

PURPLE LOLLIPOP

LOGLINE: A whimsical candy store owner gives a tour to his young, silent business partner, who has some unfortunate news to share.

FADE IN:

EXT. CANDY STORE - DAY

A tall, lanky man in a suit stands on a quiet street. He's in front of a towering building, staring up at an exuberant sign illuminating the dull, mid-morning sky. It reads: SIR BALJEET'S WORLD OF SWEETS.

The man - GERALD, early 30s - sighs. A soft buzzing of noise escapes from within.

INT. STORE ENTRANCE - DAY

As he opens the door he is transported to another world. His senses are overwhelmed by a cacophony of children's voices and a rainbow kaleidoscope of color. Gerald steps back as a group of children scurry by. He looks around, struggling to gain his bearings in the sea of vibrant shelves and candy displays. Hallways lead off into further rooms and a magnificent spiral staircase climbs to an upper floor.

A voice from above:

MAN'S VOICE (O.S.)
Gerry! Welcome back!

A stout, Indian man - SIR BALJEET - descends the stairs. His grey beard and wrinkles reveal his age, but his eyes convey a youthful twinkle. He wears a multicolored robe and carries an ornate purple staff.

GERALD
Sir Baljeet.

SIR BALJEET
My boy. How long has it been,
Gerry?

GERALD
Well...erm, a few years, certainly.
I go by Gerald now. My life's been
quite hectic. I've been dealing
with this piece-of-work client
who's driving me up a wall...

Gerlad realizes Baljeet is not listening, but grinning absent-mindedly.

GERALD (CONT'D)
Anyhow, I would love if we could
speak privately -

SIR BALJEET
 Would you like a tour? Come with
 me.

Baljeet turns and shuffles away. Confused, Gerald follows.

INT. LICORICE LANDING

They pass through an archway labelled LICORICE LANDING. The floor squishes under their feet.

GERALD
 The floor...is this actual -

SIR BALJEET
 Licorice is one of the softest
 candies there is. Watch out!

A small girl drops from the upper landing, colliding with Gerald and knocking him to the floor. She hops up and runs off, giggling. Gerald looks up to see Baljeet, hand extended, chuckling.

INT. CHOCOLATE CHURCH

The pair enter a miniature temple with brown walls. Gerald has to duck to squeeze through the door.

GERALD
 You built a...

SIR BALJEET
 Chocolate Church!

GERALD
 These walls are real chocolate?

SIR BALJEET
 A substitute I'm afraid. My
 architect informed me the risk of
 melting was too high. Please,
 kneel.

He gestures to the front of the church where several children were knelt, praying. Baljeet joins them. Gerald does not.

SIR BALJEET (CONT'D)
 You must pray to the chocolate
 gods.

GERALD
 I'm not going to do that.

SIR BALJEET
Suit yourself.

After a few moments, a trapdoor opens under Gerald's feet. He shrieks as he plummets into a knee-high pit of melted chocolate. He peers up, annoyed, as Baljeet whimsically stares down at him and shrugs.

INT. CARAMEL CANYON

The two stroll side by side into the next room, Gerald's pants stained with chocolate.

GERALD
Sir Baljeet, we really need to
discuss your financial -

SIR BALJEET
And this is Caramel Canyon!

Gerald glances down the second before he steps over an enormous chasm splitting the room. He abruptly halts and nearly loses his balance. Baljeet, unperturbed, walks across the canyon, revealing it to be a realistic 3-D sketch. Breathing heavily, Gerald follows.

INT. AIR FRYER ROOM

The two enter another room. The back wall is lined with tables and air fryers, operated by employees. Children wait at each station.

SIR BALJEET
But I feel this will be my
legacy...fried candy bars!

GERALD
I'm getting a bad case of déjà vu -

SIR BALJEET
You don't understand, my friend!
That was deep frying -

GERALD
Wasn't a child hospitalized -

SIR BALJEET
He had pre-existing conditions, how
am I to be held liable - anyhow,
this is a totally different
concept! No oil, just circulated
hot air!

(MORE)

SIR BALJEET (CONT'D)

I got the idea when the health inspector said I was "full of hot air" -

GERALD

ENOUGH!

Silence. Everyone looks at him.

SIR BALJEET

You are right, my friend. I am not too in love with this fried candy idea -

GERALD

No, I mean enough is enough! Can we go somewhere private, please!

A beat. Baljeet nods once. He hobbles off, Gerald following.

INT. HALLWAY

They reach the end of a long hallway. Baljeet presses a button on his staff and a small entrance opens. Baljeet sits and disappears. It's a slide. Gerald is beyond frustrated.

INT. BASEMENT ROOM

Gerald zooms out the other end, collapsing into a ball pit. He stands, wipes off dust.

GERALD

Kids must love that.

SIR BALJEET

Oh, no. Employees only.

He flicks a switch and reveals a square room decorated similarly to the upper floors, albeit with dimmer lighting. Two chairs face each other in the center of the room. Baljeet sits. Gerald does the same.

GERALD

Baljeet, you're out of time. You are losing investors and losing money. You give out too much free product and splurge on ridiculous expenses. If you continue to operate at a loss you'll be bankrupt within a year. I'm sorry.

After a painfully long moment, Baljeet speaks.

SIR BALJEET

I once knew a bright-eyed young boy who insisted his father take him to this store each day after school. It was his favorite place to spend his afternoons. He explored every room, ran around like he owned the place. And every day he would eat a purple lollipop - his favorite treat.

(a beat)

Your father and I built this place for you, little Gerry. What happened?

Gerald is apparently unmoved.

GERALD

He died. And I grew up.

SIR BALJEET

Death. And growing up. The two greatest lies which crush the human spirit. Your father isn't dead, Gerry. I see him every morning when I open the shop. I saw him, today, when you walked in the store. I see him in this room, right now.

Gerald's face softens.

SIR BALJEET (CONT'D)

Your father and I created this shop from the shared belief that the fantasy of youth should be preserved. Growing up does not necessitate the sacrifice of hope and imagination, Gerry. These are traits fundamental to leading a fulfilling life.

Baljeet reaches into a pocket inside his robe. He pulls out a simple, purple lollipop. Holds it out to Gerald.

Gerald stands and takes it. Unwraps it. Puts it in his mouth. In that instant, years of forgotten memories come flooding back. He remembers what it's like to believe in magic and dreams and the limitless potential of imagination.

As Gerald breaks into tears, Baljeet stands and embraces him.

FADE OUT.

THE END