

A Toast to Watson's Second Wife, by Erica Fair  
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To Watson's Second Wife. Of all the debates we enjoy, a classic is of course how many wives the handsome, sensitive, and steadfast Watson had, with speculation ranging from one to two to even six or more. Some of us here may doubt there was even a second wife at all, but of course that is preposterous. Not only can we prove the existence of the second spouse, but tonight, I intend to make a case for identity.

So, who had the privilege – or punishment – of being Watson's second choice, doomed to forever compete against Mary? I think we can draw some deductions. No doubt Watson needed someone who could offer an escape from the stress of daily life, but who was independent enough to appreciate time apart. Our lucky doctor also found someone both well-to-do and generous, who even financially supported him when his practice declined, a remarkable gesture even today. Yet despite this kindness, we don't see much for romance, so perhaps the union started from convenience rather than passion. Though Watson must have *cared* in order to make this lifelong commitment, it's also clear that his love for Mary was on a very different level.

But on the other hand, perhaps that professed devotion to Mary was tinged by guilt. Matrimony does seem a strange choice for Mr. "Three Continents". Instead, I submit that our good doctor was leading a second life, spending hours and even overnights in the company of another. If so, then that poor soul's decades of patience, loyalty, and gratitude for the smallest crumbs of attention that Watson could spare, sometimes at the strangest hours, form the final clue in tonight's analysis.

Therefore, to Watson's long-suffering better half, who accepted him as he was and sought him out time and again, forsaking all others, for better or worse, for emerald tie pins or for fees remitted entirely, in Tapanuli fever and in iron constitution, til Killer Evans dared to *try* do them part. To the *metaphorical* "second wife" of Dr. Watson, the first and only Sherlock Holmes.