

NO PLACE ON EARTH

Written by

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Based on the short story, No Place on Earth

A grainy old still of a coffee shop on the corner of an urban street fills the screen beneath the opening titles.

Heat or mold is at work under the image, and the creeping damage gradually alters the scene, giving the impression of spreading decay, abandonment, and neglect on that urban street.

The still eventually disintegrates altogether and is replaced by another, then another:

A red leather handbag; an old jalopy car in a country home garage; an axe buried in a log with split logs scattered around its base; an old barn, its roof all but gone; a tractor in a farm yard; a train at a platform; a shiny bus; a town square with grassy knolls and benches and a fountain monument in the centre.

One by one the damage turns all these idyllic or purely normal scenes to overgrown wastelands and ruins.

The final still shows a large industrial building and its surrounding lot.

As the titles end, this last still curls then crumbles and--

FADE IN:

EXT. URBAN STREET - NIGHT

The lead-in sounds are the general hustle and bustle of urban nightlife. Cars, mostly taxis, pass up and down the street, stopping at lights and drop-off points, then moving on.

A group of guys saunter up the sidewalk, laughing and joking. A couple hurry down the opposite side. The woman is half a pace behind the man, struggling to keep up with him in her high heels.

They pass three chattering girls who have stepped to the edge of the footpath to hail an oncoming cab.

Everyone is dressed in their glad rags - this is party night.

The taxi pulls over for the girls and they climb in. Before the interior lights switch off they can be seen directing the driver where to take them. They are excitable. Their shouts and laughter can be heard out on the street.

The driver takes off and we hop on for the ride.

At the end of the street, red and ice-blue lights spill onto the asphalt from the NIGHT CLUB on the corner.

Bouncers stand on either side of a red CARPET that bears the club insignia at regular intervals along its length.

The night pulses with music and vibrations from inside. Guests are arriving at the entrance in a steady dribble.

Just as the taxi turns the corner and disappears, we get off and--

INT. NIGHT CLUB LOBBY - CONTINUOUS

--the sounds of music and voices grow louder.

The club is a somewhat high-end kind of place - black, gold, mirrors and chandeliers. Art deco style. Two girls in classy uniform stand behind a counter. Beyond them are cubbyholes and hangers - the cloakroom. Already it is nearly full.

The couple from the sidewalk are at the counter. The man is shelling out their entrance fee while the woman removes her coat and passes it over to one of the cloakroom assistants.

The couple set out for the main room, which is through a pair of heavy curtains at the end of the lobby. We pass between the couple and the curtains into the--

INT. NIGHT CLUB - CONTINUOUS

The club is busy. Colored lights fight to cut through artificial smoke.

Standing around a tall table are a group of guys, one of whom is OUR GUY(late 20s). He's a 'guy next door' type - puppy dog eyes, gorgeous smile; it's easy to imagine him wearing a cut-off t-shirt and mowing a lawn before rushing to help an old lady cross the street.

Someone in the group has recently returned from the bar with a tray of shots and they each take one between thumb and forefinger.

Our Guy's eyes are already glassy, his lids at half mast. His hand veers off course as he raises his shot glass, but he manages to get it back on track before it reaches his lips.

He downs the shot, screws up his face and shivers. He opens his eyes again just in time to see a small gaggle of girls enter the club. Among them is OUR GAL(33).

Our Gal is quieter, shier than the other girls she's with. She is a little on the short side, with STRIKING EYES and a sweet, SWEET SMILE. And she has Our Guy's full attention from the off.

Our Guy's friends have noticed the newcomers too. They wink at each other - 'Fresh meat'. But Our Guy's attention is focussed solely on those EYES. That sweet, SWEET SMILE.

Both groups dissolve in a flare of light and smoke to--

INT. NIGHT CLUB - LATER

Someone from Our Guy's group has infiltrated Our Gal's group. While the pioneer chats up one of her friends, Our Gal notices Our Guy looking at her.

Their eyes meet and with only a slight delay, he smiles at her.

Our Gal smiles too, then drops her gaze, bashful.

The lights flare once more and the room dissolves to--

INT. NIGHT CLUB - LATER

Both crews have merged and now they all stand around the same table. Some of the guys and girls have made tentative pairings, marking their territories with arms slung over shoulders or by maximizing proximity.

Our Guy and Our Gal are close but not touching. Clearly into each other but shy about showing it.

There's another tray of shots at the ready and they all tip back in unison. Our Guy uses the distraction to slip his drink out of sight onto another table; his agenda for the night has changed.

Our Gal sees his deception. For a split second, before anyone else can see, he touches his lips with his forefinger - 'Our secret'.

As the girls squeal, and the men growl, flex or perform other manly displays of having taken a shot, Our Gal smiles that sweet smile at Our Guy. 'Our Secret.'

Our Guy can't take his eyes off her. Their bodies gravitate a little closer to one another.

CUT TO:

EXT. URBAN STREET - LATER

Our Guy and Our Gal walk along the street. It is late. In the distance the guys seen sauntering up the street earlier now stagger home, stained and rumpled. Besides these, there are not many other people around.

The taxis are still on the go, though fewer and farther between than earlier.

Our Guy walks with his hands jammed in his pockets, probably to stop himself from making an awkward and presumptuous move like taking Our Gal's hand.

As they near the corner of the street Our Gal points to the coffee shop there. (It's the same one from the still under the titles.)

OUR GAL
They've got the best chocolate
croissants ever.

OUR GUY
(amused)
Ever ever?

OUR GAL
In the history of the world.

Our Guy laughs. He nudges her shoulder with his.

OUR GUY
You'll have to take me sometime.

Our Gal blushes.

OUR GAL
Okay.

They smile at each other and somehow their hands find their way together as they round the corner.

EXT. RESIDENTIAL STREET - CONTINUOUS

Townhouses line both sides of the street. Small front yards lead to short flights of steps up to the front doors.

After walking for a few beats, Our Gal gestures to the railing enclosing one of the front gardens - 'This is me'. She stops there, clearly awkward about inviting him any further though her body language says she wants to.

Our Guy solves the unspoken dilemma by reaching for the gate and holding it open for her.

EXT. OUR GAL'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Our Guy leaves the gate open, easing the awkwardness even more. He escorts Our Gal up the steps to her house while she hunts for her keys.

Out on the street a TAXI PASSES by.

Our Gal unlocks the door and pushes it open. She steps just inside and turns back. Our Guy stays outside.

OUR GAL

Thank you. For walking me home.

The awkwardness ratchets for a beat before Our Guy reaches over the threshold and cups Our Gal's cheek. He regards her for a moment before pulling her to him.

Their lips meet on the border of outside and in.

The kiss is chaste initially, but then he takes Our Gal's face with his free hand too, caught up in the intensity. Our Gal's hands go up to his chest. Her fingers hook over the collar of his shirt.

After a few beats they break away, breathless.

OUR GAL

(nervously)

Will you stay?

OUR GUY

There's no place on Earth I'd rather be.

She smiles at him, then tugs his collar, pulling his lips to hers, and him inside.

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