

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 thick 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: