

# Better Holmes and Watson

## The Granada Series Reviewed

**A SCANDAL IN BOHEMIA**  
**Adaptation: Alexander Baron**  
**Direction: Paul Annett**

Night. A bijou villa, called Briony Lodge, in Serpentine Avenue, St. John's Wood. The contents of a desk are examined by furtive fingers. On the wall, a portrait of an extraordinarily lovely woman is slashed beyond repair; whether it is done out of spite, or to reveal to criminal eyes what lies between portrait and wall, is open to question. Suddenly, Fingers and Eyes are caught red-handed by a servant of the house and his gun-wielding mistress. Panicked, the miscreants take wing.

It is a typical evening in the home of Miss Irene Adler, the New Jersey native, the retired prima donna of the Imperial Opera of Warsaw, the adventuress, the woman.

Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's "A Scandal In Bohemia", published after the introductory novels *A Study In Scarlet* and *The Sign*

*of Four*, is the short story that made Sherlock Holmes a hit; fittingly, Granada TV chose to broadcast their adaptation of the tale as the first episode of the series *THE ADVENTURES OF SHERLOCK HOLMES*. Following the Briony Lodge prologue, *THE ADVENTURES* deftly establishes its credentials: we arrive with Dr. Watson at 221B Baker Street, are met at the door by Mrs. Hudson, and climb the stairs to find Sherlock Holmes brooding in his rooms. Reference is made to Holmes' preferred seven percent solution of cocaine and Watson's war wound (but not to the precise location of that peripatetic injury). Reference is made, too, to Watson's hearty appetite, a personality trait that will be made much of in future episodes. It remains only for Holmes to produce a letter from Wilhelm Gottsreich Sigismond von Ormstein, Grand Duke of Cassel-Felstein and hereditary King of Bohemia, to launch us into the well-loved tale of the Great Detective's encounter with Miss Irene Adler, a beauty "of dubious and questionable memory". Miss Adler has in



*A romantic encounter between opera star Irene Adler (Gayle Hunnicutt) and the King of Bohemia (Wolf Kahler) inaugurates Granada Television International's THE ADVENTURES OF SHERLOCK HOLMES.*

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*Jeremy Brett*

her possession a damaging photograph of herself and the King. Five attempts have been made by the King's agents to retrieve the evidence; now his Majesty has turned to Holmes as a last resort. Holmes takes the case and, by story's end, finds himself thoroughly bested by the woman in question.

Irene Adler's participation in a Sherlock Holmes movie is usually the occasion for misguided filmmakers to fabricate a romance between the friendly antagonists; happily, Granada avoids the temptation. Dramatist Alexander Baron also has the good sense to stress a vital link between Holmes and Miss Adler: their passionate love of music. Early in the episode, Holmes remarks to Watson that the case "...must be settled by Friday. The composer Tchaikovsky's conducting his own works at the St. James Hall." Later, a disguised Holmes lingers outside Briony Lodge and listens to Irene Adler singing within; thus, a musical bond is forged before the characters meet face to face.

From the start, Gayle Hunnicutt cements Granada's reputation for definitive interpretations of the Conan Doyle characters. Whether surprising two thieves in the night or dressing in male attire -- the better to flummox Sherlock Holmes -- Hunnicutt brings a quality of grace-under-pressure to Irene Adler's every action. Wolf Kahler is

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*The incriminating evidence! Can Sherlock Holmes trick Irene Adler into revealing the hiding place of this scandalous photo?*