

GOLDEN GONE

By Dennis Bush

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GOLDEN GONE

A One Act Drama

By Dennis Bush

SYNOPSIS: A young girl is kidnapped. Or did she run away or just disappear? As the layers of the story are peeled away, through the perspectives of her family, neighbors and a troubled girl obsessed with the case, the truth is revealed. *Golden Gone* holds up mirror for us to examine our own behavior and to explore the impact of revenge and reinvention, through social media, YouTube videos and the power of delusion.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(3 female, 2 male, 4 either; gender flexible)

AURELIA (f).....	17; Bright and pretty. <i>(34 lines)</i>
ADAM (m).....	30s; Aurelia's father. <i>(49 lines)</i>
AMY (f).....	30's; Aurelia's mother. <i>(45 lines)</i>
ELLEN/ ELLIOT (m/f).....	19; Aurelia's sibling. <i>(33 lines)</i>
EMMETT/ EMILY (m/f).....	15; Aurelia's sibling. <i>(41 lines)</i>
RUSTY (m).....	16; Aurelia's boyfriend. <i>(34 lines)</i>
MELODY (f).....	20; A troubled young woman. <i>(29 lines)</i>
DINO/ DINA (m/f).....	21; Lives next door to Aurelia's family. <i>(93 lines)</i>
BRIAN/ BRITTANY (m/f).....	21; Dino's best friend. <i>(93 lines)</i>

DURATION: 45 minutes.

SETTING: Takes place in New Mexico and Pennsylvania, in the past and present, in the homes, cars, and minds of the characters.

SET: A basic, flexible unit set that allows for multiple locations is ideal, though directors are encouraged to be creative with staging.

PRODUCTION NOTES

Melody's monologues can be edited to reduce runtime up to 10 minutes. Please contact Brooklyn Publishers for approval of any edits or cuts.

PRODUCTION HISTORY

Reading at Pearl Studios in New York City, NY in December 2014. With a Premiere Production in Phoenix, AZ in January 2015, directed by Dennis Bush with the cast as follows:

Hailey Araza
A.J. Katek
Logan Umbanhowar
Anthony Quezada
Elena Conti
Revel Craig
Autumn Marinello
Quintin Shepard
Alexis Ghigo

Dedication

A special thanks to Meggy Lykins, Nick Petrovich, Melissa Teitel, Kelsey Torstveit, Joe Pascale, Karen Brown, Pam Eckart, Melissa Ganas, and Martin W. Scott for their kind assistance and inspiration, during the creation of *Golden Gone*.

AT RISE: *ALL (nine.) actors are scattered around the playing space, each existing in an individual location.*

ALL: *(Simply, but crisply.) Imagine getting kidnapped. From your own bed. In your own house. In the middle of the night. While your parents are asleep down the hall. (A beat.) It happens. (A beat.) Your brother and sister are asleep in their rooms. But the kidnappers don't take them. Just you. Only you. Nobody but you.*

MELODY: *It's a compliment, really.*

ELLEN: *You're the chosen one.*

EMMETT: *They didn't take your brother or sister.*

AMY: *They didn't take the kids who live next door.*

ALL: *They took you. (A quick beat.) They wanted you. (A quick beat.) They needed you. (Each actor directs the word to a different audience member.) You. (A quick beat. Each actor directs the word to another audience member.) You. (A quick beat. Each actor directs the word to another audience member.) You. (A very quick beat. Each actor directs the word to one more audience member.) You.*

A very quick beat.

AURELIA: *Me.*

ALL: *(Except AURELIA.) Kidnapping and adoption aren't that different. They both involve a selection process.*

ADAM: *Not all adoptions involve an adoption agency.*

DINO: *The people shopping for a baby at an adoption agency might as well be picking out a puppy at the pound.*

ALL: *(Except DINO. Like a dog's bark.) ARF!*

BRIAN: *(Firmly, confidently.) If I was adopted, I'd feel like I was chosen...*

ALL: *(Except BRIAN. Like a dog's bark.) ARF!*

EMMETT: *Really wanted...*

ALL: *(Except EMMETT. Like a dog's bark.) ARF!*

RUSTY: *Essential to my parents' happiness.*

AURELIA: *My stepdad adopted me nine months after he married my mom. There's a poetic appropriateness to waiting nine months.*

ADAM: *My parental rights were terminated.*

AURELIA: You can have an actual baby in nine months.

ADAM: Terminated.

AURELIA: He told me to call him Dad. I already had a dad, but he wasn't around. He wasn't part of my life. So calling my stepdad Dad wasn't as much of an adjustment as you might think...If you were concerned.

ADAM: Nobody has the right to terminate my rights.

DINO: (*In a car with BRIAN; BRIAN is driving.*) Turn left!

AURELIA: Or worried.

ADAM: It's not right.

DINO: Left isn't right. It's *left*.

ADAM: It's just not right.

AMY: He left. Nobody made him leave. He just left.

BRIAN: Right.

AURELIA: You really don't need to be. (*Clarifying.*) Worried or concerned. I'm sure you have more important things to worry about...more important than me.

DINO: I worry about you.

BRIAN: Don't.

DINO: I do.

BRIAN: It's a waste of worry.

DINO: It's not like we get a limited supply.

BRIAN: A limited supply?

DINO: Of worry.

BRIAN: Don't be stupid.

DINO: You're the one who said worrying about you was a waste of worry. If there's not a limited supply of something, then you can't waste it.

BRIAN: Just don't worry about me.

DINO: That ship has sailed.

BRIAN: Bring it back into port.

DINO: I'd worry about you in port, too.

BRIAN: (*A tangent.*) Is port left and starboard right, or is it the other way around?

DINO: There isn't an actual ship.

BRIAN: Then why say, "That ship has sailed?"

DINO: The train has left the station.

BRIAN: I worry about *you*.

DINO: Don't make me a victim.

BRIAN: I'm not. I *didn't*.

DINO: Worrying about somebody is like saying, "You need to be taken care of. You're weak. You're a victim."

BRIAN: You said *you* worry about *me*.

DINO: I do.

BRIAN: So I'm weak?

EMMETT: It takes a strong man to handle a difficult situation.

BRIAN: I need to be taken care of?

EMMETT: (*Clarifying.*) A *challenging* situation. As opposed to a *difficult* one.

BRIAN: I'm a victim?

EMMETT: "Difficult" implies a certain inability to accomplish what you're trying to do.

DINO: Pretty much.

EMMETT: But "challenging" feels doable. (*As if it's an indisputable truth.*) It takes a strong man to handle a *challenging* situation...at least that's what my dad says.

RUSTY: She moved in down the street when I was seven. She was eight. It was nine years ago.

EMMETT: When my sister Aurelia disappeared, I was six. My oldest sister Ellen was ten. Aurelia was eight. And she disappeared.

RUSTY: She lived with a guy named Adam. That's what she called him. He was 36 or 37. Somewhere around there. He looked pretty young but, when you're a kid, it's hard to tell how old adults are. He must've had a good job or some way to make a lot of money, because they had a big house. Four bedrooms. And a game room in the basement with a ginormous TV, two dart boards, air hockey, and a pool table on a raised platform like it was some kind of altar. (*Letting the memory wash over him.*) It's where I learned to play pool. I'm good. If you play with me, you'll lose, so you might as well not even bother trying.

EMMETT: Whether you consider a kidnapping to be a disappearance or a disappearance to be a kidnapping depends on your perspective. Either way, the person isn't there anymore. When I woke up on New Year's Day, nine years ago, Aurelia was gone. Poof. Disappeared.

AMY: (*Firmly.*) Kidnapped.

EMMETT: (*Defiantly.*) Disappeared.

AMY: (*Louder, with sharp intensity.*) Kidnapped.

ELLEN: Or she just ran away.

RUSTY: I kept looking for a way to make the transition from being her friend to being her boyfriend. (*Clarifying.*) Not when she first moved in down the street. No seven-year-old boy should have an eight-year-old girlfriend. No seven-year-old boy should have a girlfriend at all. Aurelia became my girlfriend when I was 15 and she was 16. We had a lot of classes together at school. I skipped second grade, so we were both juniors, when I was 15 and she was 16. So, we were friends for seven years and we've been boyfriend and girlfriend for two years. (*With swagger.*) Hello, romance, hello.

ELLEN: Goodbye. (*Explaining.*) There was a piece of paper on the floor next to her bed and "Goodbye" was written on it. You don't leave a goodbye message if you're being kidnapped. But you do, if you're running away. (*Pause; bitterly.*) She just ran away.

DINO: People get away with things all the time. Things they definitely shouldn't get away with.

BRIAN: You let things slide. Or you don't. It depends on the situation. It depends on a lot of things.

MELODY: When you're best friends with somebody, you know things about them. Important things. Aurelia's my best friend. I know where she is. And I know how she got there. But nobody asked me what I know. What I knew then—when it happened—or what I know now. Not the police. Not her mom or her stepdad. Not her brother or sister. Nobody. I didn't volunteer the information. And I won't. Not now. Not ever. That's the kind of friend I am. Loyal. Devoted. Her *best* friend. (*With a giggle.*) It's fun to have a secret. (*Becoming very serious.*) It makes you feel powerful. It makes you important. Because you can change the course of history. I know that sounds like I'm exaggerating, but I'm not. It's true. I could change the course of history. I could change people's lives. But nobody asked what I knew—what I *know*. (*Coldly.*) People are stupid.

AMY: People look at you like you're a failure when your daughter gets kidnapped.

EMMETT: (*In a stage whisper.*) Disappears.

ELLEN: (*In a stage whisper.*) Runs away.

AMY: Even the police treat you like it's your fault. My husband and I were *questioned*. Like *suspects*. Like we'd done something wrong. (*Angrily.*) We didn't do anything wrong! We were asleep and, when we woke up, she was gone.

EMMETT: Poof. Disappeared.

AMY: It was like the sunshine went out of my life.

ELLEN: So that makes me...what? Dark clouds and rain?

EMMETT: Aurelia was always my mom's favorite. My stepdad's favorite, too.

AMY: When she was born, I looked at her and thought, "She's special." She had gold flecks in her eyes and her hair was light brown with golden highlights—like they'd been done at a salon. (*Letting the memory wash over her.*) She was beautiful...perfect.

EMMETT and ELLEN: The golden child.

AMY: I know parents aren't supposed to have favorites, but they do. I did. I named her Aurelia. My husband... (*Clarifying.*) My ex-husband said—

ALL: What the heck kind of name is that?

AMY: (*Proudly.*) It means "golden."

ADAM: I believe in the golden rule. Do unto others as they've done to you.

AMY: So you can understand why she was so special.

ADAM: Hurt the people who hurt you.

AMY: You can understand why she was my favorite.

ADAM: Hurt them the way that will hurt the most.

ELLEN: Knowing that your mom loves your sister more than you hurts. It does. It hurts when you're ten. And every day and every minute after that. (*Begins to cry.*) And nothing you can do can change that.

DINO: Twenty bucks can change the way your day is going.

BRIAN: I know that's right.

DINO: When you're twelve years old and the guy who used to live next door offers you twenty bucks to let him borrow the spare key your parents have to the house he used to live in, you take it. You get him the key. *I* got him the key. He was always nice to me. And I don't like the guy who married his ex-wife. And twenty bucks goes a long way when you're twelve.

BRIAN: If you're twelve and you've got twenty bucks, you're the man.

DINO: I'm the man, with or without twenty bucks.

BRIAN: Because you're 21 now instead of 12.

DINO: 21 is 12 looking in a mirror.

BRIAN: When you're 21 and you look in a mirror, you see the 12-year-old version of yourself?

DINO: What?

BRIAN: 21 is 12 looking in a mirror?

DINO: Right. 21 is 12 in reverse...flipped.

BRIAN: It's a scary place inside your brain.

DINO: You a brain surgeon now? You been inside my head?

BRIAN: It was just a theory...an assumption.

AURELIA: If there's no sign of a break in, the police assume that nobody broke in. And if the person entering the house is wearing gloves, he doesn't leave any fingerprints. He knows his way around the house because he used to live there. The dog didn't even bark.

ADAM: I loved that dog. I'm the one who bought the dog. I almost took *him* instead of Aurelia. But Amy—my ex-wife—didn't like the dog. She was afraid raccoons or rabbits or rats would get into the house through the doggie door. And she took that anxiety out on the dog. So I left him and took Aurelia, according to plan.

AURELIA: I guess I could've screamed, but I didn't. It didn't seem like the thing to do. In the situation. As it was happening. I've never been the kind of girl who screams at the drop of a hat. Or during a scary movie. Or while my dad was kidnapping me.

ADAM: You've got to be a man with a plan. If you're not, what kind of man are you?

EMMETT: When your mom says—

ALL: You're just like your father!

EMMETT: She doesn't mean your stepfather, who you're supposed to call dad. She means the father who left the day I was born. (*A quick pause.*) Literally, the day I was born. He wasn't in the delivery room. He came in after I was already cleaned up and my mom was holding me in her arms. And he looked at me and said—

ALL: I thought having a son was going to make me feel different. Like it would make me love you or something. I thought it would make me want to stay. But it doesn't. Not even a little. So...

ADAM: Good luck.

EMMETT, AMY and ELLEN: And he walked out of the hospital room, and that was the last time we saw him.

EMMETT: As much as a baby can see. I think babies' eyes are all cloudy and gross. Like a newborn kitten.

EMMETT, AMY and ELLEN: What kind of a man walks out on his wife, two daughters and newborn son?

ADAM: A man with a plan.

EMMETT: I used to have dreams that he came back to me. That he wanted me with him, wherever he was. Like we had a father-son connection that was strong and unbreakable. And then I'd wake up and I was still in my room with the Ohio State wallpaper. Because my stepdad went to college there, not because we lived in Ohio. Because we didn't. We live in New Mexico. Where people don't care about Ohio State. I live where people don't care.

MELODY: When you care about your friends, they know it. They feel it. You have a bond. *(Begins to cry.)* When you find out that your friend is missing—that she's been kidnapped or something worse—it can be very traumatic. *(Crying harder.)* When you find out from the older sister of your best friend two days after the disappearance... the kidnapping, you feel helpless and overwhelmed and you don't know what to say or do. *(Full-out sobbing.)* It's horrible. It's the worst possible thing that could happen to you. *(The tears stop, as if a faucet has been turned off. She smiles, but there is no emotion in her eyes, as she wipes the tears away.)* Unless you already knew she was safe and on her way to where she lives now. Then, everything is fine. *(A flash of anger crosses her eyes.)* Except that Aurelia's sister waited two days to tell me she was missing. That wasn't fun. That was hurtful. And selfish. And she should be ashamed of herself. And she shouldn't expect me to tell her anything. Ever. Seriously, not ever.

ELLEN: Ever wonder who you'd be or how your life would be, if you were born to different parents? *(Quick pause.)* I do. Every day.

EMMETT: My dad—the only dad I've ever known—wishes I'd want to watch football with him...no thanks. Football is just a whole lot of traumatic brain injuries waiting to happen. *(Pause.)* I don't feel connected to him. There's no organic bond. Genetics don't lie.

DINO: I could lie and say I feel guilty about getting the key for him. But I don't. No guilt at all.

BRIAN: And you got twenty bucks.

DINO: I gave half of it to you.

BRIAN: And he paid for you and me to go to Vegas for a weekend, when we turned 21.

DINO: He was always nice to me. A cool dude.

BRIAN: What happens in Vegas, stays in Vegas. And what happened in New Mexico nine years ago, nobody needs to know.

DINO: It's none of their business.

BRIAN: Right.

DINO: As far as we know, the girl just left.

ELLEN: Aurelia had a purple pen she liked to write with. (*Clarifying.*)

The *pen* was blue, but the ink in it was purple. *Bright* purple. She used it to write in her diary. Nothing exciting. Nothing to hold my interest when I was reading it. Or while I was teaching myself to write like she did. Exactly like she did. *Exactly.* "Goodbye." That's what I wrote. Just like she would've written it. With her pen. In purple ink. On a piece of paper I tore from her diary. So people would think she ran away. Which is what the police thought—what they *believed*—after they found the piece of paper with "Goodbye" on it next to her bed.

AMY: Parents shouldn't be investigated when their child goes missing.

The police shouldn't waste their time questioning people who didn't do anything wrong. They should be out looking for the people who kidnapped the child. *My* child. And they shouldn't have gotten annoyed when I pointed that out to them. If anyone had a right to get annoyed, it was me! Don't tell me that, without a ransom note or communication from the kidnappers, it's not a kidnapping. And don't call it an *alleged* kidnapping. It's not alleged. I know what I know. And I know Aurelia didn't run away. She wouldn't have. And nothing the police said or did was going to change that.

MELODY: People change. They grow apart. But not if they have a real connection. If they have that kind of bond, then they can be thousands of miles apart and still feel like they're in the same place at the same time. That's how it is with Aurelia and me. That's the kind of powerful psychic connection we have. It's a wonderful, beautiful thing.

AURELIA: Pennsylvania is beautiful. Except in winter. Then, it's just gray and cold and snowy. But, even then, it's nicer than New Mexico. New Mexico is supposed to be "The Land of Enchantment," but I was never enchanted. At least not with the part of it where I lived before Adam brought me to Pennsylvania. It's kind of funny that my stepdad wanted me to call him, "Dad," but Adam—my actual dad—wants me to call him Adam. Especially in front of other people. *Always* in front of other people.

MELODY: I always know where Aurelia is. That's how it is, when you have a powerful psychic connection with somebody. But you wouldn't understand that. Usually, she's scuba diving in the Great Barrier Reef off the coast of Australia. And I can see her, if I use Google Earth on my phone. I slide the little man icon into the center of my phone screen and Aurelia appears. But only on my phone, so don't try it with yours. You'd only be disappointed and nobody wants to be disappointed. The hot air balloon she escaped from New Mexico in is stored in a floating warehouse near the Great Barrier Reef. For when she's ready to come back. Or when she needs to fly to Switzerland for chocolate and neutrality.

AMY: Nobody stays neutral, when your child goes missing. Nobody keeps their mouth shut. Everybody has an opinion about what happened and why it happened and what you could've done to keep it from happening.

ALL: (*Except AMY.*) How do you know you really know what you know, when you think you know what you know?

AMY: I don't know how people can be so clueless.

MELODY: People are stupid.

AMY: And when they start a sentence with, "Maybe," you know you're in trouble.

ALL: *(As a neighbor with an opinion.)* "Maybe she sleepwalked out of the house and just kept walking." *(A quick beat; each actor delivers the line to a different audience member. As a cop, during an interrogation.)* "Have you considered that?" *(A quick beat; each actor delivers the line to a different audience member. Like technology geeks.)* "Maybe the alleged kidnappers sent you a ransom note by email and it went to your spam folder." *(A quicker beat; each actor delivers the line to a different audience member. As a cop, during an interrogation.)* "Have you checked your spam folder?" *(An even quicker beat; each actor delivers the line to a different audience member. Like an alien conspiracy theorist.)* "Maybe aliens were involved. This is New Mexico after all. Roswell wasn't an isolated incident." *(An even quicker beat; each actor delivers the line to a different audience member. Condescendingly.)* Everybody knows that.

BRIAN: I know that's right.

DINO: We should take another trip. A weekend getaway that lasts for a whole week. Someplace we can have an adventure.

MELODY: She escaped in a hot air balloon, like the Wizard of Oz, and she headed straight to the Great Barrier Reef. *(As if it's the only logical explanation.)* Because that's where you go when you escape from New Mexico. *(Annoyed.)* Anyone who knows anything knows that. *(Shouted.)* Am I the only one who knows anything?

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