

Scene 1

*(Robert Louis Stevenson enters as the "Storyteller," walking as though on a hillside path on the island of Hawaii.)*

STORYTELLER

There was a man of the Island of Hawaii, whom I shall call Keawe. He still lives, and his name must be kept secret.

*(Keawe enters, and Storyteller watches him walk down another path to the sea.)*

STORYTELLER (Cont'd)

He was poor, brave, and could read and write like a schoolmaster. A first-rate mariner besides, he sailed on the island steamers and steered a whaleboat on the Hamakua coast.

*(Keawe strides across the stage, looking out to the horizon, as though sailing.)*

STORYTELLER (Cont'd)

To have a sight of the great world, Keawe shipped on a vessel bound to San Francisco.

*(Sound of ships' horns in a seaport. Keawe crosses as though into city from a dock and strolls the street.)*

KEAWE

A fine town, a fine harbor, and rich people uncountable. What a hill: covered with palaces!

STORYTELLER

And one day, Keawe walked upon this hill with his pocket full of money.

KEAWE

What fine houses! And how happy must those people be who dwell in them, with no care for the morrow!

*(An Rich Man appears inside a house, as Keawe approaches.)*

STORYTELLER

He stopped at a house, smaller than some, but whose steps shone like silver and whose windows were bright like diamonds. An elderly man looked at him through a window so clear that Keawe could see him as you see a fish in a pool upon the reef.

KEAWE

His face is heavy with sorrow.

STORYTELLER

And the truth of it is, Keawe and the man envied each other.

*(The Rich Man smiles and beckons Keawe to come in and meets Keawe at the door.)*

RICH MAN

*(Sighing.)*

Would you not care to view the chambers?

*(He leads an astonished Keawe through it.)*

KEAWE

Truly, if I lived in this beautiful house, I should be laughing all day long. How comes it, then, that you should be sighing?

RICH MAN

There is no reason why you should not have a house similar to this, and finer, if you wish. You have some money, I suppose?

KEAWE

Fifty dollars. But such a house will cost more.

RICH MAN

I am sorry you have no more, for it may raise you trouble in the future; but it shall be yours at fifty dollars.

KEAWE

The house?

RICH MAN

No, the bottle. I must tell you that all my fortune, and this house itself and its garden, came out of a bottle not much bigger than a pint.

STORYTELLER

And he opened a lockfast place and took out a round-bellied bottle with a long neck.

*(The Rich Man turns, as if opening a locked cabinet, and then presents the bottle.)*

KEAWE

White glass like milk, with changing rainbow colours. What moves inside, like a shadow or a fire?

*(The Rich Man holds it to him. Keawe laughs.)*

RICH MAN

You do not believe me? Try, then, for yourself. See if you can break it.

*(Keawe throws the bottle on the floor several times, but it bounces like a ball and doesn't break.)*

KEAWE

*(Handing the bottle back to the man.)*

A strange thing: for by the touch of it, as well as the look, the bottle should be of glass.

RICH MAN

Of glass it is.

*(Sighing heavily.)*

Glass tempered in the flames of hell. An imp lives in it: the shadow we behold there moving. If any man buy this bottle the imp is at his command; all that he desires—love, fame, money, houses like this house, ay, or a city like this city—all are his at the word uttered. Napoleon had this bottle, and by it he grew to be the king of the world; but he sold it at the last, and fell. Captain Cook had this bottle, and by it he found his way to so many islands; but he, too, sold it, and was slain upon Hawaii. For, once it is sold, the power goes and the protection; and unless a man remain content with what he has, ill will befall him.

KEAWE

Yet you talk of selling it yourself?

RICH MAN

I have all I wish, and I am growing elderly. There is one thing the imp cannot do—he cannot prolong life. If a man die before he sells it, he must burn in hell forever.

KEAWE

I would not meddle with the thing. I can do without a house, thank God; but there is one thing I could not be doing, and that is to be damned.

RICH MAN

Dear me, all you have to do is to use the power of the imp in moderation, and then sell it to someone else, as I do to you, and finish your life in comfort.

KEAWE

Well, I observe two things. All the time you keep sighing like a maid in love, and, you sell this bottle very cheap.

RICH MAN

I have told you already why I sigh: because my health is breaking. As you said yourself, to die and go to the devil is a pity for anyone. As for why I sell so cheap, I must explain a peculiarity about the bottle. Long ago, when the devil brought it first upon earth, it was extremely expensive and was sold first for many millions of dollars; but it cannot be sold

RICH MAN (Cont'd)

at all, unless sold at a loss. If you sell it for as much as you paid for it, back it comes to you again like a homing pigeon. The price has kept falling and the bottle is now remarkably cheap. I bought it from one of my great neighbours, and I paid only ninety dollars. Now, about this there are two bothers. First, when you offer a bottle so singular for eighty odd dollars, people suppose you to be jesting. And second—but there is no hurry about that—I need not go into it. Only remember it must be coined money that you sell it for.

KEAWE

How am I to know that this is all true?

RICH MAN

Some of it you can try at once. Give me your fifty dollars, take the bottle, and wish your fifty dollars back into your pocket.

KEAWE

Well, I will risk that much, for that can do no harm.

*(Keawe exchanges money for the bottle.)*

KEAWE (Cont'd)

Imp of the bottle, I want my fifty dollars back.

*(Keawe finds coins in his pocket.)*

KEAWE (Cont'd)

To be sure this is a wonderful bottle.

RICH MAN

And now good morning to you, my fine fellow, and the devil go with you!

KEAWE

Hold on, I don't want any more of this fun. Here, take your bottle back.

RICH MAN

You bought it for less than I paid for it. It is your now; and, for my part, I am only concerned to see the back of you.

*(Old Man calls for servant, who shows Keawe out the door.)*

STORYTELLER

Now in the street, with the bottle under his arm, Keawe began to think.

KEAWE

Perhaps the man was only fooling me.

*(Keawe counts the sum of his money.)*

KEAWE

Forty-nine dollars American money, and one Chili piece. That looks like the truth.

STORYTELLER

The streets in that part of the city were as clean as a ship's decks, and though it was noon, there were no passengers. Keawe set the bottle in the gutter and walked away.

*(Keawe places the bottle and looks back at it twice when moving off.)*

STORYTELLER (Cont'd)

And there was the milky bottle where he left it.

*(Keawe looks back and quickly turns the corner. He feels a weight in his pocket.)*

STORYTELLER (Cont'd)

Behold! It was jammed into the pocket of his pilot-coat.

KEAWE

*(Looking at bottle.)*

And that looks like the truth.

STORYTELLER

He began to shake and sweat, for he was afraid of that bottle.

*(Shop owner enters with shelf and puts sales objects on it.)*

STORYTELLER (Cont'd)

On his way to the port-side was a shop which sold shells and clubs from the wild islands.

*(Keawe offers the bottle to the shop owner.)*

KEAWE

A hundred dollars.

SHOP OWNER

*(Laughing.)*

Five.

*(Keawe reaches for the bottle, but the owner handles it.)*

SHOP OWNER (Cont'd)

Indeed, it is a curious bottle—never blown in any human glassworks. Sixty dollars.

*(Owner gives Keawe sixty silver dollars. Keawe exits the shop. The owner collects objects, including bottle and exits with the shelf.)*

KEAWE

Now, I have sold that for sixty which I bought for fifty—or, a little less—one of my dollars was from Chili. I shall know the truth upon another point.

*(Keawe goes to his ship.)*

Scene 2

STORYTELLER

Back on board his ship, he opened his chest.

*(Keawe opens chest.)*

KEAWE

The bottle.

STORYTELLER

It had come more quickly than himself.

*(Lopaka enters Keawe's ship compartment.)*

STORYTELLER (Cont'd)

Now Keawe had a mate on board named Lopaka.

LOPAKA

What ails you?

STORYTELLER

Keawe bound him to secrecy, and told all.

LOPAKA

Very strange, and I fear you will be in trouble about this bottle. Make up your mind what you want with it; give the order, and if it is done as you desire, I will buy the bottle myself; for I have an idea of my own to get a schooner, and go trading through the islands.

KEAWE

My idea is to have a beautiful house and garden on the Kona Coast, where I was born, the sun shining in at the door, flowers in the garden, glass in the windows, pictures on the walls, for all the world like the house I was in this day—only a story higher, and with balconies all about like the king's palace—to live there without care and make merry with my friends and relatives.

LOPAKA

Well, let us carry it back to Hawaii. If all comes true, I will buy the bottle, as I said, and ask a schooner.

*(Sound: steamer ship's horn.)*

STORYTELLER

They were agreed, and it was not long before the ship returned to Honolulu, carrying Keawe and Lopaka, and the bottle.

Scene 3

*(Keawe and Lopaka descend from boat and meet an entering neighbor.)*

STORYTELLER

They were scarce come ashore when they met a friend upon the beach, who began at once to condole with Keawe.

KEAWE

I do not know what I am to be condoled about.

NEIGHBOR

*(Embracing Keawe.)*

Is it possible you have not heard, your uncle—that good old man—is dead? And your cousin—that beautiful boy—was drowned at sea!

*(Keawe weeps, as the neighbor exits.)*

LOPAKA

Had not your uncle lands in Hawaii, in the district of Kau?

KEAWE

Not in Kau; they are on the mountain side—a little way south of Hookena.

LOPAKA

These lands will now be yours?

KEAWE

So they will.

LOPAKA

Do not lament. Is this the doing of the bottle? Here is the place ready for your house.

KEAWE

A very ill way to serve me by killing my relatives! But, indeed, it was in just such a station that I saw the house with my mind's eye.

LOPAKA

The house, however, is not yet built.

KEAWE

No, nor like to be! For though my uncle has some coffee and bananas, it will not be more than will keep me in comfort. The rest of that land is the black lava.

LOPAKA

Let us go to the lawyer.

*(They go to an office, where lawyer greets them.)*

STORYTELLER

Now, when they came to the lawyer's, it appeared Keawe's uncle had grown monstrous rich in the last days, and there was a fund of money.

*(Lawyer hands Keawe an envelope.)*

LOPAKA

And here is the money for the house!

LAWYER

*(Handing Keawe a card.)*

Here is the card of a new architect, of whom they tell me great things.

LOPAKA

Better and better! Let us continue to obey orders.

*(They go to architect's office; he enters and shows drawings to them.)*

ARCHITECT

How do you like this?

KEAWE

My thoughts exactly drawn. I am in for this house.

*(To himself.)*

Little as I like the way it comes to me, I may as well take the good along with the evil.

STORYTELLER

So he told the architect how he would have that house furnished, and he asked plainly how much for the whole affair. The architect made a computation, and he named the very sum that Keawe had inherited.



KEAWE

It is quite clear that I am to have this house, whether or no. It comes from the devil, and of one thing I am sure: I will make no more wishes as long as I have this bottle.

*(Keawe signs with the architect, who exits. Keawe and Lopaka go to a boat. Sound: a steamer's horn.)*

STORYTELLER

Keawe and Lopaka took ship again and sailed to Australia, leaving the architect and the bottle imp to build and to adorn that house at their own pleasure. The voyage was a good one, only all the time Keawe was holding his breath, for he had sworn he would utter no more wishes, and take no more favours from the devil.

Scene 4

STORYTELLER

The time was up when they got back; the house was ready, and Keawe and Lopaka went down Kona way to see if all had been done fitly.

*(Keawe and Lopaka leave boat and take path to house.)*

STORYTELLER (Cont'd)

Now, the house stood on the mountain side, visible to ships. Above, the forest ran up into the clouds of rain; below, the black lava fell in cliffs, where the kings of old lay buried. As for the house,

KEAWE

Three stories high, with great chambers and broad balconies on each.

LOPAKA

Windows of glass, as clear as water and as bright as day.

KEAWE

Balconies so broad that a whole town might live upon them in delight!

STORYTELLER

And Keawe knew not which to prefer,

KEAWE

The back porch, with the land breeze and view of the orchards and flowers, or the front balcony, where you drink the wind of the sea, and see the schooners playing up the coast for wood and bananas.

*(Keawe and Lopaka sit.)*

LOPAKA

Well, is it all as you designed?

KEAWE

Better than I dreamed, and I am sick with satisfaction.

LOPAKA

All this may be quite natural, and the bottle imp have nothing to say to it. Consider: if I were to buy the bottle, and got no schooner after all, I should have put my hand in the fire for nothing. I gave you my word, I know; but do not grudge me one more proof.

KEAWE

I have sworn I would take no more favours. I have gone already deep enough.

LOPAKA

No favour. Only to see the imp himself. There is nothing to be gained by that, and so nothing to be ashamed of; and yet, if I once saw him, I should be sure of the whole matter. Indulge me, and, after that, here is the money in my hand: I will buy it.

KEAWE

The imp may be very ugly to view. If you once set eyes upon him you might be very undesirous of the bottle.

LOPAKA

I am a man of my word.

*(Handing Keawe money.)*

Here is the money betwixt us.

KEAWE

Very well.

*(Picking up the bottle.)*

I have a curiosity myself. So come, let us have one look at you, Mr. Imp.

*(Keawe sets the bottle down and opens the top.)*

STORYTELLER

Now, the imp looked out of the bottle, and in again, swift as a lizard.

*(Keawe and Lopaka sit, stunned.)*

STORYTELLER (Cont'd)

Night had quite come, before either found a thought to say or voice to say it with.

*(Lopaka takes the bottle.)*

LOPAKA

A man of my word and had need be so, or I would not touch this bottle with my foot. Well, I shall get my schooner and a dollar to two for my pocket. Then I will be rid of this devil as fast as I can. The look of him has cast me down.

KEAWE

Lopaka, do not think any worse of me. It is night, the roads bad, and the pass by the tombs an ill place to go by so late, but I declare since I have seen that little face, I cannot eat or sleep or pray till it is gone from me.

*(Keawe gets lantern and gives it to Lopaka with a basket.)*

KEAWE (Cont'd)

A lantern and basket to put the bottle in—and any fine thing in all my house that takes your fancy. Be gone at once, and sleep at Hookena.

LOPAKA

Keawe, many a man would take this ill; above all, when I am doing you a turn so friendly. But I am so extremely terrified myself, I have not the heart to blame you. Here I go then; and I pray God you may be happy in your house, and I fortunate with my schooner, and both get to heaven in the end in spite of the devil and his bottle.

*(Lopaka exits as if down the mountain.)*

STORYTELLER

So Keawe stood on the front balcony and watched the lantern go shining down the path and along the cliff of caves where the old dead are buried, and he prayed for his friend and that he himself was . . .

KEAWE

*(Sitting.)*

Escaped out of that trouble.

*(Keawe lies down to sleep.)*

Scene 5

*(Keawe stands, stretches and looks out over balcony.)*

STORYTELLER

But the next day came very brightly, and his new house was so delightful that he forgot his terrors. One day followed another, and Keawe dwelt there in perpetual joy. The fame

STORYTELLER (Cont'd)

of the house went far and wide: it was called *Ka-Hale Nui*—the Great House—and sometimes the Bright House.

*(Servant 2 enters, dusting and cleaning.)*

STORYTELLER (Cont'd)

For Keawe had a Chinaman, who was all day furbishing the glass and the fine stuffs until they were bright as morning. And Keawe could not walk in the chambers without singing, his heart was so enlarged.

*(Keawe hums.)*

STORYTELLER (Cont'd)

So time went by, until Keawe went upon a visit to certain of his friends in Kailua.

*(Keawe travels to eat with a couple of friends.)*

STORYTELLER (Cont'd)

There he was well feasted, but left early the next morning, impatient to behold his beautiful house.

*(Keawe, returning home, sees a distant figure near the shore.)*

STORYTELLER (Cont'd)

Beyond Honaunau, he saw a woman bathing in the edge of the sea.

*(Kokua comes, dressed, and stops to greet him.)*

STORYTELLER (Cont'd)

By the time he came abreast of her, she stood by the track-side in her red holoku. She was freshened with the bath, and her eyes shone and were kind.

KEAWE

I thought I knew everyone in this country. How comes it that I do not know you?

KOKUA

I am Kokua, daughter of Kiano, and I have just returned from Oahu. Who are you?

KEAWE

I will tell you in a little, for if you knew who I was, you might have heard of me and not give me a true answer. Tell me: are you married?

KOKUA

*(Laughing.)*

It is you who ask questions. Are you married yourself?