

THE LONG RED ROAD

Brett C Leonard

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Brett C Leonard has been a member of New York's acclaimed LAByrinth Theater Company since 2003. His plays have been produced in New York, Chicago, Los Angeles, London, Toronto, Berlin and Sydney. In early 2010, *THE LONG RED ROAD* was directed by Philip Seymour Hoffman in an extended-run world premiere at Goodman Theater in Chicago. In 2008, *UNCONDITIONAL* was directed by Mark Wing-Davey in its world premiere production by LAByrinth Theater Company at New York's Public Theater, and was published in Smith and Kraus' *New Playwrights: The Best Plays of 2008*. In 2004 *GUINEA PIG SOLO* had its world premiere at New York's Public Theater as the first-ever LAByrinth/Public co-production, and was later produced at Chicago's Collaboraction, where it was named *Chicago Tribune's* "Top 10 of 2005" and "most visceral show of the year." In 2007 *GUINEA PIG SOLO* was presented as part of the Berlin Arts Festival's 50th Anniversary at the House of World Culture. *ROGER AND VANESSA* has been produced at Latchmere Theatre 503 in London, The Actors' Gang in Los Angeles and Tap Gallery in Sydney. *SCOTCH AND WATER* was produced by New Company in London, where it was selected as Critics' Choice in *Time Out*. Short plays include *BEAUTY AND LIGHT*, *INTERROGATION*, *BOBO AN' SPYDER...*, and *WHAT I'M LOOKING FOR*. Leonard is the recipient of the

2008 Daryl Roth Creative Spirit Award and a member of Israel Horovitz's Playwrights Lab. GUINEA PIG SOLO, UNCONDITIONAL, ROGER AND VANESSA, SCOTCH AND WATER and THE LONG RED ROAD are published by Broadway Play Publishing Inc. Leonard's past and upcoming film and television projects include *Unconditional* (Cooper's Town Prods/Overture Films), *The Other* (Lionsgate, co-written w/ Tom Hardy), *Hung* (H B O), *Jailbait* (Belladonna/Kindred/Warner Brothers) and *Upstate* (H B O/Cooper's Town Prods/E-1 Ent., co-written w/Bob Glaudini).

THE LONG RED ROAD was first produced at the Goodman Theater (Robert Falls, Artistic Director) in Chicago, opening on 13 February 2010. The cast and creative contributors were:

SAM..... Tom Hardy
ANNIE..... Greta Honold
BOB..... Chris McGarry
SANDRA..... Katy Sullivan
TASHA..... Fiona Robert
CLIFTON..... Markos Akiaten
Director..... Philip Seymour Hoffman
Assistant director..... Scott Illingworth
Scenic design..... Eugene Lee
Lighting design..... Edward Pierce
Costumes..... Janice Pytel
Original music & sound..... Ray Nardelli &
Joshua Horvath
Stage manager..... Kimberly Osgood

CHARACTERS & SETTING

SAMMY, *white, 32*

ANNIE, *white, early 20s*

BOB, *white, 36*

TASHA, *white, 13*

SANDRA, *white, 30s*

CLIFTON, *Native American, Lakota, 50s*

South Dakota and Kansas. The Present.

for my brother Bruce

ACT ONE

Scene 1

(Studio apartment)

(South Dakota)

(Cheaply furnished, small, old. A double bed. A bedside lamp with a torn shade glows its yellow 60 watt bulb. Cigarettes fill an ashtray. A few booze bottles are strewn about.)

(A chest of drawers in a corner. On top is a ten-year-old 19" television with an antenna. There is a small round wooden table with two mismatched chairs.)

(A small kitchen area is adjacent—cheap linoleum floor, a fridge, stove, toaster.)

(A door leads to a small bathroom off stage.)

(On one wall is a cheaply framed painting of a Native American Man, a Lakota Indian Chief, in face paint and head dress. Nailed to another wall is a replica buffalo skin. On the floor is a fake bearskin rug.)

(Also on the floor are SAMMY, white, 32, and ANNIE, white, early 20's. Wrapped in a Lakota blanket)

(They're fucking. Making love. Trying to connect. ANNIE is on top.)

SAMMY: I love you, I love you. Tell me you hate me.

ANNIE: I hate you.

SAMMY: Tell me again.

ANNIE: I hate you...

SAMMY: ...I love you...

ANNIE: ...I hate you. I hate your guts.

SAMMY: Tell me you hate my guts an' I'm a piece a' shit.

ANNIE: You're a filthy piece of shit and I hate you.

SAMMY: I'm a low-life.

ANNIE: You're a disaster.

SAMMY: I love you.

ANNIE: I hate you.

SAMMY: Tell me I ain't shit an' don't deserve you.

ANNIE: You don't deserve me.

SAMMY: I'm a fuckin' drunk.

ANNIE: You're a loser and an asshole—don't stop, right there, don't stop.

SAMMY: I deserve nothing!

ANNIE: Fuck you!

SAMMY: I'm a scumfuck fuckbag...

ANNIE: ...You're a piece a' garbage, oh yeah, yeah, don't stop, don't...

SAMMY: ...Yeah...

ANNIE: ...Yes yes!...

SAMMY: ...I love you...

ANNIE: ...I hate you...

SAMMY: ...I love you so much...

ANNIE: ...I hate you MORE—YES, YES!...

SAMMY: ...Yes...

ANNIE: ...You're a drunk, you're a murderer...

SAMMY: ...You're beautiful, you're perfect...

ANNIE: ...Don't stop, don't stop...

SAMMY: ...Oh God, you're so perfect—I'm gonna cum...

ANNIE: ...No!...

SAMMY: ...Baby, I'm, I can't, I, I...

ANNIE: ...No, no!!...

SAMMY: ...Uuaagghh, I'm *tryin' not to*...

ANNIE: ...no-no-no-no-no-no-no- don't stop, don't st...
no, *don't stop!*...

SAMMY: ...Shit, fuck, I'm cumming, I'm cummin—g...

ANNIE: ...Fuck fuck fuck fuck fuck fuck fuck...

SAMMY: ...Oh God, oh God!!!...

ANNIE: ...Yeah baby, yeah baby, yeah baby...

SAMMY: ...don't leave, don't leave me...please...

ANNIE: ...Sshh—sshh... I'm right here.

SAMMY: Don't leave...don't...oh, fuck...

ANNIE: I love you.

SAMMY: Don't go...

ANNIE: ...I won't...

SAMMY: ...I love you...

ANNIE: ...I'm right here...

SAMMY: ...Don't go... Don't leave...

ANNIE: ...Sshh...sshh... I love you too... I'm right here,
Sam... I'm right here.

Scene 2

(A mushroom barn.)

(Kansas)

(Rows and rows of Grow Bags hang from the ceiling. Mushrooms grow through holes, forming clusters. Shitake mushrooms. And Oyster mushrooms—yellow, pink, blue, gray, brown. Other items include a pressure cooker, jars, lids, pots, pans, alcohol lamp, small scale, large scale, petri dishes, boxes, rope, tool box, trash bags, test tubes, a fan, an automatic misting system, and gauges that read humidity and temperature. Rows of other species of mushroom grow on long greenhouse tables and inside plaster pots.)

(Sitting on a stool, tending to the mushrooms, is BOB MCHENRY, white, 36. Standing to the side, by the door, is TASHA, white, 13.)

BOB: *(Without looking at her)* An' then I'll burn 'em, ya unnerstand? I burn 'em, they're no more. Rip 'em inta lil' pieces, throw 'em inta flames, leave nothin', no choice. Changes come... Parts come... Things grow, ya unnerstand? They change. *(Beat)* Polyporus Tuberaster. Stone Mushroom. It blooms and...sprouts... ..like a beautiful velvet. Got a nice mild flavor to 'em too. Good for sautee. *(Beat)* Or these, the Maitake. Grifola Frondosa, "Hen a' the Woods". *(Beat)* Your mother prefers the Pearl...Pleurotus Ostreatus. They're okay. *(Beat)* We gotta have rules, Tosh. It's our fault we ain't been good enuff enforcin'. You're thirteen years old. Soon you'll be fourteen...fifteen. You're a little girl on the verge become a big one. You understand? *(Beat)* I asked you a question. Do you understand?

TASHA: Yeah.

BOB: Wassat?

TASHA: I said 'yeah'.

BOB: You're a lil' girl, Tosh. You're not a goddamn prostitute.

Scene 3

(Studio apartment)

(ANNIE is sitting up in bed, a pillow propped behind her back. The sheet and blanket are still on the floor. She stares without interest at the television's poor reception, airing a long-cancelled half-hour comedy.)

(From the offstage bathroom we hear SAMMY vomiting into the toilet. Again and again. Pause. And again. Pause. And again.)

(ANNIE gets off the bed. She carries a bottle of whiskey into the bathroom, offstage.)

(She re-enters. As the T V continues its re-run, and the vomiting slowly subsides, ANNIE picks the Lakota blanket off the floor and moves to the bed. She begins making the bed.)

(SAMMY enters from the bathroom, bottle in hand. He puts the bottle on the nightstand, on his side of the bed. He says nothing. She says nothing.)

(He helps her finish making the bed.)

(He carries the bottle to the small, round table. He sits. He lights a cigarette.)

(ANNIE gets on the bed. She looks at the T V, again without interest.)

(Pause)

(SAMMY drinks straight from the bottle.)

(Pause)

ANNIE: You wanna watch T V?

(SAMMY shrugs.)

(Pause)

(With the remote, ANNIE turns off the T V.)

(Pause)

ANNIE: You wanna come to sleep?

SAMMY: *(Meaning "no, I'm not tired")* I'm alright.

(Pause)

ANNIE: Try to sleep in the bed tonight, Sam. *(Beat)* I want you to.

(SAMMY drinks. ANNIE turns off the bedside lamp. She lies down, tries to sleep.)

(Long pause)

SAMMY: You seen that thing on the T V 'bout today with them tourists? Mmph? What happened at the K O A, 'round Rushmore? Mmph? You seen it? Annabelle?

ANNIE: *(Meaning "no")* Mmm-mm.

SAMMY: Outside Rushmore, 'bout thirty-fourty minutes. Might be you could catch it if ya turn it back on. They was showin' it earlier, least. *(Beat)* Annie? *(Beat)* Annie, you heard? *(Pause)* Guy got mauled ta death on his family vacation. By a black bear in brown coat. News morons callin' grizzly. Brother-in-law gets the whole thing on videotape. *(Beat)* Ya turn it on ya might still see it—minus any gore or graphics or anything. They blurred out the details when I saw. Too much for the uh...too much for the average person, I s'pose...the viewer. Rather see the weather. They favorite sports team. No blood an' guts. No big ol' teeth marks. Chunks a' flesh torn. Missin' limbs. No truth. *(Beat)* His brother-in-law stood by pointin' a camera. *(Beat)* Mmph? *(Beat)* Annie? *(Beat)* You like that? *(Beat)* They got five kids with 'em...two wives...only thing put ta use... the camera. *(Beat)* Peaceful getaway. *(Beat)* Don't

know 'nuff ta tie his food up a tree. *(He rubs his chest with his fist. He drinks. Pause. He drinks. He rubs his chest.)* Annie? *(Beat)* Babe? *(Beat)* It's happenin'. *(Beat)* Annabelle? *(Beat)* Baby? *(He drinks. Pause)* Hey? *(Beat)* Hey? *(Long pause. Softly)* G'nite. *(He drinks.)*

Scene 4

(A bedroom and adjacent bathroom)

(BOB and SANDRA, white, 30s, get ready for bed.)

(She walks with a limp.)

(She brushes her teeth with an electric toothbrush. He uses a traditional toothbrush.)

(She washes her face. He washes his filthy hands. He gargles with hydrogen peroxide and water.)

(She flushes the toilet.)

(He moves to the bed.)

(She puts cream under her eyes.)

(He gets under the covers.)

(She enters the bedroom.)

(She sits on her side of the bed. She removes two low-quality prosthetics. Each leg is cut off near the knee.)

(She gets under the covers.)

(They lie on their backs, two-three feet of empty space between them.)

BOB: I talked to 'r. *(Beat)* I said I talked to 'r. *(Beat)* I told 'r she come home or go out, wherever...clothes we ain't like, ain't bought...she borrowed, found 'em, stole 'em... I'll rip 'em up an' burn 'em. I told'r she's thirteen years old. I told 'r she ain't no prostitute.

SANDRA: Her friends are the same.

BOB: I ain't have no responsibility for no friends.

(Pause)

SANDRA: You called her a prostitute?

BOB: I said she was *not* a prostitute. I told'r she's a young girl.

(Beat)

SANDRA: Wha'd she say?

BOB: Said "momma's right...you can be a real asshole."

Then she run off. *(Pause)* I'm gonna try ta sleep now.

(Beat) 'Less ya wanna stay up some? *(Beat)* Together, I mean, you know...for a lil' while?

(Long pause)

BOB: G'nite. *(He turns off his bedside lamp.)*

SANDRA: Goodnight.

(Pause)

(SANDRA turns off her bedside lamp. They lie on their sides, their backs two-three feet apart.)

(Pause)

SANDRA: I don't always think you're a asshole. I'm sorry I told 'r that.

(Beat)

BOB: I don't always think you're a asshole neither.

(Pause) G'nite.

SANDRA: G'nite.

Scene 5

(Studio apartment)

(Morning)

(Sun fights through slivers in the blinds. It beats down on SAMMY, sound asleep/passed-out on the floor.)

(On the table, next to empty bottles, almost empty bottles, and an overflowing ashtray, there's a pen and a 5" x 8" spiral notebook.)

(ANNIE enters from the bathroom, ready for work.)

(She moves to the table. She picks up the notebook and rips out two pages on which SAMMY has written. She leaves the notebook on the table.)

(She goes to her side of the bed, reaches under the bed and takes out a shoebox, places it on the bed. She puts the two pages she ripped out of the notebook into the shoebox. She puts the shoebox back under the bed.)

(She goes to SAMMY. She gently nudges him with her foot. No response. She nudges again. Again. Her gentleness grows a bit more aggressive, but doesn't become extreme or violent.)

ANNIE: Sammy. Sammy, get up. Get up, Sam. Come on, wake up.

(SAMMY stirs awake, barely, and is disoriented.)

ANNIE: Go to the bed, Sam, go on... Try to. *(She leans down and kisses his forehead.)* Have a good day.

(ANNIE moves to the front door. She stops and looks back. SAMMY is slowly moving, trying to get to his knees.)

ANNIE: I love you. *(Beat)* I love you.

(SAMMY half-nods in an attempt at reciprocation:)

SAMMY: Me too. *(He reaches for the cigarettes on the table. His hand shakes.)*

ANNIE: Remember to eat. *(Beat)* Sam? *(Beat)* Eat something.

(SAMMY lights a cigarette. He coughs. He rubs his chest with his fist.)

(ANNIE exits.)

(SAMMY looks around. He reaches for a chair. His shakes continue. With difficulty, he manages to sit in the chair. He smokes. He gets his hand on a bottle of whiskey. He clutches it, but doesn't lift it. With the help of his other hand he moves the bottle to his lips. He drinks. He drinks again. He drinks again.)

(His shakes begin to subside. He breathes more deeply, more relaxed. He smokes. He drinks. He drinks again.)

(He looks at the notebook and pen. He picks up the notebook and leafs through a few blank pages. He carries the notebook and pen to the chest of drawers. He puts it on top of the dresser.)

(He lifts an empty, green, canvas duffle bag off the floor. He puts it on the kitchen counter. He opens a cabinet and removes pots and pans.)

(He puts the pots and pans into the duffle bag. He zips the bag closed.)

(He carries the bag into the main room of the studio. He hangs it on two metal hooks drilled into the ceiling.)

(He hits the bag with his bare fists. One punch at a time. Slowly, in no rush. Punch. Punch. Punch. Then a bit harder...Punch. Punch. And harder... Punch-punch-punch... He exhausts himself. He stops punching.)

Scene 6

(The bedroom)

(Morning)

(BOB is gently kissing SANDRA's sleeping neck and cheek. She stirs, but doesn't wake. He continues, his hands begin to roam.)

(She moves farther away.)

(His hand makes its way under the sheets, down to her crotch.)

(She removes his hand.)

(He turns onto his side—his back to hers.)

(He sits up on his side of the bed.)

(Pause)

(He walks to the bathroom, turns on the shower, gets in.)

(She tries to get more sleep.)

(Silence...other than the sound of the shower.)

(TASHA enters. She looks at SANDRA, whose eyes are still closed.)

(She looks to the bathroom, at BOB in the shower. She stares.)

(Suddenly...)

SANDRA: Get outta here—go on, git out!

(The shower stops, TASHA continues looking toward BOB in the bathroom.)

SANDRA: I said git out, turn your eyes.

(TASHA looks at her mother. SANDRA remains in bed, sitting up.)

SANDRA: I said go, Tasha, git out. Now.

(BOB appears, standing in the bathroom doorway, wet, a towel around his waist.)

BOB: Everything okay? Tosh? Mmph? Sandy?

(SANDRA and TASHA look at BOB.)

BOB: I'm makin' eggs for breakfast. Bacon-mushroom, Pleurotus Ostreatus. Your mother's favorite. Why don'choo go on now. Go on, pour yourself a glass a' juice. We'll be soon enuff. Go on.

(TASHA exits.)

BOB: Tosh? Tasha?!

(TASHA returns.)

BOB: Shut the door, please. An' lock it.

(TASHA locks the door and exits.)

SANDRA: She was watchin' you in the shower.

BOB: We need ta remember ta lock the door. *(Beat)* I'm gonna make omelettes. *(Beat)* I gotta take a shit. *(He enters the bathroom.)*

Scene 7

(Studio apartment)

(SAMMY is sitting on the foot of the bed...sweating...spent...sipping from a bottle.)

(Silence)

(Lights remain on SAMMY as they rise on:)

(A run-down classroom.)

(ANNIE teaches young, elementary schoolchildren on a Lakota Indian Reservation. She reads from A People's History of the United States.)

ANNIE: Listen up, class. Quiet please. *(She holds up one finger, then a second, then a third. Pause. Reads)* "When Columbus and his sailors came ashore, carrying swords, the Arawak (natives) ran to greet them,

brought them food, water, gifts..." Columbus wrote in his diary... "They brought us parrots and balls of cotton... They willingly traded everything they owned... They do not bear arms... With fifty men we could subjugate them all... As much gold as you need... as many slaves as you ask."

(Lights out on SAMMY and ANNIE.)

Scene 8

(The mushroom barn)

(BOB pours pellet fuel substrate from five-gallon buckets into tall, plastic trash bags supported by cardboard boxes.)

(TASHA arrives in the doorway.)

TASHA: Momma say take me ta school, say she feel sick.

BOB: What'samatter with 'r?

TASHA: Just sick, I dunno, I ain't the doctor.

BOB: You suppose ta been there two hours now.

TASHA: Well, I ain't.

BOB: I'm throwin' out the T V too, Tosh... no more Britney, no more hussies, no more puberty boys. Your teachers prolly too havin' them thoughts. I'm burnin' every lil' overexposed piece you got. Then ya *haveta* wear what we say cuz, well, cuz you won't have no choice.

TASHA: Ya mean *haveta* wear what you say, momma ain' care, she ain' even like lookin' my *face*, alone what I *wear*, cuz I *remind* 'r too much. Now you gonna take me ta school or I'm a *haveta* walk? Or ya want I should put out my thumb?! I ain't care one way.