

The States Collection – Louisiana
Mounds of Dirt
By Claudia Haas
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Cast: 2 (male or female)

Cameron (male or female); 15-16

Spirit (male or female); ageless (Ideally played by an Indigenous actor; at the very least, cast a person of color)

Time: Summer, now

Place: Poverty Point, Louisiana

(Lights up on Cameron. It is a hot, August day in LA.)

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 but there is nothing to show that they are a spirit – or a ghost.)

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.

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

Not exactly correct. 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.

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, they moved two million cubic yards of earth.

CAMERON

I don't know what a cubic yard looks like.

SPIRIT

It's about 38,462 truckloads.

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.

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

Sixty-five generations lived here. We traded. We held ceremonies of thanks for a place to live that was so abundant in food. We made decorative objects. I painted owls on mine. 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?

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

CAMERON

Wait! I want ... to know more.

END OF PLAY