

THE ONE ABOUT THE HAMSTER

CHARACTERS

Gary In his thirties, a little shabby
Candice A hamster

DUAL ROLES MAN

Player National Basketball Association
 player, on the opposing team

Kyle Sporty, he wears roller skates,
 tight shorts, no shirt and a vest

Russian Coach Olympic track & field coach –
 Wears a red tracksuit

Dancer One Wears a unitard (life is pain)

DUAL ROLES WOMAN

Coach NBA coach, he wears a suit and
 tie, carries a clipboard

Model An artist's model, wears a
 bathrobe and no shoes

Russian Lady Generally terrifying

Dancer Two Another unitard (The horror)

Quick note: At some points in the script, the writer uses a | to denote lines happening in quick succession, or on top of each other. At other moments, the writer uses [] to identify Russian translations (by Yale's John Hanlon – thanks, John!) and { } to suggest places for a little improvisation. Additionally, if selected, writer will incur cost for purchase, care and feeding of any rodent, in perpetuity.

SETTING: Gary's APARTMENT, THE NBA FINALS, ARGENTINA, a NEW YORK CITY LOFT and VARIOUS OTHER PLACES, to be determined.

TIME: RIGHT NOW

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The lights come up on GARY, waking up on the floor.

GARY

Candice? CANDICE? No, no, no, no – Look, you’ve left your alfalfa untouched! Oh, my sweet Candice, where are you?

A basketball rolls onstage. GARY looks at it and picks it up. COACH runs in, blowing a whistle, while PLAYER bounds to his spot on the free throw line.

COACH

You got this! Don’t choke –

PLAYER

Brick!

GARY

(Surprised to be dribbling) Coach, have you seen a hamster?

COACH

Focus, Gary! This is the NBA finals!

PLAYER

Ka-BOOOM!

GARY runs up to an audience member, frantic.

GARY

Have you seen a hamster – She’s like, hamster size?

COACH

Gary, get your head in the game!

GARY

Her name is Candice. And she is my everything!

PLAYER

Illegal traveling – Ref are you seeing this?

GARY

(Asking the audience) I gotta go take this shot, but first could you all look under your seats for her?

COACH

Gary!

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GARY

(To a particular audience member) She's adorable, and caramel-colored, no, she's burnt sienna, no – She's golden – like the corn in "Field of Dreams"!

PLAYER

METAPHOOOOOR!

GARY

She's majestic! Like the Queen of the –

COACH

GARY!

GARY

Sure, Coach. Right. Free throw shot. Okay – No problem!

GARY sets up for the shot, and freezes.

GARY (CON'T)

But what if I hit Candice?

COACH

Jesus Christ, Gary. *(He breathes in and out deeply.)* Be the ball. Feel the ball? Yes – The ball is round. The ball is full of air. Now *throw* the ball. Be throwing the ball!

GARY

Candice is little and defenseless and this – is like a meteor!

PLAYER

METEEOOOOOOR!

COACH

Just shoot!

Gary closes his eyes and lobs the ball offstage. We hear the sound of cheers as PLAYER deflates and COACH jumps for joy.

PLAYER

Good game.

COACH

Remind me to up your visits with the team shrink, kid!

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COACH and PLAYER exit, with GARY attempting to follow. GARY becomes distracted. He starts heading towards the audience.

GARY

You go on ahead, Coach. – I'm just gonna sign a few autographs!

GARY starts looking under seats and next to audience members.

GARY

(Weaving through the crowd) {I just really want to find my hamster! Have you seen her? Can you help me look?} It's been established – She's little and furry and cute and her ground speed, barring injury, is about 4 feet per hour! How hard can it be to find her, people? You're not even *trying!* {It's your fault, it's *all of your faults!*} I didn't have to wake up here! I used to have a bed! But no, you people want entertainment! You *wanna see a show!* Well, you want art? I'll give you art! *(Beat.)* Now, hand me my paintbrush!

GARY points to a paintbrush under a seat and motions for an audience member's help.

GARY

Could you hand me that please? Yes, thank you. *(Screaming)* Kyle! It's time for my wheat grass juice!

KYLE rolls onstage, carrying green juice.

GARY

Are those new roller skates?

KYLE

(Flinching) Yes.

GARY

I hate them! Now help me find my hamster.

KYLE

Your hamster?

GARY

Where's the model? We require a muse. And with no Candice, my artistic vision is an aimless pony wandering across vast deserts of desolation and torment! *(He drinks.)* Oh, good juice.

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KYLE

You like it?

GARY

(Spitting out juice) NO!

MODEL enters, swinging a whistle.

MODEL

I'm not getting naked.

GARY

My work demands it!

MODEL

Use your imagination.

GARY

Kyle – Is this a friend of yours?

KYLE

(To MODEL) You wanna a wheatgrass juice?

MODEL

Is it organic?

GARY

That's it! Both of you better look for Candice.

KYLE

Who's Candice?

MODEL

My replacement?

GARY

Shut up! Enough! I'm ready! Kyle, hold the canvas!

KYLE rolls over with a big white canvas.

GARY (CON'T)

You, robe woman, blow the whistle on the count of three.

MODEL

Three, two, one –

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MODEL blows the whistle and GARY throws his juice on the canvas, leaving "art."

GARY

Call it 'Epiphany' – And get me a carrot and a beet juice, too – I feel a triptych coming on!

KYLE rolls offstage.

MODEL

I like beet juice –

MODEL exits.

A pole vault enters the stage. GARY looks at it.

GARY

Shto za CHORT?! ["What the heck?"]

GARY is surprised to be speaking Russian. He grasps the pole. RUSSIAN COACH enters, doing deep lunges and flexing his arms.

RUSSIAN COACH

(Ordering) Pree-SHLO VREM-ya dlya TVOI-yeh-vah oo-KOL-ah, Gary.

GARY

It's time for my shot?

RUSSIAN LADY enters, stroking a fake cat.

RUSSIAN GIRLFRIEND|GARY

(Cooing) Tva-EE MEESH-tsee Bood-oot ta-KEE-mee bol-SHEE-mee! Kak BUEEK. |My muscles will be so big! – Like a bull calf.

RUSSIAN COACH|GARY

Pro-stah ne-bol-SHO-yeh ko-LEECH-est-vah ste-ROID-ov, neh bol-SHOY. |Just a small amount of steroid – no biggie!

RUSSIAN COACH looks around quickly then pulls down GARY's pants to reveal his flank, which he wipes with an alcohol swab.

GARY (CON'T)

– Wait, what?

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RUSSIAN COACH gives GARY a steroid shot.

GARY

Ow! No, vue VEE-deh-lee MO-yeh-vo khom-YA-ka, Candice?

RUSSIAN COACH AND RUSSIAN LADY

Nyet. We have not seen your hamster.

GARY runs with the pole towards the exit. Once he's offstage, we hear a sproingy noise and then RUSSIAN COACH and RUSSIAN GIRLFRIEND "watch" GARY's ascent and then descent. The crowd goes wild. GARY re-enters and stands on a "podium" to receive a gold medal as the Russian National Anthem plays. He addresses the audience over the sound.

GARY

I was thinking maybe if I made a lost hamster sign, I could find her. But I don't even have a pen. (Beat) Could I borrow a pen? Do they even have pens here in - ?

RUSSIAN LADY

Summer games in (with a trilling Spanish accent) Argentina.

RUSSIAN COACH

Dah. Argentina, comrade Gary.

GARY

I just really need a pen! Are there any pens in Argentina? Do you have one? Or you?

GARY walks towards the audience. The anthem ends. RUSSIAN COACH and RUSSIAN LADY strip down to unitards.

Do any of you have a pen? {After some effort, someone hands him one, eventually.}

The moment GARY holds a pen a spotlight shines brightly on him.

GARY

I'm a writer!

A chorus of angels sing a major C chord.

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As GARY speaks his poem into his pen – as if it's a microphone – DANCER ONE and DANCER TWO move lyrically behind him in a mystifying choreographed whorl.

GARY (CON'T)

I look, but I cannot see!
I touch, but I cannot feel.
I listen to the orange, but I cannot hear the truth.
Candice! Riding the night on a blackbird's wing!
What? When? Where? Who?
How many hamsters? – None.
None at all.

Pen drop.

The sound of emptiness is heard. Lights go dim. The dancers return the pen to the audience member using Graham technique.

GARY

Candice, I'm so sorry. I'll never find you!

DANCERS ONE and TWO go to opposite sides of the stage, as GARY is trapped between them, together enacting the frenetic transitions.

DANCER ONE

You're the world's greatest stockbroker, Gary!

GARY throws his pointer finger in the air.

GARY

Sell! Sell! Sell!

DANCER TWO

You're a fighter, Gary! The best boxer the world's ever known!

GARY careens around the stage, fighting an invisible opponent.

DANCER ONE

This kid's life is depending on your surgical skills, Gary – I mean, his brain won't fix itself!

GARY

(Scrubbing in) But where's Candice?

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DANCER TWO

Who's Candice, Doctor Gary?

GARY

My hamster!

DANCER ONE

They don't let hamsters aboard a submarine! Now, *don't push that button.*

GARY

What button?

DANCER TWO

That's the button for the *Deep Dive.*

GARY

The *Deep Dive*? – But Candice can't swim!

DANCER ONE

Gary, they're getting away! Use your heat vision!

GARY

But I don't know how!

DANCER TWO

You're a superhero, same as the rest of us, Gary! Power up!

GARY

I can't without Candice!

DANCER ONE AND TWO

Who's Candice?

GARY

You promised me you'd help me find her.

All three begin floating.

DANCER ONE

And you promised me the last freeze dried Salisbury steak dinner, but there are a lot of promises broken here on the International Space Station, aren't there, Gary?

GARY

Space station? Where are we?

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DANCER TWO

God, Gary – *It's in the name.*

GARY

Is Candice here?

DANCER TWO

I'm sorry, Gary. I do not have familiarity with that code.

DANCER ONE

What, you two have *secret codes* now?

GARY

She's my hamster!

DANCER ONE AND TWO

You do not have a hamster, Gary.

GARY

But I feel like I do. Did you ever have one of those days – where everything goes wrong, and all you know is what you can remember, but all you can remember is fuzzy and honey-colored and adorable – Oh my god, Candice! (*He weeps.*)

DANCER ONE

Has he been getting enough oxygen?

DANCER TWO

(*Speaking into his inner wrist.*) Houston, we have a problem.

GARY

I just wanna go home. I'm taking the lem.

DANCER ONE

It doesn't have the firepower to get you back to Earth, Gary!

DANCER TWO

It's a death wish – You'll never make it.

GARY

I have to try – For Candice.

Stirring orchestral music plays as GARY detaches from the International Space Station. DANCER ONE and TWO slowly recede and exit upstage as GARY heads bravely

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into the void of deep space, immersing in a rarefied foam-like plasma stretching between galaxies.

GARY

Wow! What a view. I can see so much from out here! And I have enough frozen hot dogs to last two, three weeks. I'll just put this puppy on cruise control for the nearest galaxy. I mean, know it's a fool's errand. I see now, Candice, that coming to terms with your loss, means really letting you go. I see you, me, I see everything so clearly from up here – The stars, the moon – and hey, there's the Great Wall of China! And the pyramids of Giza and the Grand Canyon! Can you see them, too, Candice? Why, if I stay up here long enough, I bet I'll see the seasons come and go. Won't that be beautiful? (*Beat.*) Look, I know that you're gone, probably scurried into a heating duct or down a pipe or out the window. I'm just so sorry, Candice. You were my best friend. And I will do everything I can to keep your memory alive – for now and for all time.

Without making his/her hands visible, a stage hand gently pushes CANDICE, in a plastic hamster ball, onstage a few inches. Gary focuses on the ball. Beat.

GARY

Candice!

GARY goes to the ball, picks it up, opens the hatch, takes out CANDICE and holds her close.

GARY (CON'T)

How was your day?

Lights out.