

"THE CHOCOLATE-BOX"

By

Giuliana Morello

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Giuliana Morello
MGM Independent Productions Ltd
16 Greys Hill
Henley on Thames
Oxon RG9 1SJ
ENGLAND

Tel +44 (0)1491 572482
Mob +44 (0)7964 539796

info@mgm-independentproductions.com
www.mgm-independentproductions.com

Background: Larry Jones is a successful and attractive media-tycoon in his early 50s who hasn't time to enjoy his home or wealth nor has any real friends, save Edward Rogers, a peaceful and quiet man and the only one of Larry's three business-associates not greedily hanging on his back for more clients. The spending of Larry's wealth is being taken care of by his wife Renée, a fortune-seeker who fooled him into marriage saying she was pregnant by him after a friend's stag-party. He was then engaged to his childhood sweetheart and still had dreams of yachting the world. In reality they were never intimate with each other but Larry has no memory of the night.

Soon after the wedding Renée said she had a miscarriage and used one of Larry's contacts, Dr. Kaufman, to have a hysterectomy done behind Larry's back. She doesn't know Larry was informed of this, however he has lost the dreams he once had and is only occupied to contain his 'world': the business, a growing wealth and success and a loveless but on pictures good marriage. This includes keeping his affair secret with Cleo Vargas, a successful Spanish-American art-dealer wishing to be the next Mrs. Jones. Larry has settled for less and Renée is as gelid as possible hoping to 'force' him into 'seeking affection elsewhere', catch him, divorce him and get his fortune. So far she is unaware of the affair and the closest he gets to his dream nowadays is a quick read in "Superyacht World".

The film begins (numbers corresponding to the music from the song list): (1.) It's a Monday in June in Paris and a Chocolatier hums Francis Lai's "A Man and a Woman" whilst making truffles in his shop.

Larry has just landed another mega-bucks contract with a new French client after a long business-weekend in Paris. On his way to the Chocolate shop he calls Cleo in London, fixes a rendezvous for that afternoon and heads for the airport after buying her and Renée each ten roses and a French-speaking chocolate box (which only we can hear).

On the plane he finishes off a vital presentation for a merger between the new French client and an existing big American client, saves the work on a USB-stick and tucks it in his jacket. Content he starts reading "Superyacht World" but is interrupted by a chatty passenger.

Back in London in his 'Volvo 1800', Larry writes: 'To a beautiful woman. XXX L' on both flower-cards and drives to "Portobello Hotel" (3.). After the encounter in room 109, Cleo wants confirmation that he will leave Renée. With no such intentions but plenty of natural charm he wiggles out of the question.

The same afternoon Cleo is to meet her friend Zara Reinhart for a coffee. Zara is a rude, eccentric celebrity and former actress in her late 50s who cheats on her husband with a myriad of toy-boys trying to stay 'young'. She married Harold Sinclair, a financial businessman, for money 30 years ago and has since walked all over him. With Renée wanting to get into charity to network with the 'elite' and Zara being hugely involved with charity-events, it is only a question of time before they will meet. So before leaving the hotel-room, Larry underlines the importance of Cleo's discretion about their affair. Later, Cleo has a few chocs and starts humming "A Man and a Woman".

Back home Renée is more interested in showing off the interior decorator's work than hearing Larry or giving his gifts any attention. His unusual suggestion of taking the Tuesday off for them to chill and celebrate the merger only excites her with the opportunity to shop - particularly for something to fill the void on the mantelpiece in the newly decorated lounge.

Larry donates to charities without bragging about it and sees most of the upper-class' charity-events as 'show-offs'. Renée brags about her 'good will' - a 3hr slot at the local charity-shop on a Saturday which she shares with Mrs. Pauline Dobson, a mature lady with a pink poodle called Fifi.

His attempts to chill by the pool with his "Superyacht World" is interrupted by Renée's constant and spiteful cooing over throws and cushions behind "The World of Interiors". He is even less relaxed when she mentions an invite from Mrs. Dobson to Zara's Charity Auction Ball in two days and he skirts the subject. Mrs. Dobson is unknowingly to Larry also Cleo's sporadic house-sitter.

Meanwhile, Zara comments on the government being Hitlerian about smoking and catches up with Cleo at a street-café. Zara tells of her affair with Glen Harris, a married record-producer her junior by several years, whilst Cleo stays secretive about

Larry. Instead she tells Zara about her merger with one of the biggest galleries in 'SoHo'-New York on Wednesday, in two days' time, and of the A-list celebrity-party she will throw in London on the Saturday for the pertinent artists before their work is couriered to the 'SoHo'-gallery. Cleo agrees as a favour to see Glen's wife Roxanne Jones, an undiscovered gifted Pop-Art painter, and her work at the party.

(4. and 5.) On the way back from the café Zara spots Geraldine Bailey, a jolly Bajan in her 30s, decorating her new fair trade shop. Geraldine invites them to the opening-party on the Thursday. Addicted to openings and premiers for press-attention's sake, Zara grabs a closer look but it's not to her liking. Geraldine only recognises Zara from a "National Lottery"-ad but knows instantly who Cleo is. A miffed Zara is however keen to attend the opening to get some press-attention. Upon acceptance to the opening-night the sky suddenly turns dark and it's the beginning of a record-breaking 4-day non-stop beating down with rain, but only over London.

(6. and 7.) Later Renée and Larry spend an evening in an intimate restaurant with good food and great live soul-music. Renée mentions Mrs. Dobson's invite to Zara's Charity Auction Ball again which Larry dismisses as 'snobbery'. (8.) They dance but when Renée senses a romantic tone building up she complains about an 'oncoming headache' and they leave. Back home with Renée asleep and the rain pouring down outside, Larry reflects over his life: the greed, his loveless marriage and squalid affair.

Early the following morning a Cleaner in room 109 finds a USB-stick. Not knowing what it is she puts it in her uniform-pocket next to the pocket with wet cloths.

It's now Tuesday. Dressed and ready to take Renée on cushion-and-throw-shopping, Larry is to send the important presentation to Edward for tomorrow morning's meeting with the American client, but can't find the USB-stick. Increasingly worried and with an impatient Renée, it dawns on him that he has lost it in the hotel-room and just about manages, behind Renée's back, to convince a very uncooperative receptionist to find out if they have found it.

In between the mundane choices of green or mauve throws, an edgy Larry learns from a call-back that the stick has been found and posted to Cleo who has left for New

York. Not being able to get into her house and with no solution, he is tense for the rest of the day and loses it when a rough sleeper on a rusty bike sways out in front of his car.

(5.) The following morning Larry waits in his car for the postman outside Cleo's house, only to his horror see Mrs. Dobson making her way down the stairs with Fifi under her arm, signing for a jiffy-bag containing Larry's USB-stick. Defeated he drives back to the office, on the way noticing a queue of rough sleepers outside the "Salvation Army" waiting for free breakfast. In the queue also the elderly rough sleeper conversing with a younger one when he notices Larry driving past.

Larry tries blagging his way through the meeting but the fuming Texan client, Johnny Hart from "Hart Cosmetics", storms out with his nipped, tucked and hugely busted 'assistant' giving Larry 48hrs before suing him and his associates who, save Edward, show no mercy. No closer to a solution Larry goes for a walk in the rain in the 'West End', takes up smoking again and puffs with a double brandy.

On overhearing a conversation where a woman prompts her friend to divorce and take everything from her husband, Larry leaves the fags and brandy behind. He gets a take-away coffee, buys "The Big Issue" and heads for 'St James Park', on the way tucking money into a "RSPCA"-Collector's can.

His destiny is about to change when he finds the elderly rough sleeper, who is having a heart-attack, and gives him first aid in 'St James Park'.

Seeing the ambulance off he strolls back and in a strange way happier than in a long time. Larry notices a teenage- mother entering "McDonalds" shouting to her young kids that she can't afford taking them to "Legoland". He decides to have his first 'fast food' in over 20 years.

Sitting a few tables away from the teenage-mother and thoroughly enjoying his big lunch, he blows bubbles into his "Coke" whilst reading "The Big Issue". The kids are amused by him and play with their toys nearby. When their mum shouts them back the girl drops a set of toy-keys on a heart-shaped key-ring and everything stops for Larry who suddenly realises he has the solution. After profusely thanking the baffled mother he gives her £200 asking her to take the kids to "Legoland" and rushes out.

Back at his office he furiously pulls out all drawers from his desk, eventually finding a forgotten birthday-card from Cleo with her house-key on a heart-shaped key-ring. Larry phones Renée saying he'll be working late and, putting his marriage at risk, suggests she goes to the auction with Mrs. Dobson, thus assuring Cleo's house to be empty. Content and exhausted he lies down for a quick nap but falls asleep.

(2.) Later Renée takes The Chocolate Box with her as a last minute gift to Zara. From the taxi she notices the younger rough sleeper going through a bin. Cold and untouched she touches up her lipstick.

(10.) Dr. Kaufman is a friend of Zara's and greets the guests at the door, helping with their outer garments. He recognises Renée and takes care of her coney-cape but she, keen to get into the 'elite-world', doesn't notice him. Whilst Larry is deep asleep Renée's life starts taking a different turn: Mrs. Dobson introduces her to some key-people landing Renée four invitations to prestigious events around the country and Baron Hackenbacker, a crazy gentleman in a kilt with a bought title, falls head over heels for Renée. To top it all off Renée finally finds the missing perfect object for her mantelpiece, a vase from Cleo's gallery "Republica". She memorises the name and decides to visit it.

Exiting the Ladies sometime later, she hears the sound of a private party down the corridor and nears the door. Caught by Zara she is dragged into the inner circle's boudoir-party headed by Lynda Lainchbury, a Botoxed socialite and fortune-seeker going on her 6th marriage, and Renée accidentally has cocaine-contaminated Champagne. After listening to some gossip, including Cleo's affair with a secret and unnamed married media-tycoon, an invitation to Zara's after-party and her welcome-gift to Renée: a cardholder with the best escorts, surgeons, drug-dealers and divorce-lawyers in London, she returns high and drunk to Mrs. Dobson.

With coke- and champagne-based confidence, Renée brags proudly to Mrs. Dobson on the terrace how she fooled Larry into marrying her: Larry was a hard worker and soon became a self-made millionaire in the media-world but was already engaged to his childhood sweetheart. Renée tracked him down at a stag-party, got him drunk and took him back to hers and the morning after pretended they had had a 'one-night

stand'. Larry left ashamed in the morning and a month later she contacted him saying she was pregnant. Renée adds to the shocked Mrs. Dobson that she can't stand children and that all she waits for is to discover him having an affair so she can divorce him and take everything. Dr. Kaufman has been out on the terrace all the time for some fresh air hearing Renée's bragging and perceives she doesn't recognise him. Amused he doesn't protest when she calls him over, still thinking he is a 'mere' Butler, ordering him to get some more Champagne.

(11.) Later Mrs. Dobson leaves and the usually rigid Renée is lavished with Champagne at the after-party and flattered to take coke for the first time (12.) dances madly to go-go music. (12. conts/...) Meanwhile Larry wakes up late and drives furiously to Cleo's where he sets off a silent alarm to the Police. He then has an accident with Cleo's ascorbic acid in powder-form, covering himself in it from top to toe, wakes up Mrs. Dobson and Fifi, escapes with the jiffy-bag and chased by Fifi in the back-garden throws himself over a 3mtrs high wall breaking his tibia.

Mrs. Dobson tells the two patient PCs on the doorstep how much Larry reminds her of "Bond", from the back, and how her passed away husband looked just like Roger Moore. Meanwhile Larry, covered in ascorbic acid powder, escapes in agony to a hospital where they initially believe him to have a coke-problem.

Renée returns home high and drunk and has forgotten her coney-cape at Zara's.

A few hours later, now Thursday, she wakes up by a call from the hospital and visits Larry who is high on morphine and sedatives and shares a room with Duncan Floyd, a Barry Manilow tribute-artist.

The austere nurse, Hilary Maguire tells a paranoid Renée they can help with cocaine-addictions and Dr. Bakshi, a quirky Sikh, tells her to her disappointment that Larry will be out in a few days.

(13.) A few hours later Larry wakes up horrified after a morphine- and sedative-induced romantic dream about Edward, with the backing of Duncan singing loudly "Can't Smile without You" and demands a room to himself. Edward arrives with a bunch of flowers and Larry's laptop and they send off the report to Johnny Hart, safely retrieved from the USB-stick.

That evening Renée falls for the temptation to open Larry's credit card-statement and goes to bed happily, having realised the amount spent on chocolates and roses is too high for one box and bunch alone.

(2.) Meanwhile Zara goes to Geraldine's opening-party. She only eats posh chocolate from shops in 'Kensington' so she gives Geraldine The Chocolate Box. Harold puts his business-card in a bowl to win a throw and Geraldine makes advances on him not knowing it's Zara's husband. Zara gets irritated when she realises the press has been and gone. There's no Champagne and a child drops a taco on her shoe. Zara loses it and when not allowed to smoke she storms out followed by an embarrassed Harold.

The next morning, now Friday, after having passed Cleo's shut gallery for the vase Renée brings Larry some clothes and apologises about the opened post saying she did it in error. Suspecting Renée might be onto something Larry has a file couriered to him which has been in a deposit-lock for seven years.

(17.) In the evening Duncan gets the whole ward into a "Copacabana" number which Larry thoroughly enjoys from his wheelchair. For the first time in years Larry feels alive and goes through the contents of the file: a prenup, a copy of Renée's hysterectomy-journal signed by Dr. Kaufman and a faded photo of him, his childhood sweetheart, his brother and his dad by a big boat called "Free Spirit". Sorrowful he caresses the woman's face when he learns the rough sleeper he gave CPR to didn't make it and that his son lives and thrives in Monaco. When also hearing that Duncan moved to London to be closer to his son, whose only interest is his business, Larry realises what really matters to him. He looks at the superyacht in the magazine and calls his Dad for the first time in years, asking him to come on a fishing-trip. (20.) Suddenly the non-stop rain subdues and Larry contacts an old friend top-lawyer and Dr. Kaufman whilst the sunset breaks through the clouds.

In the meantime Roxanne's husband Glen is in Paris with Zara under the pretences of promoting his latest band. Geraldine gets invited to Roxanne's 40th Pop-Art birthday-bash by their friend in common Rufus Diaz, a gay Spanish designer who loves quoting wisdom in Latin. (2.) Being only into fair trade chocolate and not knowing what to bring she gives Roxanne The Chocolate Box (18.-21.).

From his hospital-bed the next morning, Saturday, and after having made new plans with Edward, Larry announces to his angry associates that he is selling the lot.

(2., 22. and 23.) In the evening Roxanne arrives with her portfolio to Cleo's bizarre Warholesque party including breakdancing pink Pigalle-girls and neon-painted waiters. She doesn't want the 'R. Harris' badge offered at the door and insists on her artist-name 'Roxy Jones' being written on it but gets one saying 'R. Jones'. Roxanne leaves her portfolio at the cloak-room with a crew by a big flight-case who points her to Cleo's direction. Believing she is one of the artists, they haul her artwork into the flight-case which is to be couriered the next day for the sister-gallery in N.Y. Being a vegetarian and unsure of what to bring, Roxanne gives Cleo The Chocolate Box. Glen has many of Cleo's paintings in his recording-studio so Roxanne tells Cleo excitedly how much her husband has told her about Cleo. Staring at the box and Roxanne's badge Cleo concludes 'R. Jones' stands for 'Renée Jones' and reduces Roxanne to tears who runs for the door forgetting her portfolio behind. Meanwhile Cleo screams down the mob to a content Larry that it's over.

Back home between dodgy taxis and walking miles, Roxanne discovers Glen with Zara and bolts back out heartbroken. Her close friend Rufus comes to her aid. The following night, Sunday, whilst drowning her sorrows with too many tequilas, the nutty Douglas Quinn from the New York-gallery calls her saying he loves her work and has booked her on a N.Y.-flight for the next day (24.).

The following day, now Monday, Renée aims for Cleo's gallery to buy the vase and nips into Geraldine's shop on the way. Further down the street she sees a poster at a gallery about an exhibition of Roxanne's and crosses the teenage-mother from "McDonalds" on the street, overhearing her conversation about wanting to get back into education. Meanwhile Douglas tells a baffled Cleo on the phone how much he loves Roxy Jones' work.

Renée enters the gallery and after a brief chat realises the vase has to be commissioned for her, (2.) Cleo needs her details and whilst giving Cleo Larry's business-card, Renée spots the two chocolate boxes and identical roses on Cleo's desk. The penny drops for both of them, Cleo falls flat whilst Renée strides out victoriously already spending Larry's divorce-settlement in her head. Strutting down

the street her joy is short-lived when Zara returns her call about the forgotten coney-cape. Laughing Zara explains that she has her cape but no Butler and that her friend Dr. Kaufman passed by with it sending his regards to Renée.

(26.) Later that evening Roxanne disappears in high spirits into the crowded streets of 'Broadway' heading for 'SoHo'.

(The credits start rolling.)

A swirling "Hello Magazine" tells about 'Charity-Angel' Renée and Larry Jones' amicable divorce. Another of Harold divorcing Zara for her multiple affairs. "FT" reports on Larry, Edward and Harold joining forces for a trust aiding "Help the Aged", "NSPCA", "RSPCA" and fair trade issues.

(Quick shots reveal:)

Harold marrying Geraldine and Rufus catching the flowers. Renée having to settle for less with no money from the divorce and becoming an item with Baron Hackenbacker.

(Last shot:)

In the south of France, Larry with his Dad and a Marina-attendant signs off papers by a 37mtrs superyacht called "Free Spirit II". Whilst the yacht cruises out on the sea for a test-drive, a woman by the stern of a smaller boat called "Free Spirit" looks up, sees it and smiles. It's the same woman and boat as on Larry's faded photograph, his childhood sweetheart.

The End