

Vida Subita
by
Joseph Cahill

August, 2010 draft

"VIDA SUBITA"

FADE IN:

EXT. NEW YORK STREET - DAY

Midday. A tough, low-income part of the city. Boarded up shops, burnt out apartment buildings dot the street.

PEDESTRIANS, mostly immigrants, stand around some waiting for work others escaping the heat.

CLOSE ON

A 'Watchtower' Booklet with a picture of the earth on fire and the words "Is The End Near?"

A FOOT comes down on it and we PAN OUT to show

ROSA, 20, a frail, sickly-looking woman steps on the watchtower booklet and continues down the crowded sidewalk. She holds the hand of ANA MARIA, 5 as she tries keeping up.

Ana Maria wears cat ears and tail with her normal clothing.

Rosa literally drags her daughter to somewhere. She weaves in and out of the midday CROWD occasionally bumping someone.

She doesn't notice. Keeps moving. Hurried, careless steps as if either running to or from something.

Ana Maria loses a sneaker.

ANA MARIA

Mommy!

Rosa doesn't notices. Continues pulling the girl to somewhere.

INT. COMMUNITY HEALTH CENTER

Packed with PATIENTS waiting for appointments. All low income, most Latino immigrants.

Ana Maria sits alone. An empty chair next to her.

As she colors a page in a COLORING BOOK, she cheerfully swings her sneakered feet to some unheard rhythm. The loose shoe laces swinging beneath them.

Rosa approaches and sits next to Ana Maria.

ANA MARIA
Nobody called.

ROSA
Good girl.

Rosa forces a smile though preoccupied with something else.
Runs her hand through Ana Maria's hair.

Her haunting, sunken eyes, and protruding cheekbones show us
that something is terribly wrong with her.

Noticing her daughter's untied shoes, Rosa leans over to tie
them.

ROSA
I thought you knew how to tie your
own shoes?

ANA MARIA
I do. They keep untying themselves.

ROSA
Mmm-hmmm.

NURSE (O.S.)
Rosa Jimenez.

Rosa immediately gets up forgetting about the untied laces
and heads toward the nurse leaving Ana Maria sitting there.

Remembering suddenly, Rosa goes back to get Ana Maria. Takes
her by the hand.

Ana Maria hurriedly collects her things.

EXT. NEW YORK STREET - DAY

Rosa stands at a pay phone waiting for someone on the other
end to answer.

Ana Maria stands nearby in the shade.

ROSA
Hello? Could I speak with Juan?
Yes, it is an emergency.
(waits)
What do you mean? I don't care.
Tell him its about his daughter.
(waits)
What do you mean he isn't there?!
You just said he was! Please.
(MORE)

ROSA(cont'd)

(listens)

The only mistake is that bastard
being alive! Tell him to go to fuck
himself!

Rosa slams the phone down on the receiver. She motions to Ana Maria to come to her.

Ana Maria quickly does and takes her mother's hand.

ANA MARIA

Mommy, what's 'fuck'?

Rosa stops and looks at her daughter. Gets down low.

ROSA

Don't ever use that word. Bad word.
Promise?

ANA MARIA

I promise.

Rosa takes off, with Ana Maria in tow, up the street.

DOWN THE STREET

A busy street corner.

Rosa is crouched on the sidewalk facing her daughter. She has both hands on her arms.

ANA MARIA

I tried to stop you, mommy. You
wouldn't listen.

ROSA

Where did you lose it?

ANA MARIA

Way back there.

Frustrated, Rosa ties Ana's only shoe.

Rosa begins crying. Her face one of hopelessness.

ANA MARIA

It's okay, mommy we can find it.

Rosa forces a smile through tear soaked eyes.

INT. RESTAURANT

Rosa follows the DOMINICAN OWNER from the kitchen. Chasing him down, actually.

ROSA
Please, I need this job. Please!

The Owner keeps moving toward the bar.

OWNER
Look, this is not a day care. This is a place of business. If you can't find someone to watch your children you shouldn't have them.

IN THE CORNER

Ana Maria sits at an empty table.

BAR AREA

The Owner does some task. Cleans a glass.

Rosa's right next to him.

ROSA
You don't understand. This is all I have. What can I do?

Finally, the owner stops what he is doing and faces Rosa.

OWNER
Go back to where you came from then. You can't make it here, you can't make it anywhere.

The owner leaves leaving Rosa standing there.

ROSA
Because you have some gringo paper makes you better than me!? You are no better than any of us. At least give me what you owe me.

The Owner two TWENTIES and throws them at Rosa.

OWNER
Get out of here. Go on, beat it. Entiendes? Cabrona.

ROSA
Go to hell.

Rosa picks up the bills, takes Ana Maria by the hand and storms out of there.

INT. CONVENIENCE STORE

Ana Maria stands near the counter looking at a new COLORING BOOK.

Rosa counts out several one dollar bills and some change. Pays for a PHONE CARD.

Rosa looks over at her daughter thumbing the coloring book.

ROSA
Come on, sweetheart.

Ana Maria goes to her mother. They leave.

OUTSIDE

Rosa and Ana Maria stop.

ROSA
Wait here.

Rosa leaves Ana Maria and goes inside.

MOMENTS LATER

She returns. Hands the coloring book to Ana Maria.

Ana Maria smiles and gives her mother a big hug.

INT. COMMUNITY HEALTH CENTER - EXAM ROOM

A room that barely looks like an exam room. Just the essentials. Box of gloves. Sink. Exam table. Chair.

Rosa sits on the table in a patient's gown.

Ana Maria sits on the chair quietly coloring.

A KNOCK on the exam room door before the overworked DOCTOR enters.

Both Ana Maria and Rosa look up to greet the doctor.

The Doctor looks over Rosa's chart.

Rosa forces a smile.

DOCTOR
Miss Jimenez?

Rosa responds by nodding.

DOCTOR
We have your results here...

Rosa looks on blank.

DOCTOR
Do you speak English?

ROSA
E-spanish.

The doctor lets out a frustrated SIGH. Goes to the exam room door and sticks his head out.

DOCTOR
I need a translator in here.

The doctor waits for the nurse to arrive.

The NURSE, an overweight Puerto Rican, enters.

The doctor quickly changes his tone.

DOCTOR
(to nurse, matter-of-fact)
Tell her we are sending her to the hospital. Ask her if she has family here. Anyone that can help her? Friends?

The nurse repeats in Spanish.

Again, Rosa shakes her head 'no'.

The doctor looks over at Ana Maria who has gone back to coloring.

DOCTOR
Anyone that can take care of her daughter?

The nurse repeats in Spanish.

Rosa looks up at the nurse, defiant.

ROSA

No, why?

DOCTOR

(to nurse)

We need to get a hold of Child Services. Keep her here, make sure she doesn't leave.

The doctor leaves.

The nurse looks at Rosa.

ROSA

What did he say?

The nurse hesitates.

NURSE

The doctor wants you to stay here for a moment. He wants to make sure he gives you everything you need before you leave. Paperwork and things.

The nurse smiles.

NURSE

Wait here.

The nurse leaves and closes the door behind her.

ANA MARIA

Why do they want someone to take care of me, mommy?

ROSA

Is that what he said?

ANA MARIA

He said you can't leave because someone has to come and take care of me.

Rosa suddenly realizes. Jumps off the exam table and gathers her things.

INT. COMMUNITY HEALTH CENTER - HALLWAY

Just outside an exam room door. It opens slowly, and Rosa sticks her head out to check out the hallway.

No one in the immediate area.

Fully dressed now, Rosa steps into the hallway with Ana Maria in tow. She quietly closes the door to the exam room.

Taking a few steps down the hallway, Rosa stops and gets her eye on the exit.

ANA MARIA
Mommy, my coloring book. I forgot
my coloring book.

Rosa holds her hand tight.

ROSA
Mommy will buy you a new one, dear.
We have to go.

Rosa heads straight for the exit.

Something behind them catches Ana Maria's eye. She follows whatever it is with her eyes.

INT. COMMUNITY HEALTH CENTER - WAITING ROOM

Rosa walks straight out the front doors with Ana Maria in hand.

EXT. COMMUNITY HEALTH CENTER - DAY

Rosa and Ana Maria exit the front entrance and hurry up the street.

EXT. NEW YORK STREET - DAY

Rosa hurries down the crowded sidewalk. She holds the hand of Ana Maria as she tries keeping up.

Rosa has tears in her eyes.

Rosa literally drags her daughter to somewhere. She weaves in and out of the midday CROWD occasionally bumping someone.

She doesn't notice. Keeps moving. Hurried, careless steps as if either running to or from something.

Ana Maria loses a sneaker.

ANA MARIA
Mommy!

Rosa doesn't notices. Continues pulling the girl to somewhere.

EXT. BRIDGE - DAY

The sun low in the sky.

Rosa crosses over train tracks with Ana Maria on her shoulders.

Rosa looks like she is about to drop from exhaustion.

Ana Maria has one foot with just a sock. The other foot with an untied sneaker.

ANA MARIA
I'm hungry, mommy.

ROSA
I know, dear. Mommy's gonna get us some food. When we get to grandma's we can have all the food we want.

ANA MARIA
Are we going to Mexico?

ROSA
Yes. And it's beautiful. They have these fields with this plant called Agave. Hundreds of them. Mommy used to play in them when she was little. And they have horses that we can ride.

ANA MARIA
Really? Can I ride by myself?

ROSA
Of course, you're almost six. Everything will be okay once we get to grandma's house.

ANA MARIA
When are we leaving?

ROSA
Tomorrow.

Rosa lifts Ana Maria from her shoulders. Sets her on the ground next to her.

Rosa stoops to face her daughter.

ROSA
It's going to be a very long
journey, dear. I want you to
understand this.

ANA MARIA
That's okay, mommy. I'm almost six.
I'm strong. Feel.

Ana Maria out her tiny arm and makes a muscle.

ROSA
I know you are, sweetheart.

Rosa lovingly fixes Ana Maria's hair, kisses her forehead.
She takes her hand and they both continue walking.

ANA MARIA
Mommy, does grandma live in a real
house?

ROSA
She does. She's even got a garden.
You can help her with it.

ANA MARIA
She's got chickens, too, huh?

ROSA
Lots of chickens that lay eggs. You
can help her get the eggs.

ANA MARIA
Mommy?

ROSA
Yes?

ANA MARIA
Are you going to heaven soon?

ROSA
I don't know, dear. I don't know.

ANA MARIA
Mommy, I want to go with you.

Rosa looks down at the top of her daughter's head. Tears in
her eyes. Tries holding them back.

Both continue down the tracks.

EXT. ABANDONED YACHT CLUB/BOAT YARD - DAY

Rosa and Ana Maria turn into an abandoned area filled with forgotten, decaying boats. Eight foot high weeds hide everything.

They approach several, large boats. All with cabins. All hidden behind the tall weeds.

EXT. BEACH - DAY

Ana Maria plays in the shallow water while Rosa watches a short distance away.

Rosa COUGHS a terrible cough. Blood trickles from her mouth. Blood coming from her lungs. She wipes it away.

Ana Maria approaches her mother.

ANA MARIA
Mommy, you have blood, again. On
your mouth.

Rosa wipes her blood stained mouth. Looks at her hand.

ANA MARIA
Mommy, are you okay?

ROSA
I'm fine. Let's go, dear. It's
getting dark. Mommy needs her rest.

EXT. ABANDONED YACHT CLUB/BOAT YARD - DAY

Rosa helps Ana Maria up the side ladder to one of the largest boats. She follows her up.

INT. ABANDONED BOAT CABIN

Evidence of Rosa and Ana Maria living there awhile. Personal items. Some empty food boxes.

ANA MARIA
I'm hungry, mommy.

Rosa checks the food boxes. Most empty except a taco shell box. Rosa removes the last taco shell.

ROSA
Here, sweetheart.

ANA MARIA
That's it?

ROSA
Eat this for now and we'll get
pancakes in the morning.

Ana Maria reluctantly takes the taco shell, nibbles it.

ROSA
Get those wet clothes off.

Rosa helps Ana Maria get her shirt off. Finds another dirty, but dry one laying around. Puts it on her.

INT. ABANDONED BOAT CABIN

Through the curtains, the darkness has replaced the light.

Rosa is collapsed shivering on the makeshift bed. She looks like she's about to pass out.

Ana Maria curls up next to her mother. She strokes her mother's hair.

ROSA
Promise me one other thing,
sweetheart. Promise me you learn
all the important things in life
and go to school.

ANA MARIA
I know important things, mommy.

Rosa can barely hold her eyes open. Either falling asleep or passing out.

ANA MARIA
Mommy?

Rosa doesn't respond.

ANA MARIA
Tell me about grandma's again.

ROSA
Go to sleep, sweetheart.

Doing as she's told, Ana Maria gets quiet. Her eyes stare at nothing. Old suddenly.

INT. COMMUNITY HEALTH CENTER

Taking a few steps down the hallway, Rosa stops and gets her eye on the exit.

ANA MARIA
Mommy, my coloring book. I forgot
my coloring book.

Rosa holds her hand tight.

ROSA
Mommy will buy you a new one, dear.
We have to go.

Rosa heads straight for the exit.

Something catches Ana Maria's eye.

FROM A CORNER

The nurse watches Rosa and Ana Maria leave. Her eyes meet Ana Maria's eyes.

ANA MARIA

Stares at the nurse.

NURSE

Stares until they are gone allowing them to sneak out. Goes back to her paperwork.

INT. DOCTOR'S OFFICE

The doctor on the phone.

DOCTOR
Child protective services, please.
Thank, you.

Put on hold, the doctor waits. Notices the photo of his wife and little daughter, about the same age as Ana Maria.

He takes the photo, examines it.

VOICE (V.O.)
Child Protective Services. How can
I help you?

The doctor continues looking at the photo. Runs a thumb
across it.

VOICE (V.O.)
Hello?

After a moment of hesitation, the doctor hangs up the phone
without saying a word.

Stares at nothing.

INT. RESTAURANT

After closing.

The Dominican owner sits at a table. Counts the day's take.

Stops. Stares out the window at the busy street. Lost for a
moment.

Hold on the Owner's face.

He grins and goes back to what he was doing.

INT. COMMUNITY HEALTH CENTER

The nurse stares at nothing in particular.

Lost in thought.

She carries on with her task.

INT. DOCTOR'S OFFICE

The doctor stares at nothing. He, too, lost in thought.

He takes another patient chart and leaves.

INT. ABANDONED BOAT CABIN

Sunlight shines through shabby, torn curtains that peel off
the small windows.

ANA MARIA (O.S.)
I know that nine is bigger than
eight, four is bigger than three,
six is bigger than four...

We pan down to find Rosa lying across the worn, padded boat seat motionless. From the look on her face and empty eyes we know that she is dead.

OUTSIDE

A beautiful morning. The lush bank of the Jersey Shoreline sits in the background.

Ana Maria colors on the concrete next to the boat. She's got on her cat ears and tail.

ANA MARIA
I know all kinds of important
things. Five is bigger than one,
seven is bigger than two...

EXT. NEW YORK STREET - DAY

Rosa ties Ana's only shoe.

Rosa begins crying. Her face one of hopelessness.

ANA MARIA
It's okay, mommy we can find it.

Ana Maria wipes Rosa's tears away.

Rosa forces a smile.

ROSA
There is one thing I want you to
remember from now on, sweetheart...

She puts Ana Maria's hand on her own chest.

ROSA
No matter where I go, no matter how
many days you spend without hearing
my voice, never forget how much I
love you. Everyday the sun shines,
every day a leaf falls, everyday
your shoe lace unties itself, every
time you laugh or cry, this weak
heart will be watching you in your
dreams. You will never be alone.

(MORE)

ROSA(cont'd)

(beat)

God has a way of making everything
right.

EXT. ABANDONED YACHT CLUB/BOAT YARD - DAY

Ana Maria continues to color on the sidewalk.

ANA MARIA

Three is bigger than one...

WE PAN OUT

And watch Ana Maria get lost in her surroundings. Like the
whole world has eaten her up.