

Great Books Guy

Reading The Classics

The Twilight Zone: Season 2, Episode Two "The Man In The Bottle"

Posted on [23 Jun 2021](#)

Original Air Date: October 7, 1960

Writer: Rod Serling

Director: Don Medford



Influenced by the *One Thousand and One Nights* and W. W. Jacobs' short story "The Monkey's Paw," this episode of *The Twilight Zone* explores an amusing hypothetical question: what if a genie granted you four wishes?

"Mr. and Mrs. Arthur Castle, gentle and infinitely patient people whose lives have been a hope chest with a rusty lock and a lost set of keys. But in just a moment that hope chest will be opened and an improbable phantom will try to bedeck the drabness of these two people's failure laden lives with the gold and precious stones of fulfillment. Mr. and Mrs. Arthur Castle, standing on the outskirts and about to enter the Twilight Zone."

–Rod Serling

We enter into an old antique shop owned by Arthur Castle (played by Luther Adler). He and his wife are poor and indebted but when an elderly woman enters the shop one day their fortunes change. The elderly woman pleads with Arthur for him to buy an old wine bottle she found in a trash can, reluctantly he takes pity and buys the bottle. When she leaves, Arthur and his wife discover that the bottle contains a genie who emerges in a mist offers them four wishes. The genie takes on the visage of a dapper, shifty 1950s American businessman, played by Joseph Ruskin.



To test the genie's power, they use their first wish to repair a broken glass cabinet. When it works, Arthur gets excited and asks for a million dollars in cash. Suddenly, a mountain of bills appears in the middle of the shop and Arthur starts giving away thousands of dollars to his friends. However, an IRS agent shows up and delivers a sizable tax bill to Arthur. In the end, Arthur and his wife are left with a mere \$5. His dream of becoming rich is neither as glamorous nor as easy as it once seemed.

After considering his next wish, Arthur asks to be made into a world leader who is immune to the pesky laws of the IRS. The genie smiles and Arthur is transformed into Adolf Hitler trapped in a bunker during his final moments of life. A Nazi soldier rushes in and hands him a vial of cyanide in which to commit suicide. In terror and desperation, Arthur uses his final wish to be returned to his old life. When he reappears in his shop the bottle falls and breaks upon the floor. His life, despite near impoverishment, does not seem so bad anymore. Armed with a new perspective, Arthur begins cleaning up and he notices the repaired cabinet window but he accidentally breaks again. He dumps the broken shards of the bottle into the trash where it magically transforms into a complete wine bottle again, ready for the next person to come along and unleash the genie. This episode contains some wonderful cinematography by the great George T. Clemens, but as Marc Scott Zicree notes this episode was a "pretty pale affair" and not "terribly interesting."

"A word to the wise, now, to the garbage collectors of the world, to the curio seekers, to the antique buffs, to everyone who would try to coax out a miracle from unlikely places. Check that bottle you're taking back for a two-cent deposit. The genie you save might be your own. Case in point, Mr. and Mrs. Arthur Castle, fresh from the briefest of trips into The Twilight Zone."
 -Rod Serling

The Twilight Zone Trivia:

- Luther Adler previously had portrayed Hitler in two 1951 feature films.

- Joseph Ruskin also performs the voice of Kanamit in the Season Three episode "To Serve Man." He later appeared in Rod Serling's *Night Gallery* in an episode "The Messiah on Mott Street."
- The bulk of this episode is shot entirely inside the tiny antique store.

[Click here to return to my survey of *The Twilight Zone* series.](#)

This entry was posted in **Twilight Zone** by **Great Books Guy**. Bookmark the **permalink** [<https://greatbooksguy.com/2021/06/23/the-twilight-zone-season-2-episode-two-the-man-in-the-bottle/>].