

The States Collection – Louisiana
We Were Amazing
By Claudia Haas
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Cast: 2 females

Cameron female); 15-16; perpetually bored

Spirit (female); ageless; does not suffer bored people easily; (Ideally played by an Indigenous actor; at the very least, cast a person of color)

TIME: Summer, now.

PLACE: Poverty Point, Louisiana

SYNOPSIS: Once upon a time in North America...

TAGS: History, rural, drama

(Lights up on Cameron. It is a hot, August day in LA. CAMERON sits with her phone yelling to her family.)

CAMERON

I am not going on a hike to see mounds of dirt.

(SPIRIT appears. SPIRIT may be dressed a wee bit different from these times or dressed in whatever your idea of a “spirit” is. (Please, no Halloween ghost costumes.)

SPIRIT

There’s actually a lot to see. Mounds that span 5,000 years. Some are dome-shaped, another is conical and then there’s the huge platform. There were good times on that platform!

CAMERON

Thanks for the brief tour. I’m good here.

SPIRIT

When the Mounds were started, the Great Pyramids hadn’t been built. Stonehenge was just getting started. You have heard of them? Stonehenge?

CAMERON

Yeah. A bunch of stones built by aliens.

SPIRIT

Stop doing your research at The Google High Altar of Misinformation. When the first mound was built, Queen Nefertiti and a boy known as the Pharaoh Tutankhamen ruled Egypt. The Shang Dynasty in China was just beginning. We built an amazing city right here.

CAMERON

I get it! It’s old dirt. Find yourself a tourist for your tour. I’m just a teen trapped in my family’s vacation.

SPIRIT

The mounds were built by Indigenous people over 3400 years ago. With no modern tools, we moved two million cubic yards of earth.

CAMERON

I don't know what a cubic yard looks like. And I don't dare google it and get misinformed.

SPIRIT

It's about 38,462 truckloads. Picture it. Look over those mounds and try to picture over 38,000 trucks.

CAMERON

That's a lot of work to bury people.

SPIRIT

They're not burial grounds. It was a city. North America's first city. We traded wares – not the clumsily made pottery shards you find in museums – but filled with color and shapes all from the natural world. I was particular fond of painting owls.

CAMERON

You don't give up, do you?

SPIRIT

People came on highways.

CAMERON

Wait! There were highways?

SPIRIT

All those rivers? They were our highways. And we built the mounds on the very top of the ridge so as not to be flooded. Something you modern people have yet to learn.

CAMERON

“We?” What do you mean by “we?”

SPIRIT

(And maybe the SPIRIT dances.)

And we danced. Oh how we danced! Amazing jumps and twirls and slides and lifts. We didn't go for the pointy-toe, straight-backed dances in short itchy skirts that you people seem to cherish. We were more like a jitterbug clan of movement.

CAMERON

Wait! Jitterbug?

SPIRIT

Sixty-five generations lived here. We held ceremonies of thanks for a place to live that was so abundant in food. It was a wonderful time. Look on the ridge. Can you see us? Can you see a circle of colorful posts all decked out in celebration? Can you see us dancing? Laughing? Falling in and out of love? Can you feel our tears of grief and joy? The blood racing through our veins as we celebrated the fact that we were alive in such a time. At such a place. We were amazing.

See that river there? That's where I met my first love. Tall and straight with legs that went on for days...

CAMERON

So, pretty hot?

SPIRIT

You don't know the half of it. It was just two days and two nights. Two evenings of dance and tentative touches. Two days of dreaming about the possibility of us... Together - we were amazing. We were alive as you are now ... think about celebrating your time here. You never know about tomorrow. Look out. See us. Touch us. Think us.

(CAMERON looks out and starts to imagine. SPIRIT is gone.)

CAMERON

Wait! What happened with you and the guy? I want to know more.

END OF PLAY