

WATSON. (*To us.*) To Sherlock Holmes she was always *the* woman. I have seldom heard him mention her under any other name. In his eyes she eclipsed and predominated the whole of her sex.

(The voices on stage rise to beauty in the La Bohème duet "O soave fanciulla.")

He first saw Miss Adler from his box at the Royal Opera House in Covent Garden. I happened to glance at him at the time and it was obvious that – quite uncharacteristically for a man who feared that emotion might ever interfere with his reason – he was smitten by her instantly.

At the time, he had no occasion to speak with her – nor did he during our frequent visits to the opera that

* A

season. But he would say, much later, after the case in question had reached its unexpected, shocking conclusion, that despite her beauty, or perhaps because of it, she was a woman destined for a tragic end.

(We hear the sounds of a London street of the period: the pleasant clip-clopping of the horses and the tolling of bells.)

The case began on a cheerful sunlit morning at 221B Baker Street, the address I was sharing once again with Sherlock Holmes. My wife of four years had passed away suddenly in the Spring of that year, and I had moved back into our digs with a heavy heart that had at last begun to heal, in no small part thanks to the presence of my dear friend, Sherlock Holmes. To others he was a hero of great fame, but to me, he was simply my best friend.