

DARK SNOW

Original story and screenplay

by Ronald Micci

FADE IN:

EXT. NEW YORK WOODS - NIGHT

The thick branches of evergreens tremble in the cold, swirling air, with snowflakes whipping round and round.

CAMERA PANS left to reveal a house isolated in the woods with a drive leading up to it. The porch light is on, and there are LIGHTS in the downstairs windows.

The dark silhouette of a woman can be seen -- AUNT LIDA -- spinsterish, 60s, behind the window curtains.

AUNT LIDA (V.O.)

In the winter, my niece Sandra called late on a Saturday night. There was a mixture of fear and excitement in her voice the like of which I had never heard before, as icy winds whipped snowflakes outside my little cabin in the woods. Could she come and see me, could she drive up from the city, please, for something wonderful had happened, wonderful and terrifying, and she had to share it with me, she simply had to. And of course I said yes, yes, my darling Sandra, my precious only niece Sandra, of course you can drive up and see me, as you've always come to see me when you sought solace from the pain, the terrible pain we have both endured at the hands of this curse, this terrible curse. Yes, come quickly my darling Sandra, come quickly and let me enfold you in my arms. Let Aunt Lida protect you from the dark, my precious Sandra, and the snow.

MOVE IN as Aunt Lida comes to the window. Parts the drapes. Peers out. Dark features contemplating the wintry night.

CUT TO:

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - NIGHT

A car hugs the curve, wiper blades beating back lightly falling snow, and moves into the straightaway.

Through the snow-blurred windshield we can make out the features of the driver, SANDRA, a plain-looking woman in her 30s. With haunted eyes, nervous and agitated. Trying to focus her attention on the road.

INT. MOVING CAR

A palpably edgy Sandra clutches the steering wheel. Those wiper blades continue to beat and beat.

AUNT LIDA (V.O.)
(softly)
Was there snow on the road?

SANDRA (V.O.)
Snow?

AUNT LIDA (V.O.)
Were you afraid?

SANDRA (V.O.)
No -- no, I wasn't afraid.

AUNT LIDA (V.O.)
Of the dark and the snow?

SANDRA (V.O.)
No.

AUNT LIDA (V.O.)
Yes.

Sandra's face in terror. Her foot lunges for the brake. The car begins to swerve.

EXT. ROADWAY

The car skids.

IN THE CAR

Sandra frantically fights for control.

THE CAR

swerves onto the shoulder of the road. Thuds to a stop in a snowdrift.

INT. CAR

A shaken Sandra lies dazed against the seat. She slowly manages to pull herself upright. Wiper blades beat and beat.

She slumps back, dazed.

AUNT LIDA (V.O.)

Tell Aunt Lida, Sandra, what is it,
what happened? What happened tonight
in the dark and the snow?

FLASHBACK TO:

EXT. BISTRO - GREENWICH VILLAGE - NIGHT

Light snow is falling. Inside, an advertising agency is holding its annual Christmas party.

INT. BISTRO

A Christmas party is in full swing. A bar. Well-dressed Yuppies mingling. Loud dance music.

In a corner of the room, Sandra is conversing with a girlfriend, EMILY.

Opposite, an affable guy in his thirties, ROBERT, surveys the scene.

He catches sight of Sandra. She catches sight of him. They sense an attraction, and immediately retreat from it. But Robert is curious.

FOLLOW HIM as he circles the room, stalking his prey.

Sandra senses his presence, grows nervous. She hopes to escape from what she perceives as a male threat, yet she is intrigued because she feels something. Even from a distance, for the first time in her life, she feels something.

SANDRA

Excuse me --

And she starts to move away, but he's too quick for her, and he steps in her path.

ROBERT

Hi. I'm not interrupting? I saw you over there, and I thought --

EMILY

You'd interrupt.

ROBERT

Yeah.

EMILY

It's okay. Go on, you guys.

ROBERT

No, I mean --

EMILY

It's okay.

(a wink at Sandra)

It's Christmas.

She pats Sandra on the shoulder, moves away.

ROBERT

I'm not much good with introductions.

(extends his hand)

Robert.

SANDRA

(hesitantly)

Sandra.

They shake.

ROBERT

When I saw you -- I don't know, I just felt sort of compelled. I sometimes feel like I'm on my own little island, I mean, in crowded places like this. Then I saw you, and -- well, you ever feel that way?

SANDRA

Always I feel that way. Always.

An awkward moment.

ROBERT

So, what do you think?

SANDRA

What do you mean?

ROBERT

I mean --

He gestures. She's uptight, shrugs.

ROBERT

You wanna get something to drink?

SANDRA

The two of us?

ROBERT
(looks around)
Is there someone else here?

They share a soft laugh.

ROBERT
What do you say? Live dangerously?
Trust in our instincts? Aw hell,
get loaded. . . I'm kidding. Come
on.

He leads her through the sea of people to the bar. There's
a bowl of punch there. He points.

ROBERT
You think?

She shrugs.

He pours out two glasses. Sips the punch.

SANDRA
It takes a little time -- for the
poison to work.

Robert nods -- good. Then gestures -- her turn.

She demurs. Smiles. Then after a few beats, takes a
tentative sip. Nods -- not bad.

ROBERT
I know a restaurant across the street.
They don't poison the food. I have
it on good authority. It won't be
so crowded.

SANDRA
No, I don't think so.

ROBERT
Come on -- it's Christmas.

SANDRA
I'm not comfortable, I mean, in these
kinds of situations.

ROBERT
I'm not either, believe me.

SANDRA
Especially in these kinds of
situations.

ROBERT
I'm just getting a vibe, you know?

SANDRA
I know.

ROBERT
You do?

SANDRA
I sort of do, and I'm not used to
this.

ROBERT
We could take a chance.

EXT. BISTRO

As Robert and Sandra emerge. They stop. Robert points.
They move along the walk, cross the street to a small
restaurant.

INT. RESTAURANT

They find a table.

ROBERT
This is better, don't you think?
(off a pained look)
Or maybe not. Look, I'm pretty
innocuous. Somewhat innocuous?
Extremely innocuous?

She laughs softly.

ROBERT
Okay, let me guess, because I don't
recall seeing your face before --
traffic?

SANDRA
Studio. Illustrator.

ROBERT
Ah, an artiste.

SANDRA
An artiste.

ROBERT
New?

SANDRA

A few weeks.

She gestures -- your turn.

ROBERT

Okay, I admit up front -- I'm one of --
them.

SANDRA

Oh God.

ROBERT

Not top gun. Yes, the dreaded AE.
 Or AE in grooming. But it's safe to
 talk to me, I'm still reasonably
 human.

A pause.

SANDRA

I'm not used to these situations.
 I'm hardly a conversationalist.

ROBERT

As you can tell, neither am I.

SANDRA

I --

She starts to her feet.

ROBERT

Hey --

SANDRA

I'm a little tense, okay? This is
 very difficult for me.

ROBERT

It's difficult for me.

Pause. The WAITER comes over.

ROBERT

The waiter wants us to stay.

(to waiter)

Right? I think we'll need menus.

SANDRA

Robert?

ROBERT

It's okay. Come on, sit down.

She obliges. He nods to Waiter, who retreats.

ROBERT

So, we both got a vibe. I'll show you my vibe if you show me yours.

(off a pained look)

Weak joke.

SANDRA

I'm sorry, I'm uncomfortable. And I'm making you uncomfortable.

ROBERT

Don't be uncomfortable. It's just me. Besides, I'm really trying, can't you see?

SANDRA

Yes, and I'm ruining it.

ROBERT

No no. Now come on, be brave.

She remains tense.

SANDRA

I can't even believe I'm doing this.

ROBERT

Having drinks with a colleague? Am I that bad?

SANDRA

It's not you.

ROBERT

And it's not you, so -- I think we're safe.

(a beat)

You live here in the city?

SANDRA

Yeah.

ROBERT

I live right around the corner. In the Village. You grow up here?

SANDRA

Upstate New York. My mother died a couple of years ago, I moved down here. It was traumatic.

ROBERT

I can understand that.

SANDRA

When you lose somebody that close -- it's hard. She was sort of like me -- frightened, always frightened. Can't help it, I guess it's genetic or something.

ROBERT

Frightened?

SANDRA

You know --

ROBERT

Yeah.

(a moment)

Maybe you just haven't met the right person.

Pause.

SANDRA

I still have an aunt who lives up there -- in the woods. I'm very close to her. I just don't want to end up like her.

ROBERT

What do you mean?

SANDRA

Alone. Unhappy. I don't want it to be that way -- forever. Except I'm probably kidding myself, I probably do want it to be that way.

Robert reaches across, puts his hand on hers. The Waiter returns, passes them menus.

ROBERT

I grew up in Brooklyn. My father was in advertising, that's how I got in. I studied journalism. There isn't much by way of journalism these days. Print media dying. So, you know, not wanting to starve --

SANDRA

(checks her watch)

Look -- I really should go.

ROBERT

It's only 10:30.

SANDRA

I'm sorry.

ROBERT

It's okay.

Pause.

SANDRA

You ever feel -- well, sometimes I feel as though I am in the dark, and it's cold everywhere. I mean, all alone, and I can hear the winds outside, and there's snow.

ROBERT

I know the feeling.

(re: menu)

Well now, what looks good?

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. BROWNSTONE - UPPER EAST SIDE - NIGHT

A cab pulls up to the curb.

INT. CAB

Robert gestures to cabbie.

ROBERT

Wait here.

EXT. BROWNSTONE

Robert and Sandra emerge from cab.

SANDRA

I'm sorry I've been so uptight. I'm
sorry.

ROBERT

Don't apologize, I had a good time.
Can I call you this weekend?

Pause. She's tense.

SANDRA

You sure?

ROBERT

No, I was just testing you. Yes,
I'm sure.

(a beat)

How about, I'll give you my number
if you give me yours? Come on.

She removes pen and scrap of paper from purse, jots her on
it. Hands it to him.

That tense moment has come when goodbyes are said.

SANDRA

Well --

ROBERT

Well --

SANDRA

Good night.

She starts to walk away.

ROBERT

Wait.

He moves to her; they share a kiss. She flees up the steps.

CUT TO:

INT. SANDRA'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

She enters, rushes to the phone. Dials out.

SANDRA

(into phone)

Aunt Lida? . . . I know it's late.
I need to see you, to talk to you.
Something's happened, and I need to
come up. I know, but it's important.

FLASH FORWARD TO:

EXT. ROADWAY - PRESENT

Sandra's car is in the snowbank.

INT. CAR

Sandra snaps out of her daze, pulls herself upright, and resumes control of the steering wheel.

EXT. CAR

As it backs out of the snowbank, and continues on its way to Aunt Lida's.

CUT TO:

EXT. AUNT LIDA'S HOUSE - WOODS - NIGHT

Sandra's car turns off the road and moves up the drive. Aunt Lida is standing in the lighted doorway.

Sandra gets out of the car, moves to her.

AUNT LIDA

Sandra --

They hug.

SANDRA

Oh Aunt Lida, Aunt Lida, I know you
are going to be so happy for me.

AUNT LIDA

Come inside.

They move inside.

INT. FOYER

Sandra shakes off the cold, a bit stunned.

AUNT LIDA

Let me help you with your coat.

She helps Sandra shed her overcoat, then hangs it in the closet. Sandra moves into the LIVING ROOM, turns.

AUNT LIDA

You're shaking.

SANDRA

Yes.

(several beats)

It happened, Aunt Lida, it finally happened.

AUNT LIDA

Calm down. Come on, sit down.

They move to the sofa. Sandra seats herself.

SANDRA

I just can't believe it.

AUNT LIDA

I made you some coffee.

SANDRA

That's all right. I met someone, Aunt Lida. Tonight. At a party.

AUNT LIDA

You met someone. And?

SANDRA

It was an office Christmas party.

Several beats.

AUNT LIDA

You met someone at an office party. Well?

SANDRA

His name was Robert -- is Robert. I don't know how it happened, but I was attracted to him. I sensed it, he sensed it. We were attracted to each other.

AUNT LIDA

Oh Sandra, my precious Sandra. Don't put yourself through this again.

SANDRA

This time it was different.

AUNT LIDA

It wasn't different. But go on.

SANDRA

We had feelings for each other. For the first time, I felt as though I had made a real connection. Do you know what that means?

AUNT LIDA

No, I don't. And neither do you. You're fooling yourself Sandra, as you have a number of times in the past. As a young woman I was frightened of men. Here I am, alone my entire life, in this cabin. Your mother was frightened, but somehow for a time she overcame it. And now you've inherited this family curse. What happened tonight, did he frighten you?

SANDRA

No, he loved me. And I had feelings for him. We kissed, Aunt Lida. And it was wonderful. I came to you because we were so close, I needed to share this with you. I want you to be happy for me.

AUNT LIDA

Of course you do.

SANDRA

But you don't believe me. I can see it in your eyes.

AUNT LIDA

I don't want to see you hurt. And if you delude yourself in this way, you will be hurt.

SANDRA

It's not a delusion.

AUNT LIDA

It's always the same. You're frightened, you retreat into my arms. But it's nothing to be ashamed of.

SANDRA

I'm not ashamed. For once, I'm happy. Probably for the first time in my life. I can't wait to be with him again. I know you can't accept that, but I'm excited. I feel as though I am finally coming alive. Be happy for me.

AUNT LIDA

(putting arm around
her)

Oh Sandra, my precious Sandra. . .

SANDRA

Please be happy. I felt warmth in his arms. He is sweet and gentle.

AUNT LIDA

When I was a young girl, your mother and I spent hours walking in the bright fields, where the sun was rich and warm. We would wake in the fields just to feel our senses awakening. And yet when we saw someone, a man of any kind, we were frightened. Your mother wasn't happy in her marriage, she was terrified. She regretted it, she told me so. And I've never admitted it, but I was molested by my own father, Sandra. I was terrified. Yet I hoped I could be happy and overcome this fear, while always there was darkness surrounding me, and the coldness like that snow. I don't want you to delude yourself -- you'll only bring more suffering and pain.

SANDRA

I'm not deluding myself.

She rises.

AUNT LIDA

Where are you going?

SANDRA

To call him. To tell him I have feelings for him. I'm leaving, Aunt Lida. I'm sorry if you can't share my happiness.

AUNT LIDA

Don't go.

SANDRA

I deserve to be happy. Say you will support me in this, Aunt Lida. Say you are glad for me.

AUNT LIDA

Sandra --

Sandra moves to leave.

AUNT LIDA

Sandra, please -- I want to support you, but I'm jealous. Now I'll be all alone.

SANDRA

No, you won't be alone. I promise you.

AUNT LIDA

Outside the snow is falling, and it is dark and cold and painful, and I hide against it. I bunch up under the covers in the chill of night, and pray. I hide and hide. Oh Sandra, if what you say is true, you'll go away from me forever. Please don't go away from me.

They embrace.

SANDRA

Goodbye, Aunt Lida.

She goes out.

AUNT LIDA

Sandra -- !

Several beats. Sound of front door closing.

Aunt Lida moves to the window. SOUND of SANDRA's car starting.

POV shot of car pulling out.

AUNT LIDA

Oh Sandra, my own dear niece Sandra --
don't leave me all alone in this
little house, with the snow swirling.
Don't leave me in the dark and the
snow.

FADE OUT.

THE END