What a Wonderful World

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FADE IN:

INT. AGUILAR APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - MORNING

MARIA AGUILAR, 35 going on 50, lies sprawled on an old sofa, out cold. A picture of Jesus in a cheap frame looks down from the wall above her.

A half empty liter bottle of Montezuma tequila stands on a weathered coffee table in front of her. Dark stains discolor the worn carpeting, below.

KATIA AGUILAR, 14, enters from the back hallway, rushes over to her mother.

    KATIA
    Momma? Momma?

She looks down at the tequila, scowls, picks it up angrily.

    KATIA (CONT'D)
    Por Dios, Momma!

Katia walks into the -

KITCHEN

- where dirty dishes and glasses litter the sink. A pot of dried beans with a spoon sticking up sits on the stove.

She sets the tequila on the counter, next to numerous other liquor bottles, looks around in disgust.

    KATIA
    Dios me ayude!

Katia takes a clean towel from a drawer, wets it under the faucet, rings it out.

She heads back into the -

LIVING ROOM

- where she gently wipes Maria's forehead.

    KATIA
    Momma, it has to stop. You're going to kill yourself. Please...for Hector and I, if not yourself. I love you. God loves you.

Maria murmurs in her stupor, turns away.
INT. AGUILAR APARTMENT - BATHROOM - LATER

Katia, in a bathrobe, wraps her wet hair in a towel, as she examines herself in the wall mirror. She smiles, but it's not a happy smile. A tear rolls down her cheek.

INT. AGUILAR APARTMENT - BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

HECTOR AGUILAR, 11, sits in bed, facing another picture of Jesus on the wall, his hands clasped together in prayer.

HECTOR
   Padre Nuestro, que estas en los cielos, santificado sea tu nombre, venga a nosotros tu reino...

Katia enters from behind.

KATIA
   On earth, as it is in Heaven.

Hector stops praying, turns as Katia joins him on the bed.

KATIA (CONT'D)
   In English, Mijo...in English.

They join hands, look to the picture of Jesus.

KATIA & HECTOR
   Give us this day our daily bread.
   And forgive our trespasses, as we forgive those that trespass on us.
   And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen.

Katia hugs Hector, rubs his think head of black hair.

KATIA
   OK, get ready for school, it's getting late.

Hector looks directly into Katia's eyes.

HECTOR
   Is Momma OK? She was drinking again, wasn't she?

KATIA
   God will hear our prayers, Mijo. He'll protect her...and help her. She has to help herself, too.

HECTOR
   Are you sure God really listens?
Katia smiles, looks back to the Jesus picture.

KATIA
He's always listening, Mijo.

HECTOR
Then, what's he waiting for? Why doesn't he help us?

KATIA
Never question God or his ways. He is here for us, and he'll protect us. Trust me.

INT. AGUILAR APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - LATER
Katia and Hector walk past Maria, still out cold on the sofa. Hector stops.

HECTOR
I love you, Momma.

Katia pulls him along toward the front door.

KATIA
Let her sleep, Mijo. She'll be better when we get home from school.

As they leave the apartment, Hector turns one last time, waves goodbye.

FADE OUT:

FADE IN:

INT. AGUILAR APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - AFTERNOON
Maria, naked from the waist down, lies straddled over the edge of the sofa, on her stomach, legs on the carpet.

A crack pipe, lighter, and a square of aluminum foil rests on the coffee table. The bottle of tequila has also returned.

Thin wisps of smoke emanate from the filthy pipe, wafting into the air.

SANTIAGO NUNEZ, 31, walks in from the back hallway, zipping up his jeans, his face and hair dripping wet.

SANTIAGO
Maria, mi hermana, you gotta get some clothes on, girl. Damn...smells like ass in here...and crack...ass crack.
He smiles, laughs crazily out loud, and slaps Maria across her buttocks. She doesn't respond.

He opens a small window, adjacent to the sofa, fans the air with his hands in an animated fashion.

EXT. AGUILAR APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

Katia and Hector approach the front door. Both have wide smiles on their faces. Hector holds a piece of paper in his hands, proudly.

KATIA
Momma's gonna be so proud of you, Mijo.

HECTOR
Let me tell her...let me just show her. Maybe it will make her get better.

KATIA
You did so good...a B in English is something to be very proud of.

INT. AGUILAR APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

The lock on the front door turns, and the door flies open.

Hector charges in, holding the paper out in front of him.

HECTOR
Momma...look! Look what I got!

Katia enters behind him, closes the door.

Santiago steps forward, a wild, wasted look on his face.

SANTIAGO
Hey Mijo, give su Tio a hug. You're getting so big.

Hector stops in his tracks. Katia quickly steps in front of him, holding him back.

KATIA
Santi, what's going on here? What's that smell?

Santiago pulls a blanket over Maria's lower half.
SANTIAGO
(slurring badly)
I just came by to say hola, and see
how my favorite hermana's doing.
(beat)
She isn't feeling too good, though
and had to use the bathroom...forgot
to put her pants back on, I guess.

He laughs crazily again, raises his arms in the air in an "I
don't know" gesture, a silly grin on his face.

Katia turns, puts her arms around Hector's shoulders.

KATIA
Go to your bedroom, Mijo. Lock the
door and don't come out till I tell
you.

Santiago takes a teetering step towards them.

SANTIAGO
No, no, it's OK. Everything's fine,
Mija. Su Madre just had a little
too much to drink, I think.

Santiago puts his finger to his lips.

SANTIAGO (CONT'D)
She's sleeping...we have to be quiet.
(beat)
I just helped her with her pants.
C'mon now...you know me.

Katia pushes Hector toward the back hallway.

KATIA
Go...now! Don't come out till I
tell you, you hear?

Hector runs off, as tears fill his eyes.

Santiago takes another iffy step forward.

SANTIAGO
Oh, Mija, why you have to be like
that, huh? You're just like su Madre
sometimes, you know...like a little
bitch.

KATIA
Stay away from me, Santi. I know
that smell...it's drugs. You're
doing drugs and giving 'em to Momma.

Katia takes a closer look at Maria straddled over the sofa.
Her eyes go wide with realization, as tears begin to fall.
KATIA (CONT'D)
Dios mio! You bastard! You've been raping Momma? Your own sister? What's wrong with you, Santi?

Santiago reaches out, grabs Katia by the hair.

SANTIAGO
No, Mija, no. Come to me, let me show you something you'll like. Trust su Tio.

Katia strikes out, but can't break the grip.

KATIA
Get away from me! Let go! God, help me!

He pulls her in close, wraps his arms around her torso.

SANTIAGO
Oh, baby, we need to get better acquainted.
(beat)
You want God's help, huh? You wanna see God?

Katia struggles unsuccessfully to escape.

KATIA
Get off me!

SANTIAGO
Dios is here with us today, Mija. Let me show him to you.

He points to the crack pipe on the table.

SANTIAGO (CONT'D)
He's right there in my pipe...

Santiago spins Katia around and down in front of him. He grabs his crotch.

SANTIAGO (CONT'D)
And he's right here between my legs. You gonna pray to him now, bitch. You see your God up close, no?

Katia SCREAMS, twists her head wildly, bites his hand.

She manages to break free of the grasp.

She bolts upright, takes a step toward the back hallway, but Santiago reaches out, grabs her hair again, pulls her in tight, face to face.
He kisses her mouth, roughly...licks her cheek.

Katia pounds against his chest with both hands, to no avail.

Hector appears from the back hallway, a small caliber handgun out in front of him, aimed directly at Santiago and Katia.

The gun trembles in his small hands.

    HECTOR
    Let her go, Tio!

    KATIA
    Go get help, Mijo. Next door...run!

Santiago spins Katia around, so she faces Hector. He keeps a firm grip of her around her throat with his left forearm. His eyes look like a crazed animal.

    SANTIAGO
    Hector, Mijo...you listen to me now.
    Hand me the gun. Someone's gonna get hurt here. Listen to su Tio.
    You know me, no?

Hector stands firm, but his body trembles.

    HECTOR
    Let her go, Tio!

Santiago grabs for the gun with his free right hand.

The gun explodes with a tinny POP.

The bullet rips through Santiago's hand, and continues into Katia's neck. Blood shoots out, as her head falls back into Santiago's shoulder.

    HECTOR (CONT'D)
    No! Mija...

Santiago drops Katia's limp body in a pile in front of him, lunges at Hector with both hands.

    POP!

The gun goes off again. The bullet smashes into Santiago's face, as blood splays out.

Santiago's forward momentum carries him into Hector. Both crash to the floor.

    POP!

The gun goes off a third time.
No movement from Santiago or Hector. Blood soaks into the carpet around their bodies.

Katia spasms on the ground. Her eyes pop open...wide open.

She clutches at her neck, tries to stand. Her hands come away bathed in thick blood.

Her body quiets...goes completely still.

FADE OUT:

FADE IN:

INT. AGUILAR APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - LATER

All three bodies lie where they fell. Blood pools thick around all of them.

Maria stirs on the sofa, snorts, coughs in her sleep. She opens her eyes, feebly raises her head, oblivious to the carnage behind her.

She reaches a jittery hand toward the coffee table, grabs a hold of the pipe, sticks it in her mouth. Her eyes are glazed, her movements troubled.

With her other hand, she takes the lighter and brings it up to the pipe, flames the end.

Smoke billows out of her nostrils, as her eyes flutter rapidly, then shut.

She drops the pipe and lighter in front of her on the sofa, shakes in ecstasy, then passes out again.

A red hot crystal rolls out of the end of the pipe, burns down into the fabric of the sofa.

Smoke slowly wafts up, as the small smoldering hole increases in size.

Maria shifts in her stupor, pulls her legs back onto the sofa, shimmies up, so she lies flat on her back.

Smoke lazily seeps out from underneath her.

Katia's eyes pop open. She opens her mouth to speak, but nothing comes out.

Her breathing is hoarse, raspy. With each troubled breath, blood oozes from a ragged, small hole in her neck.

She flips herself over, crawls toward the front door.

Behind her, flames jump out from the sofa.
Maria's hair catches fire. She SCREAMS out in agony.

There's a hard POUNDING on the front door.

COP (O.S.)
Open up! LAPD! Reported gunfire...we're coming in. Stand back!

The front door splinters, bursts open.

Katia reaches out blindly in front of her.

KATIA
(weak and garbled)
God...are you there?

FINAL FADE OUT: