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*Sherlock Holmes and the Adventure of the Fallen Soufflé* by David MacGregor

*Auguste Escoffier is the most famous chef in the world. Facing ruin, scandal, and possible assassination, both he and Bertie, the Prince of Wales (the future King Edward VII of England), have come to the rooms of Sherlock Holmes for help. In this scene, Escoffier has prepared a gourmet treat for the gluttonous Bertie, as Sherlock Holmes, Dr. Watson, and Irene Adler look on in bewilderment.*

### ESCOFFIER

My friends, please allow me to present to you the rarest dish in the world. Delicate, sublime, illegal in many countries, yes, but a favorite of His Royal Highness when it can be procured on the black market. But first, I shall place a clean linen napkin over the head of His Royal Highness—patience my good sir, let the anticipation build—because the napkin will help to retain the aromas of the dish once it is uncovered...and also, so they say, assist in hiding one's shame from God.

You may well wonder what this dish is called, and so I shall tell you. It is ortolan. A tiny, delicate, beautiful little songbird...no larger than my thumb. Caught in nets, they are kept in total darkness so they overeat, and then they are drowned in a vat of Armagnac brandy, then roasted whole. You uncover the dish...take in the intoxicating scent...and then place the entire bird in your mouth.

When you bite down you hear the crunch of the bones and feel the hot flesh and innards sliding down your throat. You chew slowly, grinding the skin, the bones pricking the inside of your cheeks so that your own warm blood mingles with the fat that tastes of hazelnuts. And now, Your Royal Highness, bon appétit!