard.

KEVIN (O.S.) Holy shit!

Everyone reacts.

JIMMY What the—!?

INT. WILCOX THEATER/STAGE - CONTINUOUS

Alice, Jimmy, Maya, Latimer and Andrews ENTER excitedly. The Lekko is smashed on the stage between Kevin and Nina, who is looking up with a smile. Kevin and Nina are dressed in the same street clothes as they were in the opening scene. Tom, Jean and Marcia, who were watching from wings, also rush up on stage.

Feet On the Ground by Cantara Christopher

KEVIN (stunned) Oh Jesus!

JEAN Oh my God.

KEVIN Six more inches— Six more inches—

JIMMY Are you hurt?

Tom looks over Kevin.

TOM He's fine. He's just shook up.

JEAN So it's just an accident.

MAYA It can't be. I checked the lights with the lighting crew. Every bolt, every screw. Last night.

LATIMER But not this morning.

NINA (ecstatic) It's Yuri. He's here.

KEVIN What?

NINA He loves me. Don't you see? He can't bear to have you touch me.

MARCIA Touch you? (glaring at Kevin) What do you mean, touch you?

Two UNIFORMED POLICEMEN enter from the front entrance.

POLICEMAN #1 Lieutenant, he was just spotted going south on Wilcox.

LATIMER In a car or on foot?

POLICEMAN #2 On foot.

Feet On the Ground by Cantara Christopher

NINA He's coming back. I have faith. He's coming back for me.

ANDREWS He can't get very far.

LATIMER So what are you waiting for? Go pick him up!

The two policemen hurriedly exit.

LATIMER You got a back way?

Jimmy points upstage.

JIMMY Over there.

EXT. ALLEY BEHIND THEATER - CONTINUOUS

The emergency exit door is flung open and Latimer and Andrews rush out, followed by Alice, Jimmy and Maya.

LATIMER Andrews, check the front. If he tries to double back we'll get him.

Andrews goes back into the theater, almost colliding with Nina, who runs past them into the alley.

NINA (shouting) Yuri!

LATIMER (to Alice and Jimmy) Get her out of here!

Nina starts running down the alley.

NINA (shouting) Yuri!

A big black SUV comes screeching down the alleyway. Nina runs toward it, the car slows down, the back door opens, she throws herself in. The car speeds away.

Feet On the Ground by Cantara Christopher

LATIMER (shouting) Andrews! He's double-backed. Get the car!

Latimer runs back into the theater, almost colliding with Kevin, who is running after the speeding-away car.

KEVIN (shouting) Nina! Nina!

Marcia comes out, runs past them into the alley and stops a short distance from Kevin.

MARCIA (shouting) Kevin!

Tom comes out, runs past them into the alley and stops a short distance from Marcia.

TOM (shouting) Marcia!

Jean comes out, runs past them into the alley and stops a short distance from Tom.

JEAN (shouting) Tom!

A SIREN is heard.

JIMMY (shouting) Out of the way!

They scatter out of the way as a police car barrels down the alley past them.

INT. YURI'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

The car is speeding away, pursued by the police with sirens.

In the back seat Nina and Yuri embrace passionately and laugh excitedly.

Feet On the Ground by Cantara Christopher

EXT. ALLEY BEHIND THEATER - CONTINUOUS

In the alley and near the emergency exit door Tom, Jean, Kevin, Marcia, Alice, Jimmy and Maya look helplessly on.

TOM So...I guess Yuri was here in the theater all the time.

MARCIA I guess that accounts for that falling Lekko.

She goes over Kevin, hugs and pets him.

MARCIA (continues; tenderly) Aw baby, are you okay?

Pouting, Kevin nods.

INT. WILCOX THEATER/OFFICE - DAY (LATER)

Maya is sitting at the desk with the small TV facing her, away from Alice and Jimmy, who are sitting on the beat-up sofa. They are all listening to the NEWS REPORTER.

NEWS REPORTER (ON T.V.) "A confusing high-speed chase through city streets that frustrated dozens of law-enforcement officers ended just minutes ago at San Bruno Harbor. Yuri 'Babe' Groshenko, youngest brother of the Moscow-based Groshenko crime family, managed to elude police capture and escape from his car to his family's private yacht. Agents of the F.B.I. and the L.A.P.D. SWAT team closed in on the vessel only a few minutes ago. Believed to be on board with Groshenko is actress Nina Costa."

JIMMY This is fascinating. I mean it's horrible, but it's fascinating.

NEWS REPORTER (ON T.V.) "Police have not confirmed whether Ms. Costa is a hostage or joined him willingly. We take you now to Linda Gomez on the scene."

Feet On the Ground by Cantara Christopher

LINDA GOMEZ (ON T.V.) "I'm here at the exclusive Vista Yacht Club, where just minutes ago a SWAT team was given the signal to storm the Groshenko boat—"

ALICE (overlapping) Oh my God, they're going to get killed.

MAYA Poor Nina.

The phone rings. Maya turns down the TV and picks it up.

MAYA (continues) Good afternoon, Wilcox Theater. Yes, Mr. Green. One moment.

She gets Jimmy's attention, then hands the phone to him.

JIMMY (into phone) Hey Lew! Yeah, yeah, it's a real drama. We're running around frantic here too. That Yuri guy sure left his handiwork. What? Just now? (to Maya) Check our emails.

Maya turns to desktop computer and types.

JIMMY What are we looking for? You forwarded something?

Alice glances at TV, reaches over and turns it up. They all watch.

NEWS ANCHOR (O.S.) "...and found no one on board. Another frustrating turn of events for authorities, who hope to bring the entire Groshenko family..."

JIMMY This is incredible. The old switcheroo.

Sighing, Alice turns off TV.

JIMMY I wonder where Nina is.

Feet On the Ground by Cantara Christopher

ALICE I don't even want to imagine.

MAYA Here it is. It just came in.

Alice and Jimmy read over her shoulder.

JIMMY (into phone) Lew, we got the email you forwarded. (reads) "Dear Lew, sorry to cut out on you. I'm sorry about the movie, but this is real life. Love, Nina. P.S. Tell Alice Barnes I enjoyed being in her play." (into phone) When did you get this? Just now? That's incredible.

MAYA You don't think that's really from her, do you?

ALICE (grimly) Oh yes. Oh yes.

MAYA Alice, I'm so sorry.

JIMMY (on phone while staring at Alice) Lew, can I call you back? We're sort of in crisis mode here. I'm sure you understand. Right.

He hangs up. Alice suddenly perks up alert and looks intently at Maya.

ALICE Maya.

MAYA Yes.

ALICE (slowly and deliberately) This is what I want from you right now. This is what I need. I need you to tell me what you think *The Seagull* is about.

Feet On the Ground by Cantara Christopher

MAYA (taking a beat to focus) Well...The Seagull is a play about dreams and illusions and the compromises you have to make with those dreams and illusions to keep on going. If you're not an artist, it's actually not so bad because the solution to life is just to go on living. But if you are an artist, you have to make peace not only with your real life, but the life you have inside, the thing that makes you an artist in the first place. So if you're an artist, that's two things you have to keep juggling forever, and it's very, very hard.

ALICE All right. So in your opinion, does Nina do that? Is she a success or a failure?

MAYA We never find out. We have to figure it out ourselves.

A pause as Alice considers her words, then smiles.

MAYA What is it?

ALICE (laughing with relief) It's going to be fine. Everything! Fine! I'm promoting the prop girl to stage manager. Because you know what this means, don't you, Maya?

MAYA What? (beat) You mean—?

ALICE I mean, (pointedly) Nina...

Maya's face lights up with realization and delight.

INT. ALICE'S APARTMENT/LIVING ROOM - DAY

The next afternoon. Jimmy is very much at home on the sofa with a laptop on his lap, talking on his cell phone, a half bottle of whiskey and highball glass on the table which he sips from.

Feet On the Ground by Cantara Christopher

JIMMY (with forced chumminess) ...Yeah, it's been a real thriller! Lew's mad as hell. The feds were all over his office yesterday trying to track down where that email came from. You know how he hates not being in control of his domain. No. No. They think they're both clean out of the country by now. No. No way is Lew shutting down the picture. He's already recasting. He's planning to sue her management, which I think he has a perfect right to... He said he wants us to join him suing them too but Alice put her foot down on that. Yeah, I know, she's just a hippie at heart. Yeah babe, yeah. I feel the same way. Yeah, yeah, anyway, it's great to touch bases. Let's do lunch and discuss that project of mine and Kate's, what do you say? Yeah. Yeah. Well, call me when you've got a moment. Yes, I will. I'll give your love to Kate.

Hangs up, goes back to writing on his laptop.

JIMMY (to himself, like a mantra) Gotta get something going in this town...
Gotta get something going in this town...

INT. WILCOX THEATER/STAGE - DAY

Alice, Maya, Tom, Marcia, Kevin and Jean are the last to leave. They gather up their things and file past Alice.

ALICE That's it, people. Dress rehearsal tomorrow night, then Friday...

KEVIN It feels good. It's gonna be great.

ALICE Yes, you're there. You don't need me anymore. You're all grown up.

MARCIA See you tomorrow.

Kevin and Marcia exit together.

Feet On the Ground by Cantara Christopher

TOM This is such a joy now.

ALICE I'm glad.

TOM Don't get me wrong. It was great before, but this...

JEAN Night Alice. Night Tom.

She exits.

ALICE Night dear! Great work!

Tom salutes Alice.

TOM Anyway! Hey Jean, wait up. I'll give you a ride.

He exits. Alice and Maya walk toward the doors to the lobby.

INT. WILCOX THEATER/LOBBY - CONTINUOUS

No one else is in the lobby.

MAYA I have a car, can I give you a lift?

ALICE No thanks. Jimmy's on his way to come pick me up and drive me home.

MAYA That's nice that he does that.

ALICE Well, we have things to go over. Publicity, concessions, last-minute details...

MAYA Oh, right.

ALICE So who's coming to see you? I'll bet your whole family's going to turn out for you.

Feet On the Ground by Cantara Christopher

MAYA I'm afraid I haven't got a large family.

ALICE I'm sorry to hear that.

MAYA But my grandfather's coming.

ALICE Are you very close?

MAYA He practically raised me. He owns a chain of laundry dry cleaners in Riverside. They get a lot of business from Mission Inn. You know, that fabulous hotel.

ALICE A cultured businessman of Yelets.

MAYA Please, don't insult my grandfather. He is cultured. He taught himself everything about art and music and literature... And theater, he loves the theater.

ALICE I'm sorry. I didn't mean to offend you.

MAYA You didn't offend me. I just wanted to say that he's the one who encouraged me. To become an actress.

ALICE That's wonderful.

MAYA Can I ask, who encouraged you?

ALICE (with a wistful smile) No one.

INT. ALICE'S APARTMENT/BEDROOM - NIGHT

Alice and Jimmy are in bed. Jimmy is asleep, his arms around her. Alice is awake with a look of happiness, her eyes gleaming with vitality and optimism, while Jimmy snores softly.

EXT. WILCOX THEATER/FRONT - DAY

Feet On the Ground by Cantara Christopher

The next day, around noon. The posters for The Seagull are in the marquee case.

Alice is approaching the front door and about to open it when Kate comes up to her.

KATE Hello darling!

ALICE (surprised) Kate. You're back. Glad to see you again.

KATE I owe you a lunch.

ALICE I don't think now is... (checks watch) Oh, why not. As long as I get into the theater by two.

EXT. SIDEWALK CAFE NEAR THEATER - DAY (LATER)

Alice and Kate are at a table halfway through lunch.

KATE In summer the Boul-Mich is positively swarming with them. I could do a standup routine on American tourists.

ALICE But I'm sure you had a good time.

KATE Well, it wasn't all pleasure. Mostly business. Although I got to see some old friends, Jean-Marc and Genevieve. The Delagardies, do you know them?

Alice shrugs.

KATE (continues) When they're in L.A. we always have dinner together. Old family, very distinguished, they have a fairytale chateau in the Île de France.

ALICE (politely) Mmm.

Feet On the Ground by Cantara Christopher

KATE Lew would horrify them. Jimmy they seem to like. Genevieve once told me he was "un authentique". An authentic.

ALICE So. You were buying some new pieces in Paris...

KATE Actually, I was selling. Look, can I confide in you?

ALICE Of course.

KATE I've had to do a tad more selling than buying lately. It hasn't been easy.

ALICE I guess it's a volatile market right now.

KATE It's not volatile, it's bad. Bad everywhere. Things aren't moving the way they used to. It's just...bad.

ALICE I'm sorry.

KATE No, it is. It's really bad. You haven't got any investments, have you?

Alice shakes her head.

KATE (continues) You're very lucky. I'm not telling everyone this, but... Oh well, it'll come out eventually. I lost a bundle in that rotten investment pyramid, you know the one...

ALICE I heard about it.

KATE I didn't know it was a pyramid. I mean, for God's sake, the man was one of my father's closest friends...

ALICE I'm sure you'll recover.

Feet On the Ground by Cantara Christopher

KATE Alice, it took a bite out of almost everything I had. The trust fund. I had to sell the place in Catalina. I just came back from selling the apartment in Paris and all the furnishings. And now I may lose the house.

ALICE Oh Kate, your beautiful house.

KATE Maybe not. We'll see. I may be hanging on by my fingernails by next year. But right now it's still my house. Why are you looking at me like that? You're not taking this seriously.

ALICE I am. I'm taking it very seriously because it's a serious subject. It's just that I never realized what a tough lady you could be.

KATE (modestly) You should see me at the foundation board meetings. But you know, it makes you stop and think. When you're on the verge of losing everything it makes you focus on priorities.

ALICE Such as?

KATE Well, I'm sure you yourself have been through these kinds of ups and downs. I'm starting to truly respect your years of experience.

ALICE What are you talking about, priorities? Health, work, family, loved ones?

KATE (stonily) My family you can nail shut in a barrel and throw down the Grand Canyon. (with tenderness) But I don't know if I could bear to lose Jimmy.

ALICE Oh.

KATE Isn't that crazy? If you love someone, money shouldn't matter.

Feet On the Ground by Cantara Christopher

ALICE That's what they say.

KATE It's just that... I've never tested that theory.

ALICE You've never had to.

KATE Not even with Lew and his ups and downs. I could always float him.

ALICE Kate, you're a fascinating, intelligent, beautiful woman. You can have any man you want, whether or not you can "float" him.

KATE Let's not go overboard. The crazy thing is, this is the first man in a long time I think I really do want to have a future with.

ALICE Jimmy is obviously crazy about you. He's always talking about how sympatico you are, how well you work together...

KATE Work together—? Are you talking about that screenplay? Oh jiminy cricket. I decided against that months ago.

ALICE I didn't know.

KATE Oh, it's a cute book. Four-thousand-women whatever? But just between you and me it's maybe just a tad self-indulgent. Frankly I wouldn't know how to turn it into a viable movie project anyway. God, I haven't had the guts to tell him yet. Have you read that thing?

ALICE No, afraid not.

KATE I can't imagine why he's still flogging that screenplay idea.

Feet On the Ground by Cantara Christopher

ALICE That's what he's pinning his hopes on, apparently.

KATE You know, who cares if he doesn't write another sentence. When I met him I thought he was the most genuine, caring man in the world.

ALICE Then you should remember that.

KATE I think I'm just overthinking this. All I have to do is sit down, just tell him what's happening. Just get it over with.

ALICE That's a good idea.

KATE I'm probably getting all worked up for nothing. He'll be there for me. I know he will. What do you think?

ALICE I think...you already know what kind of a man you've got.

KATE I'll do it. Maybe before the party tomorrow.

ALICE Party?

KATE Well, I am the producer! Okay, Jimmy is but it's the same thing. We are exercising our prerogative as producer to throw the opening night party.

ALICE Kate, that's very generous. Especially with everything you've got on your mind.

KATE I love doing this. Giving is my life.

ALICE So you'll be coming opening night?

Feet On the Ground by Cantara Christopher

KATE No no, I think it's better if Jimmy and I quietly drop in the middle of the run. Tomorrow night you're papering the house with family and friends, you'll need all your seats.

ALICE Oh yes, there won't be a single paying customer.

KATE So cast, crew and plus-ones, come over after the show. You're all invited.

ALICE I'll spread the word. (checks watch) Look, it's nearly two. I've got to get back for the full dress.

KATE Are you nervous?

ALICE No.

KATE Because you know what they say. Lousy dress rehearsal, great opening night.

ALICE I'm not nervous.

INT. WILCOX THEATER/STAGE - DAY (LATER)

Maya and Tom are in costume as "Nina" and "Trigorin". Tom is writing in a notebook.

MAYA ("NINA") "What are you writing?"

TOM ("TRIGORIN") "Not much. Just an idea that occurred to me for a story."

He puts the notebook back in pocket.

Feet On the Ground by Cantara Christopher

TOM (continues; "TRIGORIN") "A naïve young girl, just like you, grows up by the shores of a beautiful lake. And just like the seagulls, she loves the lake and she lives a free and happy life. But then by chance a man happens to come her way. And out of sheer boredom, this man—just as this seagull was destroyed—destroys her."

INT. WILCOX THEATER/AUDIENCE - CONTINUOUS

CLOSE UP

on Alice, watching impassively.

INT. ALICE'S APARTMENT/LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

That night. Jimmy, laptop in lap, is dozing sitting up on Alice's couch. As Alice enters she opens and closes the door a bit too loudly.

JIMMY (waking) Oh, hey, I must've nodded off waiting for you. How'd you get home?

During the conversation Alice goes in and out of the bedroom to change.

ALICE I took the bus.

JIMMY You could have called.

ALICE I knew you were busy writing.

JIMMY Oh yeah, thanks.

ALICE The screenplay again? How's it coming?

JIMMY It's coming along great. Nah, who am I kidding. It isn't flowing like I thought it would.

Feet On the Ground by Cantara Christopher

ALICE Well, give it time.

JIMMY I'm already spending too much time on it. Hey, I really appreciate being over here. I love the lack of distraction. There's no pressure. Ummm...you know that Kate's back.

ALICE Yes, I heard.

JIMMY She's been back a few days. You ought to give her a call. You can come over and see all the pretty things she bought.

Alice, now in an oversized T-shirt, comes over and sits by him.

JIMMY There's my girl.

He leans over to kiss her, she leans away slightly.

JIMMY (continues) Tired?

ALICE No, just a little keyed up.

JIMMY Shall I rub your back?

ALICE No, that's very sweet. I'm just thinking about tomorrow.

JIMMY Well, I wouldn't worry about it. It's going to be fine. And if it's not...

ALICE Of course it's going to be fine.

JIMMY You see?

ALICE I have total confidence in my cast and crew. What do you mean?

Feet On the Ground by Cantara Christopher

JIMMY What do you mean, what do I mean?

ALICE If it's not?

JIMMY Well, it's not life or death. It isn't, you know, Broadway.

ALICE No, you're right, it's not one of your major productions. But Jimmy. Don't belittle your efforts. You did a wonderful job.

He shrugs dismissively.

ALICE No, really. This play could not have happened without you.

JIMMY You don't need to sing my praises to the rafters.

ALICE We all need a little praise now and then.

JIMMY Yeah, well, not for this. I mean, this was nothing.

ALICE Nothing?

JIMMY You don't need to throw me a bone.

ALICE I'm not.

JIMMY I mean it was barely worth anyone's time. For chrissakes, I have got a lot more going on than this—thing.

ALICE All of us do.

JIMMY Oh, yeah? I don't exactly see them knocking down your door.

Alice winces at this put-down.

Feet On the Ground by Cantara Christopher

JIMMY (continues) Listen. Alice. I am this close to closing a deal.

ALICE What kind of a deal?

JIMMY (evasively) Um...a deal, you know, a deal! You know about deals don't you? Mum's the word. But when I get Kate on board it's gonna be great. Not just for me, for her too, for both of us. Hey, maybe for everyone.

ALICE Does Kate know about this deal?

JIMMY I'll let her know in good time.

ALICE (deliberately) So...shouldn't you be spending more time with her?

JIMMY (ruefully) Yeah. Maybe you're right.

He gathers up his things—notepad, pens, laptop, etc.

ALICE (with forced nonchalance) You can put the keys over there.

A beat. Nodding with understanding, he takes the keys out of his pocket and tosses them on the table.

ALICE So we'll be seeing you at the theater?

JIMMY Yeah, whenever.

He exits. Alice throws back her head on the couch and sighs.

INT. BAR NEAR THEATER - NIGHT

The same bar where the Cast met. Alice is sitting at the bar nursing a drink when Tom enters and goes to her.

Feet On the Ground by Cantara Christopher

TOM This better be good. Jean thinks I'm already cheating on her.

ALICE So it's Jean now.

He sits beside Alice, the bartender comes up.

TOM (to bartender) Just a Coke.

The bartender goes off.

TOM So, what's the great disaster?

ALICE All right, now I'm embarrassed. It's nothing, really.

TOM You sounded pretty messed up on the phone.

The bartender puts a Coke down on the bar in front of Tom and goes off.

ALICE I couldn't stay in my apartment and I found myself coming here. Now I'm feeling rotten about getting you out of the house. Oh God, especially the night before we open.

TOM Hey. I'm not gonna blame you for feeling rotten. Your Konstantin was nearly assassinated and your Nina eloped with a Russian mafia kingpin. That can be a wearing experience.

ALICE No, that was easy to deal with.

TOM So if you need to blow off some steam...

ALICE It's not the play. I'm embarrassed to tell you because it's really nothing to do with anything... I just broke up with a guy.

TOM (sincerely) Oh Alice, I'm so sorry.

Feet On the Ground by Cantara Christopher

ALICE It just happened tonight.

TOM And it's really over?

ALICE Yes, it's really over.

TOM Did it last very long, the two of you?

ALICE No, not long at all. That's the thing, I just sort of fell into it. I wasn't thinking. I knew it was all wrong from the start. But I had no idea it was going to hit me so hard when I finally said, enough.

TOM We never know till we know. Look, I don't know what to tell you. Do what everyone else does. Tear up his picture. Then get some rest, get your confidence back, get back in the game.

ALICE I've never been in the game. I've never thought of it as a game.

TOM Yeah, you never struck me as that type. An admirable quality. (in a lighter mood) Um, hey... Did you know that I passed up an audition for a national juice commercial to audition for you?

ALICE And you're telling me this now, why? To make me feel guilty on top of everything?

TOM I think you ought to know what you bring out in people. When I saw that you were directing, there wasn't a question in my mind which audition to choose.

ALICE Thank you, Tom.

TOM Although I did calculate that I had a better shot at landing Trigorin than the third grapefruit from the left.

Feet On the Ground by Cantara Christopher

ALICE Fruit juice's loss is theater's gain.

TOM You know, there are just things you have to do when they come to you. Because all we have are moments. And this moment— (taps bar counter) — will never happen again.

ALICE You're right, of course.

TOM Are you starting to feel better? Have I accomplished my task?

ALICE Yes, I think so.

TOM You going to be in shape for tomorrow night?

He reaches over and rubs her back comfortingly.

ALICE I'm fine. I'm leaving it all up to you. (raises glass) To The Seagull. "Za vashe zdorovye!"

TOM Hear hear.

They clink their glasses.

ALICE Break a leg.

TOM I fully intend to.

INT. WILCOX THEATER/LOBBY - NIGHT

The opening night audience is talking, drinking wine, waiting for the house doors to be opened. KIM, a girl in her late teens, the new stage manager, comes up to Alice, who is chatting with a group of people.

KIM I think we can start on time.

Feet On the Ground by Cantara Christopher

ALICE Go ahead and open the doors.

KIM I'll tell the house manager.

INT. WILCOX THEATER/AUDIENCE - NIGHT

The audience is seated. The house lights dim, stage lights rise. Alice is watching, rapt.

INT. WILCOX THEATER/STAGE - CONTINUOUS

The stage is fully dressed for Act 1. Marcia and DENNIS, an actor in early 30s, are fully costumed.

DENNIS ("MEDVEDENKO") "Why do you always dress in black?"

MARCIA ("MASHA") "I am in mourning for my life. I am unhappy."

CUT TO:

Maya and Kevin onstage. This is the same Act 4 speech as in the opening.

MAYA ("NINA") (distracted, agitated, intense) "I am a seagull— No, no, no! That's not what I wanted to say! This is what I wanted to say. Now I am a real actress. I act with exaltation, I am drunk with joy, I feel that I am wonderful. I know now, Konstantin, that for us, whether we are writers or actors, it isn't fame, or glory, or any of those things that are important. It is the strength to carry on. To carry on and have faith."

CUT TO:

INT. WILCOX THEATER/AUDIENCE - SIMULTANEOUS

Feet On the Ground by Cantara Christopher

CLOSE UP

of Alice, mouthing the words Maya is saying:

MAYA ("NINA") (O.S.)

"I have faith and my life is no longer so unbearable, and when I think of my noble calling, I fear nothing in the world."

Alice smiles and nods to herself, barely able to contain her joy. She's got what she wanted at last.

CUT TO:

INT. WILCOX THEATER/AUDIENCE - LATER

The audience applauds warmly.

INT. WILCOX THEATER/STAGE - SIMULTANEOUSLY

The cast, hands joined, bows.

CUT TO:

INT. WILCOX THEATER/AUDIENCE - LATER

House lights up. The crowd has thinned out. People linger in the seats and in the aisle, chatting. Kim enters and goes over to Alice, who is standing in the aisle close to the stage, accepting congratulations from various people. She extends her hand, Alice shakes it.

KIM Well, Ms. Barnes, we did it!

ALICE Call me Alice. Yes Kim, we did it. Look, go get yourself a glass of wine, you deserve it.

Feet On the Ground by Cantara Christopher

KIM Thanks, Ms.— Alice. I'll do that.

She goes off. Tom, in street clothes, comes over and hugs Alice.

TOM Hey hey hey!

ALICE Did you get your notes?

TOM We got the notes. I don't want to think about it till tomorrow night. You want to let go now?

ALICE I'm letting go.

Jean enters from upstage and puts her arm around Tom.

TOM We're going to head out to the party.

JEAN Yeah, I'm hungry!

TOM Alice, do you need a ride?

ALICE I don't know if I'm going, I'm a little wrung out.

TOM Hey, don't. Don't. That's just postpartum depression. Don't give into it.

ALICE You're right, you're right. I will be coming along. Don't worry, I'll hitch with someone else.

TOM You're sure.

ALICE I'm absolutely sure. Save me a glass of champagne.

Feet On the Ground by Cantara Christopher

They exit. Alice turns, walks up the aisle toward the lobby and halfway up runs into Lew and CARLY, a hefty and unsophisticated but pleasant-looking woman in her late 30s who is seven months pregnant. Lew hugs Alice.

LEW Baby doll. It was sublime. You don't believe me, ask Carly.

Carly pumps Alice's hand.

CARLY It was wonderful, Ms. Barnes.

ALICE Call me Alice.

CARLY I've never seen this play before. I'm so glad I got the chance.

ALICE Thank you. Are you two going to Kate's party?

LEW Party? Oh no. We gotta get the family home. (pats Carly's stomach) I think late nights are gonna be a thing of the past from now on. (to Carly) You're not feeling tired, are you, hon?

CARLY Just a little.

LEW So we'll be heading out.

ALICE He's taking good care of you, Carly.

CARLY Don't I know it!

LEW Good to see you again, Alice. We'll do lunch.

ALICE Next year, my birthday.

LEW It's a date!

Feet On the Ground by Cantara Christopher

They exit. Maya, in street clothes, comes up behind Alice, who turns when she hears her.

MAYA Alice. This was so—so—

ALICE Yes, I know. How do you feel?

MAYA I think I'm finally coming down.

Alice hugs her.

ALICE I think you deserve a little celebration.

MAYA I think you're right.

ALICE Are you going to the party?

MAYA Oh yes, of course.

ALICE Um, if you don't mind, I'd like to take you up on that ride now.

MAYA Oh.

ALICE Is it a problem?

MAYA No, I'd be glad to give you a lift, only...I'm with my grandfather.

ALICE He can come to the party.

MAYA That would be great. Would you like to meet him? He's over there with those people.

ALICE Let's go.

Feet On the Ground by Cantara Christopher

They walk over to a small group of THEATERGOERS standing and chatting nearby. Holding the floor at the moment is an attractive, smartly-dressed man in his 60s, CLAYMORE CHING.

CLAYMORE (to the group)—which is exactly why there are—

Maya goes up to him. Without pausing, he puts his arm around Maya and squeezes her affectionately.

MAYA Ye-ye...

CLAYMORE What is it, little one?

MAYA There's someone I'd like you to meet.

He turns his attention completely to Alice.

CLAYMORE Ah! No introductions necessary.

He thrusts out his hand, Alice shakes it.

CLAYMORE (continues) Miss Barnes. I've been a big fan of yours for years. Ever since—

ALICE I know what you're going to say. My weather girl in Cleveland Follies.

CLAYMORE Actually, I was going to say your Juliet at the Westwood Playhouse.

THEATERGOER Oh yeah, Romeo and Juliet.

CLAYMORE No, not at all. Juliet in Measure for Measure.

ALICE (astounded) You remember that?

Feet On the Ground by Cantara Christopher

CLAYMORE Like I said, I'm a big fan.

Alice's face registers surprise and delight.

EXT. KATE'S HOUSE/FRONT - NIGHT

Party sounds—laughter, clinking glasses, soft jazz on the music system.

INT. KATE'S HOUSE/LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Tom, Jean, Kevin and Marcia are talking among themselves. Jimmy and Kate are sitting together on the sofa, holding court while a small crowd of guests, including Dennis and DARRYL, a techie in his 20s, sit or stand around them. Jimmy is drunk.

JIMMY Jesus Christ, you would not believe the amount of money pouring into Silicon Valley in those days. And the stuff we had in our offices... Roller blades. Trampolines.

DARRYL Video games?

JIMMY We had Road Trip. We had Twisted Metal. We had—The Legend of Zelda.

DARRYL Wow.

JIMMY In every office. And for everyone—a personal cappuccino machine.

DENNIS But you did manage to do some great stuff.

JIMMY Yeah, sure.

DENNIS That software you guys developed—

JIMMY Oh fuck the software.

Feet On the Ground by Cantara Christopher

The front doorbell rings. A guest opens the door and Maya enters. Lagging behind are Alice and Claymore who enter and, without breaking their conversation (which we do not distinctly hear), take up seats a short distance from Kate and Jimmy. Maya approaches Tom, Jean, Kevin and Marcia.

TOM There's our Nina!

He hugs her warmly.

MAYA Is that for me?

JEAN We all get one.

They all hug her one at a time. At last Maya starts to loosen and even smiles broadly.

MAYA I guess I'll have to get used to this.

JEAN But first go get something to eat.

KEVIN I think there's still some rumaki left.

MARCIA I dunno about that, Jean's been a pig.

JEAN Well, I haven't had anything all day!

TOM I heard there's pizza coming.

Kate looks up from the couch.

KATE There is. I called Vito's.

TOM Well he'd better hurry up, or these bums are going to eat you out of house and home.

Feet On the Ground by Cantara Christopher

KATE I almost forgot what a bunch of freeloaders you actors are.

She gestures toward Alice.

KATE (continues) Hey, tell Alice to come on over.

TOM Alice! Come on over!

MAYA Shh! She's busy.

TOM Who's the old guy?

MAYA My grandfather. They started talking in the car and they're still at it.

Alice and Claymore are still in the middle of their conversation.

ALICE You're kidding. You saw the original cast?

CLAYMORE 1978. At the Mark Taper. We should go sometime. I always get season tickets.

Jimmy has been glaring at Alice and Claymore since their arrival. Now he drunkenly calls out.

JIMMY Hey Alice! Hey Alice! Hey Alice!

ALICE (sighs) I'm so sorry. Can you excuse me a moment? I'll be right back.

CLAYMORE Yes of course.

She gets up, goes over to the back of the sofa and puts her hand on Jimmy's shoulder.

ALICE Jimmy.

Feet On the Ground by Cantara Christopher

JIMMY So it was a great show, was it?

ALICE It was wonderful. I'm sorry you couldn't be there tonight.

KATE Alice, darling.

Alice leans down and presses her cheek on Kate's.

JIMMY You know the real credit goes to Kate.

KATE Now you know that's not true.

Jimmy toasts her with the drink in his hand.

JIMMY To Kate and all her ilk.

MARCIA Ilk. That's a funny word.

Jimmy stands, drink still in hand.

JIMMY (loudly) To the Lew Greens and the Kate Firestines and the so-called benefactors of our so-called culture!

He's got the attention of the entire room.

TOM (amused) Hey hey, I think you'd better slow down on the good stuff.

JIMMY Yeah, I'll slow down. When Kate takes her collar off me I'll slow down.

ALICE (confidentially to Kate) What's with him?

KATE I don't know. He's been drinking since this morning after I told him that things were changing for us. I've never seen him like this before.

Feet On the Ground by Cantara Christopher

JIMMY (loudly to the room) Don't you get it? Don't you see how they're all playing you for patsies? They take your work, they take the sweat of your brow, then they throw you— Well, they don't even throw you pennies. Rumaki maybe. All that work for what? A hoary old play nobody cares about anymore?

KEVIN My agent was there.

JIMMY Fuck your agent. When are you people going to settle down and start attending to business?

TOM I can't believe you worked with us all this time and you don't get it.

Jimmy dismisses Tom with a drunken wave and turns to Kate.

JIMMY (scathingly) And you, you bitch. You wouldn't even touch my screenplay. What have I got in this fucking town if I haven't got that screenplay? You said you were going to take my screenplay and show it to important people, right? Right? Well? So where are these important people?

Claymore rises and goes over to Jimmy.

CLAYMORE (conciliatory) Look here, my friend, I think you've about reached your limit.

JIMMY Oh yeah? That what you think, Bruce Lee?

Jimmy takes a swing at Claymore with his right fist; Claymore dodges to the left, thus throwing Jimmy off balance, and he falls into Tom's arms.

TOM (to Claymore) Thanks.

Feet On the Ground by Cantara Christopher

CLAYMORE He's all yours.

Tom deftly snatches the drink from Jimmy's left hand and puts it down.

TOM Take it easy, Jimmy. Take it easy.

JIMMY Fuck you.

He passes out in Tom arms.

TOM (to no one in particular) Can I get a hand here?

*Darryl applauds but HIS DATE nudges him disapprovingly and he stops.
Kevin steps up and picks up Jimmy's legs.*

KEVIN God he's heavy. What should we do with him?

Kate, now exasperated by Jimmy, answers from the sofa.

KATE Oh, just stick him in the bedroom over there, I'll deal with him later.
He's not the first drunken guest I've let sleep it off.

*As Kevin and Tom EXIT carrying Jimmy lengthwise, Alice goes over to
Claymore.*

ALICE Oh my goodness. Are you all right?

He straightens himself as Alice fusses over him.

CLAYMORE (amused) I'm fine. You're a lively bunch.

The doorbell rings. Dennis goes over to answer it.

DENNIS (calling out) Hey, the pizza's here.

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JEAN Finally!

CARD: "SIX WEEKS LATER"

INT. ALICE'S APARTMENT/BEDROOM - DAY

Alice, wearing a dressy suit, is on her cell phone.

ALICE ...Oh, Larry, I'm just so glad you could make it for closing night. Yes, she's a lovely girl, I enjoyed meeting her. No, no, you don't have to make me a grandmother just yet.

ALICE (continues) (V.O. DURING MONTAGE) Well, you know how it is with the business. You get close to the people you work with, but now it's time to go our separate ways. Right. Right. It was a good run and maybe some of us will work together again, maybe not. It doesn't matter.

MONTAGE:

CUT TO:

INT. BABY NURSERY - SIMULTANEOUS

Lew and Carly hold a newborn baby, cooing over it.

CUT TO:

INT. AGENT'S WAITING ROOM - SIMULTANEOUS

Kevin and Marcia read a script together, then look up at the same time and smile at each other.

CUT TO:

INT. LAUNDROMAT - SIMULTANEOUS

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Tom and Jean do laundry together in perfect coordination.

CUT TO:

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM - SIMULTANEOUS

Auditioning for a commercial, Maya stands holding a package of frozen dinner in front of several executives.

CUT TO:

EXT. RUSSIAN DACHA - SIMULTANEOUS

Nina looks out from a window at the dreary rainy weather, sighing, bored.

CUT TO:

EXT. KATE'S HOUSE/FRONT - SIMULTANEOUS

Jimmy, carrying a couple of pieces of luggage, trudges down the driveway away from the house.

CUT TO:

INT. ALICE'S APARTMENT/BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Alice glances out the window.

ALICE Well, here's my ride. Look, I'll call you again in a few days. There's a lot more I need to tell you about. Okay. I love you too, angel. 'Bye.

She hangs up, puts the cell phone in her shoulder bag, picks up a corsage which she pins to her lapel and takes one last look of approval at herself in the mirror. Then she picks up an overnight bag and exits.

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EXT. ALICE'S APARTMENT/FRONT - CONTINUOUS

A car is parked in front of the building, from which Claymore, dressed in a formal suit, gets out. Alice comes up to him, puts down her bag and they briefly kiss. He opens the passenger door. She gets in, he picks up her overnight bag, puts it in the trunk, returns to the driver's seat...and they drive away.

THE END.

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Cantara Christopher is a retired actress and Hollywood intimate who has appeared in porn movies under her screen name Simona Wing. She is now a screenwriter and novelist.