

Temples in the Sand

By Dave Carley

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1. SFX: Studio ambiance.
2. DAVE: When I saw those towers falling, and heard the shocked ripping of a nation's psyche, it was with a sense of déjà vu. I'd been this way before. Much less horrifically, of course. But no less intensely, because it happened when I was a child. Early in another September. Up north, on a lake.
3. SFX: Northern loons rampant.
4. DAVE: Uh, too Group of Seven.
5. SFX: Loons abruptly out.
6. DAVE: It's cottage country.
7. SFX: DAVE is drowned out by a roar of motorboats and jet skis rampant rampant.
8. DAVE: (Over.) Not that busy!
9. SFX: Roar of boats out.
10. DAVE: Can we split the difference?
11. SFX: Establish some boat and bird sounds and take under.
12. DAVE: Thanks. Now, we need to go back in time. To the final hours of my childhood -

13. SFX: Some Glenn Miller music – perhaps the opening bars of “In The Mood”
14. DAVE: How old do you think I am? Try 1963.
15. SFX: Establish a 1963 tune – “Those Lazy, Crazy, Hazy Days of Summer”
16. DAVE: Can you put that on a cheap transistor?
17. SFX: Tinny version of the song.
18. DAVE: Perfect. Now, hang the radio from a tree up at the cottage.
19. SFX: Music is off now. Establish and put it way under; fade it out eventually.
20. DAVE: Nat King Cole isn't actually my grandmother's taste in music but we only get one station up here. She sits on the deck, and reads, and smokes. My brother and I are down on the beach.
21. SFX: Infants playing.
22. DAVE: We're 9 and 7.
23. SFX: Infant sounds out.
24. SFX: Older children sounds. Establish and fade under.
25. DAVE: We're playing in that rare state of sibling harmony that only a beach and a perfect summer day can induce. My brother's the older one – scrawny, all arms, legs, ribs – naked but for a plastic army helmet - and a breech cloth. My grandmother's second-best tea towel. I'm the runty one – shorter, scrawnier, also naked but for a crow's feather I've hockey-taped to my forehead, and the breech

cloth. Grandmother's third-best tea towel. My brother and I are Hurons.

26. SFX: Aboriginal chanting beginning, take under and eventually out.
27. DAVE: Doomed Hurons.
28. SFX: Dog bark.
29. DAVE: The dog is a spaniel, fat and fetid. My grandmother says she only smokes to block out its stench.
30. SFX: Another bark.
31. DAVE: So there we are. A summer's trinity: two boys in tea towels, one swampy dog.
32. SFX: Rising under, the real sound of construction.
33. DAVE: We're building a city. A great city with canals, and freeways made from mud we've quarried from the lake and, oh, subdivisions of sand with bungalows linked by telephone lines of string. And, in the centre of it all, the city's crowning glory: a giant Huron camp. Behind a stockade of twigs we've built wigwams and teepees and longhouses and, rising three feet at its centre: an Aztec temple.
34. SFX: Aboriginal chanting up again.
35. DAVE: My brother and I are the poster boys of cultural appropriation. We are of Irish and German heritage. Not one drop of First Nations blood courses our veins. But, from our very first game of Cowboys and Indians, we've chosen the path more quietly traveled. Partly it's because our grandfather wouldn't allow us cap guns but did

whittle us bows and arrows. Partly it's couture – tea towel breechcloths make superior beach wear. But mostly we're Hurons because we love the underdogs.

36. SFX: Threatening sounds up.

37. DAVE: Our enemies are legion: Nazis and Iroquois. I'm not exactly sure who the Nazis are, but my brother says they're Germans. This I choose not to believe, and I notice he doesn't say it in front of my grandmother. Anyway, it's the Iroquois who are truly dangerous – they are the unseen foe and they are close by. No farther off than the forest behind the cottage. Ten feet beyond my grandmother.

38. SFX: Threatening sounds out.

39. SFX: Back to happy kid sounds.

40. SFX: Car horn starts in distance.

41. DAVE: After three hours we've finished the city. The beach was cold and shady when we began, but now it swelters in the noon sun. The dog has forsaken us and is under the dock, where it's cool and there's the possibility of frogs.

42. SFX: Car horn.

43. DAVE: That's our grandmother. That's how she calls us for lunch. She sits in the car and lays on the horn. She can't yell. She doesn't eat either, preferring to balefully watch us wolf down our warrior's rations: one cob of corn, one hotdog, one apple. We don't talk. Our

thoughts are our own, just as I imagine the Hurons grew silent upon rumours of imminent Iroquois.

44. SFX: Beach sounds louder.
45. DAVE: The battle of the beach is joined three minutes after lunch. September 1, 1963. War conditions on the lake are ideal: a light breeze ruffles the water and the clear sky means visibility is perfect.
46. SFX: Enemy sounds up. Whoops etc.
47. DAVE: We pile the enemy soldiers into their landing crafts – milk cartons cut lengthways – and pull them on out on the raft.
48. SFX: Gunfire begins. Howitzers etc.
49. DAVE: The enemy boats are released and I wave them to shore with a flutter board. We begin bombarding them with mudballs, pinecones, rocks... Some sink, and the plastic toy corpses drift on the waves. But most of the enemy manage to land! They fire back! Well, it's us, firing. First just a few tentative mudballs lobbed at our city. They land on our houses with satisfying thumps. We throw a few more. More satisfying thumps and cave-ins. Then missiles. Something snaps in us, some urgent boy-code. Suddenly it's fun to bomb our own houses, fun to cave in the canals we dug, and – and imperative we heave up the mud freeways that were the fruits of an entire morning's industry. Hearing our frenzied shouts, the dog runs out from under the dock.

We pelt her with sandbombs until her wet coat is caked. She shakes, sending a cloud of mud shrapnel over the city. And then she rolls through the sand, right into our Huron camp. We roll with her, squashing our fences and longhouses, our feet flailing at the majestic Aztec temple; one dog, two boys, the furry and the fat, the naked and the skinny. United in destruction.

50. SFX: War sounds mostly out.
51. DAVE: The city's flattened.
52. SFX: All sounds out. Pause.
53. DAVE: It has taken five minutes.
54. SFX: Pause. Heavy breathing, subsides.
55. SFX: Slowly, nighttime sounds of crickets etc. Establish and hold under.
56. SFX: Traces of earlier music, off.
57. DAVE: That night, after my grandmother turns out my light, I lie in bed but my mind wanders into the night. I know something has changed, except that change – unless it's uh a new teacher or larger shoes – is something I can't yet articulate. When you're seven you've never really known a state of un-change. But this is a shift, one of those terrifying glimpses into adulthood, like when you realize you might not always love ice cream. Or when you realize that you aren't ever safe, not even at your own cottage.
58. SFX: Some coughing, off, under.

59. DAVE: What if my brother is right? What if Nazis are Germans? What does that make my grandmother? She's sitting on the deck just under my window and I can smell her cigarette. Same as every night. It's how I know she's on guard. But is she guarding – or is she sending out coded messages with every puff?
60. SFX: A woof.
61. DAVE: OK, and how can it take a whole morning to build a city and then you wreck it in five minutes? Why does it feel so – good – while you're doing it. And so bad when you're done.
62. SFX: Another woof.
63. DAVE: She's not supposed to get up on beds.
64. SFX: Patting of bed.
65. SFX: Creaking of springs.
66. DAVE: Of course I let her up.
67. SFX: Sound out. Studio only.
68. DAVE: I feel empty, for the first time in my young life. And I'll only feel that emptiness again, that same kind of difference, of loss, abandonment, the impossible closeness of an enemy, an evil so close that maybe parts of it lie right within me – I'll only ever feel it quite this intensely one other time. Last year, the day those buildings fell, the day everyone told us the world had changed.
69. SFX: Nighttime sounds up full; threatening.
70. SFX: Faint chanting under.

71. DAVE: My last thoughts that night in '63? I will rebuild the temple, tomorrow morning, before we drive back to town. I'll leave it standing on the beach, and there it will wait for me to return, next summer.

(Pause.) Except next morning - in the excitement of packing - I forgot all that. And there never was a next summer. After my grandmother died, the first thing my granddad did was sell the cottage. And, at some point in that winter, my own little world changed, and I grew far too old to build sand temples, ever again.

72. SFX: All nighttime sounds out.

The End.