

**Sherlock Holmes and the Adventure of the  
Fallen Soufflé**

by

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### Setting

The rooms of Sherlock Holmes.

### Time

June 21, 1897.

### Cast

SHERLOCK HOLMES - Consulting detective in his 30s-50s.  
DR. JOHN WATSON - Physician and author in his 30s-50s.  
IRENE ADLER - Adventuress in her 30s-50s (although strictly speaking, "A Scandal in Bohemia" has her born in 1858).  
MARIE CHARTIER - Adventuress in her late 20s-30s.  
AUGUSTE ESCOFFIER - Chef, 50 years old (although leeway on either side of this age is fine). He has a large moustache.  
ALBERT EDWARD (BERTIE) - Prince of Wales, 55 years old (although leeway on either side of this age is fine). A stout, well-fed man, he has a beard and moustache.

NOTE: On the subject of accents, productions are free to address these as they wish. If authenticity is desired:

SHERLOCK HOLMES - Upper-class Oxford/Cambridge English accent.  
JOHN WATSON - English accent, perhaps with a slight Scottish brogue thrown in, as he received his Bachelor of Medicine degree from Edinburgh University.  
IRENE ADLER - Upper-class American accent, as she is an opera singer who was born in New Jersey.  
MARIE CHARTIER - French accent.  
AUGUSTE ESCOFFIER - French accent.  
ALBERT EDWARD (BERTIE) - English accent, perhaps with a touch of German, as his father was German.

(Lights up on the iconic rooms of 221B Baker Street. All of the vivid details from the original stories are here: a fireplace, fireplace tools, a violin in its open case, umbrella stand, bowler and deerstalker hats, chemical corner, pipe tobacco stuffed into a Persian slipper, a tantalus sits atop a sideboard well stocked with various bottles of alcohol and glasses, and two swords can be found among the fireplace tools or in the umbrella stand. There is a portrait of Queen Victoria and the initials "V R" marked in bullet holes adorn the wall. There is a divan with a small table in front of it, an armchair, pipe rack, a Victrola, and books and manuscripts everywhere. Burgundy Victorian wallpaper and wall sconces give the room a warm, intimate feel. Thanks to an earlier case, the iconic self-portrait of Vincent van Gogh with a bandage wrapped around his head hangs on the wall. Two doors lead to separate bedrooms and a third door leads to stairs down to the front door. A large picture window looks out onto Baker Street from the second story, and there is a breakfast table with two chairs nearby. IRENE ADLER sits on the divan, staring into space, looking like a woman awaiting the arrival of her executioner. SHERLOCK HOLMES emerges from his bedroom, gives IRENE a sympathetic pat on the shoulder, then pours himself a cup of tea.)

IRENE

Do you know what the single most terrifying word in the English language is? Traditional. Because inevitably, what does that mean? It means something ghastly, something truly horrible, that somehow, for some reason, has managed to remain in existence, so that after enough years have passed it's looked upon as beloved and revered, and it becomes a perverse duty to enter into this elaborate lie that everyone agrees on about how wonderful the tradition is.

(looking at HOLMES)

You can't help me, can you?

(off HOLMES' shake of his head)

I know...I've done this to myself. I meant well, I truly did, but I never imagined that he would actually go through with it...God help me.

HOLMES

Happy birthday, dear.

(There is the sound of footsteps on the stairs and DR. WATSON humming "Happy Birthday" at considerable volume. WATSON enters carrying a breakfast tray by its two handles.)

WATSON

(finishing the song)

Happy birthday, Miss Adler!  
Happy birthday to you!

(Beaming with joy, WATSON sets the tray down in front of IRENE. He lifts the cloche off a breakfast plate.)

WATSON

And there you are! As promised, a traditional English breakfast! A very happy birthday to you!

(IRENE's forced smile is painful to witness as she contemplates what's on the plate.)

IRENE

What is it?

WATSON

What's what?

IRENE

This brown thing.

(IRENE picks up a kipper by its tail.)

WATSON

It's a kipper!

(IRENE looks to HOLMES for help.)

HOLMES

An entire herring, my dear. Invariably split from head to tail along the dorsal ridge, gutted, salted, and smoked over oak.

IRENE

It's a salty fish with the tail and bones?

WATSON

Quite right! Very traditional.

IRENE

(pointing to the plate)

And these smaller brown things?

WATSON

Kidneys!

IRENE

No, they're not.

WATSON

I assure you they are. Quite fresh too! Just picked them up yesterday from Smithfield's.

HOLMES

You know what you should do, Watson? In your efforts to introduce Irene to all the delights of British cuisine, for her next birthday you should prepare a traditional Scottish breakfast.

WATSON

Capital idea! Black pudding!

(to IRENE)

That'll put some hair on your chest! Metaphorically speaking, of course.

IRENE

What in God's name is black pudding?

HOLMES

Sausage made from pig's blood, a little oatmeal, and various spices. Typically fried in its own skin, but it can also be baked or boiled, depending on the preference of the gourmet enjoying it.

IRENE

I'm sorry, I just don't understand. The British Empire is supposed to be the epitome of civilization! London is the biggest and most cosmopolitan city on the planet! How did you end up with...?

WATSON

Yes?

IRENE

Nothing...

WATSON

Excellent! Well, tuck in! I can't wait to hear what you think!

(IRENE contemplates the kipper with dread just as we hear shouting and police whistles from the street. The downstairs door opens with a crash, heavy footsteps pound up the stairs, and into the room rushes AUGUSTE ESCOFFIER. He is dressed head-to-toe in his white chef's outfit, including the toque on his head, and brandishes a large meat cleaver. He is crazed with fear.)

ESCOFFIER

RUINED!!!

(ESCOFFIER runs to the window and looks up and down the street, then staggers back into the center of the room.)

ESCOFFIER

Ruined...

(ESCOFFIER faints to the floor as the shouting and police whistles pass by.)

HOLMES

I say, that's certainly livened up our morning.

WATSON

Who the devil is he?

HOLMES

No idea, but perhaps a touch of brandy for our guest will bring him around.

(As WATSON gets a glass of brandy from the sideboard, IRENE stands up to look at ESCOFFIER. HOLMES picks up the cleaver and examines it.)

WATSON

Obviously a cook or chef of some kind.

HOLMES

Indeed. The capital letter K stamped into the blade of his cleaver indicates that it was manufactured by the French company Sabatier, which would naturally suggest a French chef, but the worn boots, which were made by Mr. John Branch of Bethnal Green Road, tell us he has been living in London for some time. Judging by the peculiar combination of tar and gravel adhering to his left instep, he either works or resides near Covent Garden, where roadwork is currently being performed. Irene, is there anything you would add to shed some light on this gentleman's identity?

IRENE

Just one small detail. His name is Auguste Escoffier, and he is the most celebrated chef in the world. Inventor of the *bombe Néro* and *fraises à la Sarah Bernhardt*, he is the head chef at London's most glittering restaurant, The Savoy Hotel.

HOLMES

Marvelous, my dear! But how on earth--

(ESCOFFIER chokes on the brandy WATSON is pouring down his throat and comes back to consciousness. He peers in bewilderment at IRENE.)

ESCOFFIER

Irene?

IRENE

Auguste. How nice to see you.

ESCOFFIER

But you are dead!

IRENE

Apparently not.

(ESCOFFIER struggles to his feet and rushes to the window, looking up and down the street.)

HOLMES

Looking for something, Mr. Escoffier?

ESCOFFIER

No, no! I thought that...but perhaps I was mistaken.

(changing course)

Irene! How wonderful that you are alive!

(kissing her on both cheeks)

But I do not understand. I came to see Mr. Sherlock Holmes. How is it that you are here?

IRENE

There is actually a very simple explanation for that. Mr. Holmes is my lover. Has been ever since the affair that Dr. Watson memorably referred to as "A Scandal in Bohemia" in *The Strand Magazine*.

ESCOFFIER

Yes! Which is the story that said you are dead!

IRENE

As you are well aware Auguste, at the time I was running in the dubious circles of society's best and brightest and had somehow managed to make several powerful enemies. I judged it in my best interest to disappear for a while. Dr. Watson has been gracious enough to explain my presence here by casting me in the stories as Mrs. Hudson, the housekeeper of the celebrated Sherlock Holmes.

ESCOFFIER

And you say he is your lover? I find that very difficult to believe. Sherlock Holmes, he does not like the women, *n'est-ce pas*?

HOLMES

I find this one tolerable from time to time.

IRENE

Which, if I might translate for you Auguste, means that he adores me with every fiber of his being.

HOLMES

That I do.

ESCOFFIER

Well, well, well! You do have a way with the men, Irene. I cannot deny that. This will make for some delicious gossip in the kitchen.

IRENE

I wouldn't recommend it. That would displease Mr. Holmes, and people who displease Mr. Holmes have a tendency to plunge to their deaths from waterfalls.

ESCOFFIER

You mean, as with the late Professor Moriarty? But that was a fair fight, yes? And according to Dr. Watson's story, it was Moriarty who attacked Mr. Holmes.

WATSON

To be perfectly candid, I wasn't actually there. But Holmes' word is good enough for me.

ESCOFFIER

I was joking about the kitchen gossip! Just a little *bon mot*, if you will. I assure you that I am the very soul of discretion--

IRENE

Auguste, you are a complete and utter swine.

WATSON

Miss Adler!

IRENE

Ask him. He'll tell you himself.

ESCOFFIER

I am afraid I do not know of what Miss Adler speaks. I am merely a humble chef--

IRENE

--who not too many years ago composed an absolutely wonderful and iconic dessert in which, I believe, peaches played a prominent role. Do you happen to remember the name of it, Auguste?

WATSON

Hang on, I think I've heard of that. It's Peaches Melba, isn't it? Named after Nellie Melba, the opera singer. Do I have that right?

IRENE

Exactly right. Her real name was Helen Porter Mitchell, an Australian soprano who subsequently adopted the name Nellie Melba in honor of her hometown of Melbourne. To celebrate her triumphant performance in Wagner's *Lohengrin*, Chef Escoffier invented a new dessert featuring peaches poached in syrup, laid on a bed of vanilla ice cream, coated with raspberry purée, sprinkled with rose petals, and veiled with spun sugar...

(with a meaningful look at  
ESCOFFIER, which he avoids)

...if I recall correctly.

WATSON

Yes, that's it! Quite the coincidence that you happen to be an opera singer too, Miss Adler!

HOLMES

Quite.

(ESCOFFIER picks up the kipper from IRENE's plate.)

ESCOFFIER

Have you a cat, Mr. Holmes?

HOLMES

Not that I'm aware.

ESCOFFIER

Then please allow me...

(ESCOFFIER strides to the window and throws the kipper out of it.)

WATSON

I say! That was Miss Adler's birthday breakfast!

ESCOFFIER

Ah, the famous English sense of humor, which I am afraid I will never comprehend. But is it truly your birthday, Irene?

IRENE

Yes.

ESCOFFIER

Then I shall prepare for you something *magnifique*!

(ESCOFFIER picks up the breakfast tray and heads for the door.)

HOLMES

But Monsieur Escoffier, you scarcely stopped by to make breakfast. Rather, you appear to have been running from the police.

ESCOFFIER

A small misunderstanding it would seem. Not worth discussing before Miss Adler has dined.

(to IRENE)

I shall bring you the finest breakfast in the world!

WATSON

But you don't even know what we have in our pantry!

ESCOFFIER

I am Escoffier. Your kitchen, Mr. Holmes?

HOLMES

This way.

(HOLMES and ESCOFFIER exit.)

WATSON

How do you like that? "I am Escoffier." Typical French arrogance. Nothing wrong with kippers and kidneys, if you ask me.

(IRENE heads for the sideboard and pours herself a healthy drink.)

WATSON

I say, bit early for a drink. Are you feeling all right, Miss Adler?

IRENE

May I confess something to you, Doctor? There are times when I wish that I was in love with an idiot. When I wish that my soulmate, the man of my dreams, was a stone-cold moron. Sadly, my lover is a genius; in fact, genius is too pale and empty a word to even begin to encompass the depth and breadth of his brilliance. Every word is a novel to him, every second a lifetime revealed. Emotionally and intellectually, I stand perpetually naked in his presence, every flaw, every blemish, as clear to him as a footprint in new-fallen snow. Make no mistake, I do cherish it. More than you can ever know. How a single glance between us can communicate an hour's worth of words. But at this very moment, I would give a king's ransom to be in love with a complete and utter simpleton.

WATSON

I'm not sure I understand.

IRENE

Then let me put it this way--only a woman who has loved a man of genius can appreciate what happiness there is in loving a fool.

(Just as WATSON is about to reply, HOLMES reenters, immediately sizing the situation up.)

HOLMES

I'm sorry. I appear to be intruding.

IRENE

Not at all. And we have no secrets between us in these rooms. Tell Dr. Watson what you've already deduced.

HOLMES

My dear, there's really no need to--

IRENE

Please. If this evolves into a case of some kind, the good Doctor will want details.

HOLMES

As you wish.

(turning to WATSON as he takes  
out his notebook and pencil)

But surely it's obvious.

WATSON

Not to me.

HOLMES

Quite clearly, Irene and Monsieur Escoffier were lovers. Their time together was brief but intense, and Escoffier was on the verge of naming his most famous dish Peaches Adler, before a rival by the name of Nellie Melba appeared on the scene. Stung and perhaps a tad vengeful, Irene immediately took up with the King of Bohemia, who shortly thereafter brought Miss Adler to our attention in--

WATSON

--"A Scandal in Bohemia!" Good Lord. How do you know their relationship was intense?

HOLMES

Because I know Irene.

WATSON

And brief?

HOLMES

There is no dish named after Miss Adler.

IRENE

It was like so many relationships, Doctor. At one time the very center of the universe, but now nothing more than an embarrassment.

WATSON

I'm sorry to hear that.

IRENE

Don't be. Monsieur Escoffier was the first link in the chain that brought me here, and I will be forever grateful to him for that.

HOLMES

As am I. Now then, more data. What can you tell me about this Escoffier?

IRENE

Well, he may be a swine, but he is also a genius.

HOLMES

The two often go hand-in-hand.

IRENE

His food is revolutionary. Lighter, fresher, smaller portions, more delicate sauces...he keeps track of everything each customer orders, can remember every recipe he ever created, and has over sixty recipes for pheasant alone. His best cooking is inspired by women he wants to seduce.

HOLMES

Married?

IRENE

Of course.

HOLMES

And The Savoy Hotel. I know of its reputation, but my interest in mingling with the wealthy and fashionable is confined to when their corpses are still warm.

IRENE

It's the most glamorous hotel in the most glamorous city in the world. Seven stories, four hundred rooms, electric lights, telephones, elevators, old money mingles with new and it is quite simply *the* place to be seen. Turn almost any corner and you're likely to bump into a duke, a countess, a Rothschild, or a Vanderbilt. Most notably, it enjoys the patronage of the Prince of Wales, who is the very center of London's social universe.

HOLMES

It sounds absolutely hideous.

IRENE

For you, it would be.

(HOLMES smiles and takes IRENE's hand.  
They gaze into one another's eyes.)

HOLMES

Watson, I think perhaps Irene and I will take a little walk. Get some fresh air...

IRENE

...perhaps do a little investigating regarding all that police activity?

HOLMES

My thought precisely.

WATSON

But what about Escoffier? He's making breakfast!

HOLMES

Then you, my dear Watson, shall be here to sample his creation.

(HOLMES and IRENE head for the door. HOLMES puts on his deerstalker and IRENE puts on a fashionable hat of her own. HOLMES takes IRENE's arm and they exit. WATSON goes to the window and looks down into the street. As he gives a wave to HOLMES and IRENE, MARIE CHARTIER slips into the room from one of the bedrooms. She is an absolute vision of style and loveliness, even with the fresh duelling scar on her cheek.)

MARIE

And so we meet again, Dr. Watson.

(WATSON spins in alarm and his eyes go wide as he sees MARIE.)

WATSON

Good Lord! It's you! How the devil did you get in here?  
(off her enigmatic smile)

I warn you, Miss Chartier, no sudden moves! Holmes is in that bedroom right over there! One shout from me and--

MARIE

No. Mr. Holmes is not here. I just saw him leave arm in arm with Miss Adler.

(as WATSON edges towards the sideboard)

You may go to the sideboard if you wish. Is that where Mr. Holmes keeps his guns?

WATSON

No! I wasn't! I was just...

MARIE

Nonsense. Here, let me help you.

(going to the sideboard, she opens a drawer and pulls out a revolver)

Of course. The Webley British Bulldog...

(she opens it and spins the cylinder)

*Bien.* Fully loaded.

(she closes it and hands the gun to WATSON)

There you are.

(she raises his arm to point the gun)

Let me just back up a few steps...

(she does so, in direct line of fire of the gun, and raises her hands)

...and *voilà!* You have me covered. Do you feel safer now?

WATSON

I feel slightly ridiculous.

(approaching MARIE)

I say, is that a duelling scar on your cheek?

(MARIE takes the gun from WATSON and moves towards the sideboard.)

MARIE

It is nothing. A small disagreement that escalated.

WATSON

But you've been wounded!

MARIE

You should see the other fellow...but you'd have to dig down six feet first.

(putting the gun back in the drawer and turning)

I see not much has changed since my last visit.

WATSON

No. And I don't mean to appear rude, but why are you here? Clearly not to kill Holmes, if you just saw him leaving.

MARIE

Wonderfully deduced.

(picking up a sword and pointing it at WATSON's chest)

But I could have come here to kill you.

(as WATSON laughs and brushes the sword away)

Why do you laugh?

WATSON

Because I'm Watson. Good old reliable Watson. Boring, plodding, why is he even in the stories Watson. No one notices me, much less plots my assassination. Drink?

MARIE

(putting the sword away)

Sherry.

WATSON

Sherry it is.

MARIE

Join me, won't you?

WATSON

Why?

MARIE

Please.

(As WATSON pours two sherries...)

WATSON

I'm afraid I don't know when Holmes will return, Miss Chartier, but I'm sure he'll welcome a visit from the daughter of Professor Moriarty...especially after your performance the last time you were here with that Van Gogh fellow and Oscar Wilde.

MARIE

A most interesting case, *n'est-ce pas*? I am so glad you took my advice and did not write up the story for *The Strand Magazine*.

WATSON

I may not have published it, but I wrote it nevertheless and put it safely away...for future generations.

(Handing MARIE her glass.)

MARIE

Really? And what did you call it?

WATSON

"The Adventure of the Elusive Ear."

MARIE

I like that...to "The Adventure of the Elusive Ear."  
(she raises her glass and they  
toast one another)

You have a most wonderful way with words.

WATSON

Seriously? You really think so?

MARIE

I do. The right word at the right moment. Is there anything more beautiful and seductive?

(Looking to change the subject, WATSON  
gazes up at the Van Gogh self-portrait.)

WATSON

Damned shame about Van Gogh. We all read about his unfortunate death. Your plan to exploit the miserable lives of the Post-Impressionists would appear to be coming along quite nicely.

MARIE

Yes. Do you despise me for it?

WATSON

That's a bit harsh.

(As WATSON drains his glass, MARIE does  
the same.)

MARIE

Another sherry, I think.

(MARIE takes WATSON's glass and pours another glass for herself and WATSON.)

WATSON

What are you up to, Miss Chartier?

MARIE

*Moi?*

WATSON

You're not fooling me. You have some sort of plot or scheme in mind.

MARIE

Indeed. You see right through me, Doctor, so I may as well confess that I came here with a three-part plan. First, I wanted to get you alone...

(handing WATSON his sherry)

Second, I wanted to get a glass or two of sherry into you to ease your nerves...

WATSON

And third?

MARIE

I need you.

WATSON

You mean Holmes?

MARIE

No. Holmes has Irene. They have one another. Who do you have? Who do I have? No one. That is why we need each other.

WATSON

In what way, exactly?

MARIE

It is quite simple. For all of his talents, there is one area in which the great Sherlock Holmes cannot hold a candle to Dr. Watson.

WATSON

Nonsense.

MARIE

You are too modest.

WATSON

Very well then, I'll play along. What area might that be?

MARIE

Storytelling. I want you to help me tell a story.

WATSON

About what?

MARIE

What happens in London tomorrow?

WATSON

Why, it's Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee, of course! She's been on the throne sixty years now, so tomorrow has been declared a National Holiday.

(gazing reverently at  
Victoria's portrait)

Remarkable woman. Tiny little thing, but during her reign England has become the richest and most powerful country in the world.

MARIE

Yes. And it is the "richest" part that I like best. However, I have a problem. I am not English, and the British nobility are a very close-knit group...everyone knows everyone. So, how would I penetrate that society? How could I gain the trust, for example, of Queen Victoria's son, the Prince of Wales?

WATSON

Well, you can't. It's that simple. It's impossible.

MARIE

Perhaps for Marie Chartier, but not for...  
(adopting an Irish accent)

...the Duchess of Killarney.

(executing a brief Irish jig  
before the stunned WATSON)

Oh, faith and begorrah, I've given poor Dr. Watson a wee shock, I'm afraid.

WATSON

Your accent...that's absolutely wonderful! It's as if you were born in Ireland!

MARIE

(Irish accent)

Do you really think so? You wouldn't just be flattering a poor Irish lass now, would you?

WATSON

Not at all! No, it's astonishing...

(WATSON reaches for the notebook inside  
his jacket, then stops himself.)

MARIE

(Irish accent)

Oh, go on now, get your wee notebook out. I know you want to, and you're going to need it.

WATSON

Well, perhaps I'll just jot down a point or two...

(WATSON takes out his notebook and pencil as MARIE guides him to the divan.)

MARIE

(Irish accent)

There we are. You sit down like a good lad and I will explain everything to you. It's really quite simple. The beautiful and recently widowed Duchess of Killarney happens to be staying at The Savoy Hotel at the moment, where last week she had a wee bit o' the luck o' the Irish and who do you think she met? The Prince of Wales himself.

WATSON

Hang on...The Savoy Hotel? That's where Auguste Escoffier is the head chef.

MARIE

(Irish accent)

So he is. And just between us, both Monsieur Escoffier and the Prince of Wales find the Duchess of Killarney absolutely fascinating.

WATSON

Oh my God. They're both in love with you.

MARIE

(back to her French accent)

It is what I do. Unfortunately, there are some people around the Prince who do not like the Duchess of Killarney very much. They feel she is a woman of doubtful reputation and uncertain revenue.

WATSON

But it's a brilliant character! First of all, she is apparently of noble blood, which will make the Prince of Wales feel she is of his class. But then, she's Irish, so she's just different enough to separate herself from everyone else he knows!

MARIE

I knew you would understand.

WATSON

But still, you're faced with one major problem; namely, this Duchess of Killarney doesn't really exist!

MARIE

A small detail. The Prince of Wales wants her to exist. He is one of those sad people for whom the truth is much less important than what he wishes the truth to be. Nevertheless, it occurred to me that I could use someone to vouch for me. And who do I know who is more decent, more upstanding, and more English than Dr. John Watson?

WATSON

Now see here, Miss Chartier, I don't know what you're trying to get me involved in, but the answer is no.

MARIE

But you have not heard what I am willing to offer you.

WATSON

The answer is still no. I cannot be bought. Not with money, not with a Van Gogh original, not with anything.

MARIE

But I know your weak spot.

WATSON

You do?

(off MARIE's raised eyebrows)

If you are suggesting that you could somehow use your womanly wiles to seduce me into a compromising position, I assure you that--

MARIE

If I wanted to seduce you, you would be on your knees right now. No, Dr. Watson. I am not offering you money, or art, or the single most shattering sexual experience of your lifetime. I am offering you something much, much better. You help me tell my story and I will return the favor, by giving you the greatest Sherlock Holmes story ever.

WATSON

Oh really? How so?

MARIE

Think of it. The daughter of Professor Moriarty...the Prince of Wales...The Savoy Hotel...power, wealth, the English Monarchy, oh, and that is only the tip of the iceberg. You are an Escoffier with words, Dr. Watson. What a feast you could create with those ingredients.

WATSON

There are certain points of interest, I suppose.

MARIE

Come now, Doctor. It is just us two. Alone. No one else needs to know. It will be our little secret...so look at me, and tell me what you see.

WATSON

Material. Damn it all...absolutely amazing material. You're beautiful, you're brilliant, and you are a demonic temptress completely and utterly steeped in evil. It's beyond wonderful!

MARIE

Quite so. And the Diamond Jubilee...the *Diamond* Jubilee...that is most suggestive, don't you think? And that is why I am here.

(MORE)

MARIE (cont'd)

I am not quite sure how events will unfold just yet, but for the moment I need a storyteller, my very own *fabricateur*...I need you, Dr. Watson. And you need me.

WATSON

What--I can't believe I'm saying this, but what, exactly, are you asking me to do?

MARIE

My request is a modest one. Should we, by chance, see one another in the next day or two, you simply address me as your old friend, the Duchess of Killarney. In other words, do what you do best. Tell a story.

(As WATSON mulls this over, we hear footsteps on the stairs and ESCOFFIER belting out the words to "La Marseillaise." MARIE hands WATSON her empty sherry glass and flees into the bedroom of Holmes and Irene.)

ESCOFFIER (O.S.)

(singing)

*Allons enfants de la Patrie,  
Le jour de gloire est arrivé!*

(ESCOFFIER bursts through the door carrying the breakfast tray, marching like he's in the Bastille Day parade.)

ESCOFFIER

(singing)

*Aux armes, citoyens,  
Formez vos bataillons,  
Marchons, marchons!  
Qu'un sang impur  
Abreuve nos sillons!*

(ESCOFFIER puts the breakfast tray down before looking around and realizing that HOLMES and IRENE are not there.)

ESCOFFIER

What is this? Where are Miss Adler and Mr. Holmes?

WATSON

(placing the two empty sherry glasses on the sideboard)

Who? Oh, yes! They've...what have they done...they've gone out...in the street...to go someplace...that's outside...where the street is...

ESCOFFIER

But I have prepared breakfast for Miss Adler! *Voilà!*

(ESCOFFIER uncovers the dish to reveal a golden mass of scrambled eggs with a white birthday candle in the center.)

WATSON

What is it?

ESCOFFIER

Scrambled eggs!

WATSON

Ha! Scrambled eggs? So this is the gourmet creation of the greatest chef in the--

(ESCOFFIER shoves a forkful of eggs between WATSON's lips)

--Good Lord! That can't be just...what's in this?

ESCOFFIER

Merely eggs stirred quickly over low heat with a clove of garlic on the end of a fork. *Surtout, faites simple.* That is my motto, Dr. Watson. Above all, keep it simple.

WATSON

And where in God's name did you find a birthday candle? I practically tore apart the kitchen looking for one.

ESCOFFIER

I didn't find it. I made it. Out of sugar. See for yourself.

(WATSON scrapes a fingernail along the candle, then brings his finger to his lips.)

WATSON

That's absolutely remarkable...

ESCOFFIER

I am Escoffier. I can create any dish in any shape or form you desire, for the finest food must engage all of the senses...the sizzle of a steak, the snap of a pea. Every menu should be a poem of anticipation and every meal should be a symphony for the senses, but do you know the most important ingredient in all of my dishes?

(as WATSON shakes his head)

It is love, *mon ami*. It is love.

(as WATSON reaches for more eggs, ESCOFFIER takes the fork from him and puts the cloche back on the plate)

*Non, non, non!* This is for Miss Adler...

(pulling a letter-sized envelope from his pocket and handing it to WATSON)

...and this is for Mr. Holmes--the reason I came here in the first place. I have enemies, Doctor! Invisible enemies! And now, I will go! But I shall return!

(As ESCOFFIER heads for the door...)

WATSON

I say, were you really romantically involved with both Miss Adler and Nellie Melba at the same time?

ESCOFFIER

What can I say? Mistresses are like desserts. They are both bad for you, but if you are going to have one, you might as well have two.

(ESCOFFIER exits. WATSON turns as MARIE comes out of the bedroom holding a black negligee.)

MARIE

Ooh la la! Miss Adler, she has a nice taste in clothes...

WATSON

Really, Miss Chartier! Put that back this instant!

MARIE

And what have we here? Breakfast from Chef Escoffier?

(lifting up the cloche, she sniffs the dish, wrinkling her nose)

Pah! Typical. Everything is garlic and truffles and foie gras with Escoffier. It is too much.

(putting the cloche back)

Now then, as to our little arrangement...will you tell a story for me?

WATSON

And at what cost to perfectly innocent people? Who will get hurt?

MARIE

No one. It is merely a little charade I want to play, although it is possible I may profit slightly from the game, but from people who will never notice the loss, and a man who is far from innocent.

WATSON

Are you slandering the good name of the Prince of Wales?

MARIE

Clearly, you do not know him, but that will change quite soon. I am moving my pieces into position, Dr. Watson. The game is afoot. The only question for you is, will you be a pawn, yet again? Or are you ready to play the role of the knight?

(The downstairs door slams and footsteps ascend the stairs.)

WATSON

Good God! It's Holmes and Irene! They mustn't find you here!

MARIE

Do not worry, *mon chéri*. Whenever I enter a room, I always have two exits...

(Irish accent as she drapes the negligee over WATSON's chest)

...and the Duchess of Killarney will be back in two shakes of a lamb's tail!

(MARIE disappears into Holmes' and Irene's bedroom just as the door opens and HOLMES and IRENE enter. They stop at the sight of WATSON holding the negligee.)

HOLMES

Watson?

WATSON

Oh, hello.

IRENE

What are you doing?

WATSON

Standing here. As one does.

IRENE

Are you wearing one of my negligees?

WATSON

(taking the negligee off and fighting down panic)

I can explain this...well, this is a little embarrassing, but you see, the thing of it is, sometimes if I'm writing a story and I get a bit stuck finding the voice of this or that character, I find it useful to dress in the manner of that character. So, king, beggar, old, young, man, woman...

IRENE

So when you're writing a female character, you wear my clothes?

WATSON

Not all the time! Not often, really. Hardly ever, as a matter of fact...just when I have a bit of writer's block. Awfully sorry. I should have asked.

(draping the negligee over a chair and pointing to the tray)

That's food...for you, Miss Adler. Escoffier made some eggles scram...scrambled eggs!

HOLMES

And what of Monsieur Escoffier?

WATSON

Gone! Somewhere. No idea. It's a big city, London. Could be anywhere...

HOLMES

Well, apparently his arrival just ahead of the police was, in fact, completely coincidental. They were responding to a robbery further down the street, but his guilty conscience seems to have got the better of him.

WATSON

Yes! That's why he was coming here, Holmes! He said he had invisible enemies and left this letter for you!

(WATSON holds out the envelope and HOLMES and IRENE pounce on it like hawks. HOLMES pulls out the letter.)

HOLMES

Let's see what we have here...industrial paper...

IRENE

...a broad-nibbed pen...

HOLMES

...coarse, simple strokes...

IRENE

...which indicates the writer is trying to obscure his identity...

WATSON

I say Holmes, there is something else you should know--

HOLMES

It appears to be a list of various crimes and indiscretions...

IRENE

...being committed by Auguste Escoffier at The Savoy Hotel...

WATSON

We just had a rather special visitor--

HOLMES

...so it seems to be an effort at some form of extortion or blackmail...

IRENE

...but with no demands and no signature...

HOLMES

...simply the final words, "From One Who Knows."

WATSON

Holmes, I really must tell you--

HOLMES

Watson, please! A little silence. Irene and I are working!  
 (back to the letter)  
 So, it's a warning of some kind...

IRENE

...apparently from someone very intimate with The Savoy Hotel...

HOLMES

...although whether an employee or guest is difficult to say. You know the man, Irene. Are these accusations consistent with Chef Escoffier's personality?

IRENE

Sadly, yes. He is a man of incredible talent, and like many such men feels that the rules should not apply to him. The same may be said for his close friend and the Director of The Savoy Hotel, a man by the name of César Ritz.

WATSON

Holmes, if you could please listen to me, it's about--

HOLMES

(holding up a finger for  
 silence)

Ritz...Ritz. I recognize the name.

(Giving up, WATSON sits down.)

IRENE

You should. He's the most celebrated hotel manager in all Europe. Up to now merely an employee, but apparently with plans to open his own luxury hotel in Paris, with Escoffier as the head chef.

HOLMES

That's most suggestive. Does this Ritz come from money?

IRENE

Far from it. I believe he began life as a Swiss peasant--herding goats and sheep, but he has much greater ambitions for himself. I do know that prior to coming to London, he and Escoffier worked together at the Grand Hôtel National in Lucerne...

HOLMES

...so we have two gentlemen with Swiss connections in need of large amounts of money to open a luxury hotel in Paris, which obviously brings to mind--

WATSON

--Marie Chartier!

HOLMES

Excellent, Watson! Yes indeed, Marie Chartier, who is also from Switzerland, where I threw her father, Professor Moriarty, over the Reichenbach Falls to his death.

IRENE

You think she's involved in this?

HOLMES

No idea. But whenever I begin to perceive a dark web being woven, my mind instinctively turns to the formidable Miss Chartier.

IRENE

I thought I was the only formidable woman you knew.

HOLMES

You don't mind a little competition, do you?

IRENE

Not at all.

(IRENE and HOLMES kiss passionately as WATSON picks up a newspaper. HOLMES turns his head.)

HOLMES

Oh Watson, was there something you wanted to say?

WATSON

No. Nothing. You two are doing wonderfully. You clearly don't need my help, I can see that. Just throw good old Watson a few crumbs after the case is over. That's all I need.

HOLMES

Now, now. There was something you wanted to tell us. What is it?

WATSON

Simply that...Escoffier said he would be back.

IRENE

(eyeing the breakfast tray)

I was really hoping he would make me one of his famous soufflés, but I'll nibble on this as I freshen up.

(Taking the tray and negligee, IRENE heads for her bedroom.)

WATSON

Take it from me, I had a small bite, and it's absolutely wonderful! Even the candle is delicious, for God's sake!

(IRENE exits and closes the bedroom door. HOLMES turns an appraising eye on WATSON.)

HOLMES

I say, Watson...everything all right?

WATSON

Hmm? Oh, yes. Fine. Splendid. Lovely morning.

(HOLMES points to the two empty sherry glasses.)

HOLMES

Curious. Two empty sherry glasses. These weren't here when Irene and I left.

WATSON

Oh, the sherry glasses...yes. When Escoffier brought in the plate of scrambled eggs I remarked that they would go well with some toast, and Escoffier apparently thought I was proposing a toast to the eggs. I didn't want to make him feel awkward, so I poured some sherry and we drank a toast...to his eggs.

(as the doorbell rings)

Thank God...

(rushing to the window and looking down)

It would appear we have a client!

HOLMES

Irene! A client!

(IRENE emerges from the bedroom, still holding the negligee. HOLMES holds his hand out, she takes it, and they move to the window together, brushing WATSON aside.)

IRENE

Interesting. A private hansom cab with no markings...

HOLMES

...and the windows blacked out as well to shield the passenger from prying eyes. Most intriguing. Watson, would you--

WATSON

Yes, yes! Of course!

(WATSON exits to answer the door. HOLMES holds up one of the sherry glasses, looking at it closely.)

HOLMES

Perhaps it's just me, but I don't recall Monsieur Escoffier wearing this particular shade of red lipstick...

(IRENE holds the negligee under HOLMES' nose.)

IRENE

...and I don't use this particular perfume...

HOLMES

Phul-Nana by Grossmith's of London. The notes of geranium, neroli, and sandalwood are quite distinctive.

(HOLMES and IRENE exchange a glance as the door opens, and into the room steps BERTIE; or ALBERT EDWARD, THE PRINCE OF WALES. He is dressed in the uniform of a British Field Marshall, carries a cane and hat, and wears gloves and a black mask. He hands his hat to the trailing WATSON, who hangs it up on the hat rack as BERTIE walks slowly to the center of the room and with great gravity announces...)

BERTIE

Mr. Holmes, I presume?

(off HOLMES' nod)

I am the Duke of Lancaster. I come to you for help in the most dire circumstances imaginable, but would first like to ascertain that you really do possess the powers attributed to you. So then, based upon my appearance, what can you tell me?

HOLMES

I can tell you that you are a middle-aged man who enjoys eating. Thank you so much for stopping by. Good day.

WATSON

Holmes, I think what His Grace means is--

HOLMES

I know very well what he means. But why should I indulge the whims of every idle member of the nobility who shows up at our doorstep? I am a busy man.

BERTIE

I assure you this is a very serious matter. A matter of life and death.

HOLMES

Oh dear. Well, in that case, the details of your life are quite easily read. Our housekeeper could do it.

BERTIE

Your housekeeper? Surely you jest.

HOLMES

Mrs. Hudson, would you be so kind as to offer up a few deductions regarding our guest?

IRENE

I would be delighted.

(IRENE circles BERTIE, looking at him closely as he removes his gloves. She quickly inspects his hands and cane, then takes the gloves and tosses them to HOLMES.)

IRENE

Married. English. But based upon his accent one German parent, probably an emotionally distant father. Fluctuating facial asymmetry indicates the presence of inbreeding, most likely representing a union between two first cousins. Heavy smoker, right-handed, no evidence whatsoever of manual labor, but a slight callosity on the right forefinger indicates repeated use, probably from shooting a variety of guns. His ready access to an anonymous hansom cab suggests he has used it previously, most likely for visits to brothels or to facilitate adulterous affairs, but the absence of any obvious scars or contusions indicates he is of sufficient status that everyone ignores or accepts his compulsive philandering. Is there anything you would add, Mr. Holmes?

HOLMES

Only one trifle. Judging from his age, build, and the fact that the short trip up our seventeen steps has produced a light sheen of sweat on his brow, I would deduce that his hobby of adulterous liaisons has come to an end recently, as he is now, in all likelihood, completely impotent.

BERTIE

This is monstrous! How dare you?

WATSON

Holmes, for God's sake! He's the Duke of Lancaster.

(HOLMES bursts into laughter and is joined by IRENE.)

HOLMES

Yes, of course he is! And I am Long John Silver!  
(pirate accent)  
Arr, matey! Shiver me timbers!

BERTIE

Outrageous! What is the meaning of this?

HOLMES

You are certainly free to call yourself whatever you wish, Your Royal Highness, but why you should feel compelled to do so is utterly beyond me.

BERTIE

You know who I am?

HOLMES

Of course! You sir, are Albert Edward, The Prince of Wales. Son of Victoria and Albert and first in line for the British Crown.

(MORE)

HOLMES (cont'd)

Informally known as Bertie, and thanks to your prodigious appetite, even more informally known as Tum Tum.

BERTIE

(removing his mask)

Yes. That is precisely who I am. Your reputation, and that of your extraordinary housekeeper, are well deserved. But please don't call me Tum Tum.

WATSON

(bowing deeply)

Your Majesty.

HOLMES

No, Watson, not quite yet. But with Queen Victoria nearly eighty years old and about to celebrate her Diamond Jubilee, yes, it's fair to say that you are gazing upon the man who shall very soon be known as Edward the Seventh, King of England and Emperor of India.

BERTIE

True, but only if I can make it through today without being assassinated!

HOLMES

Well, I wish you the best of luck. As it happens, I have just been commissioned by Auguste Escoffier to clear up some difficulties at The Savoy Hotel, so I'm afraid I can't take your case at the moment.

WATSON

Holmes, he's the Prince of Wales! If he's being threatened with assassination, you must help him!

HOLMES

Why?

BERTIE

Do you doubt my word? Is that it? I assure you the threat is very real! My own mother, who is practically a recluse, has been the subject of no fewer than seven assassination plots, one by a hunchbacked dwarf!

IRENE

You're making that up.

HOLMES

Not at all. John William Bean, 1842.

IRENE

Well then, if you'll pardon my saying so, Mr. Holmes, I have to agree with Dr. Watson. Surely the life of a future monarch is more important than Monsieur Escoffier's case.

HOLMES

I beg to differ. Some lives are worth saving and some are not. I regret to say that the life of His Royal Highness falls in the latter category.

WATSON

Holmes, you can't possibly be serious.

BERTIE

I would like to know upon what basis you make such an extraordinary and insulting judgment upon my character.

HOLMES

Be careful what you wish for. As an American, Mrs. Hudson has only a passing acquaintance with the fashions and foibles of England's ruling class. Watson, of course, is too decent a man to interest himself in those scurrilous affairs. Sadly, my profession necessitates an intimate knowledge of England's best and brightest, the so-called Upper Ten Thousand who contribute absolutely nothing to society, yet live lives of pampered comfort while surrounded by the slums of London. You sir, vain, shallow, vicious, self-absorbed, and childish, the so-called Playboy Prince, otherwise known as Edward the Caresser, are the leader of this debauched and depraved pack, and I daresay the world would be a better place without you in it.

BERTIE

I will not deny that I have strong animal passions and that I am fond of good living, but your ridiculous and offensive opinion of me is entirely unwarranted!

HOLMES

Watson, please be so kind as to fetch the letter "A" from my Index.  
(as WATSON pulls a thick tome  
from the shelves)

No need to read the full entry on His Royal Highness, just scan through it for any items that happen to catch your eye.

WATSON

Here we are...

(reading)

...Albert Edward, born 1841, spouse Alexandra of Denmark, six children, but only four still living--

HOLMES

Skip down a bit.

WATSON

(reading)

Affair with Lady Harriet Mordaunt, who had a baby of dubious parentage, with Lady Harriet subsequently being declared insane and committed to an asylum. Affair with Lady Susan Vane-Tempest--

BERTIE

It's all lies! All of it! Complete fabrications concocted by my enemies and the press.

WATSON

The Aylesford Scandal of 1876, the Tranby Croft Scandal of 1890...  
good God...

HOLMES

You can stop, Watson. I shall summarize. What you are gazing upon is a man born into money and privilege who has spent his entire life waiting for his mother to die. He has no sense of purpose, no vocation, and so he fills his days with smoking, gluttony, and liaisons with women from all classes of society. He races horses and yachts, and has private rooms at half the brothels in Europe, all of which is financed by the taxpayers of England to the tune of over one hundred thousand pounds per year, a sum which he feels he richly deserves.

BERTIE

I do deserve it! Do you have any idea of the number of luncheons I need to attend? The number of ribbons I cut on a weekly basis?

HOLMES

And as you can see, he adores dressing up in uniform although he has never spent a day of military service in his life. Of course, the various courtiers and sycophants who surround him will never tell him what a miserable piece of human debris he is because they are all congenital cowards seeking to benefit from their association with him. In short, while he and his kind are a plague in almost every society, I present to you the sorriest example of upper-class vermin you are ever likely to meet.

IRENE

(to BERTIE)

What in God's name is wrong with you?

BERTIE

Enough! You have insulted my honor, sir.

HOLMES

If your honor is insulted by a simple recitation of facts then you never had any honor to begin with.

(BERTIE picks up one of his gloves,  
strides forward, and slaps HOLMES  
across the face with it.)

BERTIE

There! I challenge you to a duel, sir.

HOLMES

Excellent. Then as the challenged party, I shall select our weapons. Watson, please be so kind as to fetch the box that you will find beneath my dresser.

(as WATSON heads for the  
bedroom)

And you may as well get your medical bag while you're at it.

BERTIE

Duelling pistols, Mr. Holmes? You are making a serious mistake. As your housekeeper deduced, I am quite experienced with guns. On my last trip to India I shot no fewer than twenty-nine tigers.

HOLMES

How incredibly brave of you. I take it the tigers did not shoot back?

(WATSON reenters carrying a box and his medical bag.)

HOLMES

Offer our guest first choice of weapon.

(WATSON puts his medical bag down, then opens the box and holds it before BERTIE, who pulls out a pair of boxing gloves.)

BERTIE

Boxing, eh? That suits me. I'm going to enjoy putting you in your place, Mr. Holmes. I've fought a few rounds in my time.

(BERTIE hands the gloves to WATSON as he removes his coat, then HOLMES and BERTIE put the gloves on.)

HOLMES

No doubt against opponents specifically instructed not to fight back. But you are no longer in your pampered cocoon at Buckingham Palace or Marlborough House. You are in the real world, where actions have consequences.

(BERTIE smiles, then takes a wild swing at HOLMES, who nimbly avoids it. BERTIE continues throwing haymakers, which HOLMES easily ducks or parries.)

HOLMES

(to IRENE)

Behold the boxing style of the schoolyard bully, my dear. Wild, uncontrolled, and undisciplined. For myself, I prefer a more scientific approach. For example, I am aware that a bout with typhoid fever some years ago has given His Royal Highness a bad left leg, and so I adopt a southpaw style to jab over his slow left hand...

(HOLMES makes the adjustment and delivers a series of stinging jabs, dancing around BERTIE the way a hound might torment a wounded bear.)

HOLMES

...and now, disoriented, weary, with his vision blurred, it's a simple enough matter to dispatch my opponent with what is perhaps my favorite punch, the cross-hit under the jaw...

(HOLMES executes the punch just as he described it. BERTIE staggers back, practically out on his feet, and HOLMES guides him into the armchair, where BERTIE sits in a daze.)

HOLMES

Thus ever to tyrants. Your medical bag, I believe, Doctor.

(As WATSON takes off BERTIE's gloves and attends to him, IRENE helps HOLMES remove his gloves.)

IRENE

I know that I shouldn't enjoy witnessing a man being pummelled nearly senseless, by my God that was wonderful!

HOLMES

Thank you, my dear.

(IRENE kisses HOLMES on the cheek as BERTIE recovers his senses.)

BERTIE

Mr. Holmes, I will not deny that I am possessed of certain failings. Certainly my youthful indiscretions are nothing to be proud of, but please be so kind to acknowledge that despite my status, I am quite ready to forget my rank--

HOLMES

--as long as everyone else remembers it.

BERTIE

--that with my mother in seclusion I have been the public face of the monarchy for the past thirty years--

HOLMES

--more's the pity.

BERTIE

--and I am, when all is said and done, extremely punctual!

WATSON

Well, that's something.

IRENE

True.

(BERTIE struggles to his feet. As WATSON helps him put his coat back on, BERTIE pulls an envelope identical to Escoffier's from his pocket and holds it out.)

BERTIE

So please help me! I received this letter this morning...

(HOLMES snatches the envelope from BERTIE, removes the letter, and he and IRENE examine it.)

HOLMES

Aha! Once again we have the industrial paper...

IRENE

...a broad-nibbed pen...

HOLMES

...and coarse, simple strokes.

IRENE

Monsieur Escoffier and His Royal Highness would appear to have the same correspondent.

WATSON

What does it say, Holmes?

HOLMES

It's quite short and to the point.

(reading)

"You will not be in the parade for your mother's Diamond Jubilee tomorrow, for today you die."

(putting the letter down)

"The Anarchists."

WATSON

Wonderful, Holmes! How do you know it's the anarchists?

HOLMES

That's how the letter is signed.

WATSON

But why would they want to kill the Prince of Wales?

HOLMES

To bring an end to the British Monarchy; indeed, to bring an end to all forms of government, which they see as hopelessly corrupt. Their motto is quite telling, "A pound of dynamite is better than a bushel of bullets."

(to BERTIE)

But as you say, both your mother and yourself have received such threats in the past. You can surround yourself with the finest security in Europe, so why come to me?

BERTIE

I don't trust them! I don't trust any of them. It only takes one traitor, and anarchists fill the streets and sewers of London like rats. King Umberto of Italy was almost assassinated two months ago, and I fear that I am next. Beyond that, I was advised to seek your help.

HOLMES

Really? By whom? Surely not Scotland Yard.

BERTIE

No. It was a quite beautiful and brilliant woman I met at The Savoy Hotel.

HOLMES

Do you have a name?

WATSON

Unless I am greatly mistaken, I believe His Royal Highness must be referring to the Duchess of Killarney.

BERTIE

Yes! Precisely! She said she knew you Dr. Watson, but my advisors have warned me against her.

WATSON

And now you fear that your very own advisors are part of a plot to betray you.

BERTIE

Exactly! I have enemies everywhere!

HOLMES

What? Who is this woman? I've never heard of her.

WATSON

The Duchess of Killarney, of course. Do try to keep up, Holmes. It's all quite...what's the word? Elementary.

BERTIE

I assure you, Mr. Holmes, the Duchess is quite unlike any woman I have ever met. She has this dark fire in her eyes and do you know, when we first met last week, she was so delighted that she asked me for both an autograph and a photograph. She seemed instinctively drawn to me, much like--

HOLMES

--flies are drawn to excrement, yes, I understand perfectly. However, it's the one thing I don't understand that intrigues me most...

(fixing his gaze on an  
uncomfortable WATSON)

...and so I will take your case, Your Royal Highness.

BERTIE

Thank you, Mr. Holmes! And please, do call me Bertie. Is there anything else I can tell you?

HOLMES

No, I appear to be quite out of my depth at the moment. On the other hand...Watson? You seem to be well up on things. Perhaps you have a question or two for Bertie.

WATSON

Well, actually, I did have one thought. This being your mother's Diamond Jubilee and all, it got me to wondering, just out of idle curiosity, does Queen Victoria happen to own any significant diamonds herself?

BERTIE

Why yes. She owns the Koh-i-Noor.

WATSON

The what?

IRENE

The famed Koh-i-Noor Diamond. Koh-i-Noor is a Persian phrase, it means Mountain of Light...

HOLMES

...and at over one hundred carats, it's one of the largest and most valuable diamonds in the world.

(to WATSON)

Are you certain that your question was prompted entirely by idle curiosity?

WATSON

What can I say? I'm a curious fellow.

HOLMES

To put it mildly.

(turning to BERTIE)

Well, given the nature of the threats that may be lurking outside these rooms, I suggest that you not leave our company for the remainder of the day.

BERTIE

Gladly. I feel safer here than I would under armed guard at Buckingham Palace. But please, for the love of God, tell me you have something to eat. I'm absolutely famished. What does your housekeeper specialize in?

HOLMES

Ah...I'm afraid that Mrs. Hudson doesn't actually prepare meals, as it were.

BERTIE

What the devil do you mean? That's absurd!  
(looking at IRENE more closely)  
(MORE)

BERTIE (cont'd)

Do you seriously mean to tell me that--hold on now...I recognize your face! Surely, you're...why yes, it's Irene Adler, the American soprano! I saw the premiere of your performance in *Esmeralda* at the Theatre Royal. But aren't you supposed to be--

IRENE

No, I'm not dead, it's a long story, I will thank you for your discretion, and no, I don't cook.

BERTIE

But you're a woman! You must cook something...veal, perhaps? A nice loin of pork or lamb? With a demi-glace sauce and roasted potatoes?

IRENE

I don't cook. Nothing. Ever.

BERTIE

Unbelievable. Completely and totally...this is why England is going to the dogs! Women want to smoke, women want to ride bicycles, women want to vote for God's sake, and now they can't even cook!

IRENE

You don't think women should vote?

BERTIE

Don't be ridiculous! Women voting? That's madness! They're too ignorant! Too emotional! For God's sake, at some point every month women go completely insane!

IRENE

(wrapping her hand around the hilt of a sword )

Holmes...

HOLMES

Steady...

IRENE

It is my birthday...

HOLMES

I shall make it up to you. I promise.

(IRENE releases the sword.)

BERTIE

This is not going to work. I can't possibly be expected to live like this. Perhaps a quick run out to The Savoy...I'll just have three or four courses...and one of Escoffier's most excellent soufflés for dessert.

HOLMES

If you value your life, I don't recommend leaving these rooms.

BERTIE

I'm sorry, Mr. Holmes, but I simply must have some decent food!

(The door leading to the stairs opens and MARIE enters, carrying a covered dish.)

MARIE

(Irish accent)

I'm terribly sorry to interrupt. I knocked but there was no answer-- oh, Your Royal Highness! I was hoping to find you here! And Dr. Watson! Aren't you a sight for sore eyes! It's been too long!

WATSON

Indeed it has.

BERTIE

Duchess! Yes, I took your advice! Mr. Holmes, this is the woman I spoke to you about--the Duchess of Killarney!

(to MARIE)

Mr. Holmes has agreed to help me!

MARIE

(Irish accent)

How wonderful! I was hoping he would, but then a terrible thought occurred to me. In reading Dr. Watson's marvelous stories, I know that Sherlock Holmes doesn't eat when he's on a case. Well, I knew that would never do for my Bertie, so I stopped by The Savoy Hotel and had Escoffier prepare you some food.

BERTIE

Chef Escoffier himself? But how is that possible? He has an entire kitchen to run.

MARIE

(Irish accent)

I can be very persuasive...

(indicating the dish)

...and so I have your favorite dish.

BERTIE

Impossible...Poularde Derby? Chicken stuffed with truffles and foie gras?

(off her nod)

And surrounded by more truffles cooked in champagne and slices of foie gras on a small crouton of bread fried in butter?

(MARIE uncovers the dish and BERTIE takes in the intoxicating scent, practically swooning with delight.)

BERTIE

It's heaven! I'm in heaven, you beautiful, beautiful creature! Isn't she wonderful? But I really am feeling quite faint, I must lie down for a moment.

MARIE

(Irish accent)

Of course! Let me just take you to one of the bedrooms. And don't you worry, Chef Escoffier himself will be bringing more food soon.

BERTIE

There is a God above! Thank you, my angel...

(Still carrying the dish, MARIE guides BERTIE towards one of the bedrooms and they both exit, with BERTIE casting a knowing look back just before he disappears. HOLMES and IRENE turn to one another.)

HOLMES

Is it just me, or does the Duchess of Killarney bear a striking resemblance to Marie Chartier?

IRENE

The same thought struck me as well, and as she was passing I noted a faint fragrance of Phul Nana perfume...

HOLMES

...not to mention her striking red lips, bearing a hue I recently observed on an empty sherry glass.

(They both turn to WATSON.)

WATSON

Well, this is all part of my plan, obviously.

HOLMES

Do tell.

WATSON

Marie Chartier stopped by while you two were out and hinted at a most incredible scheme involving Escoffier and the Prince of Wales. So, rather than chasing her all over London, I thought it was best that I pose as her confederate and bring her here, where we might expose her plan and put a stop to the whole business!

(At the sound of a bedroom door closing, they all turn to see MARIE as she re-enters.)

MARIE

(French accent)

Well, well, well. And so we meet again. You are looking well, Mr. Holmes. And you, Miss Adler. Always a pleasure. Bertie is resting comfortably with his chicken. Poor thing.

IRENE

Bertie is a pig.

MARIE

Of course he is. You think I do not know that?

IRENE

Then that's one thing we agree on, but I suspect the only thing. So let me say straight out, Miss Chartier, that while I know Mr. Holmes enjoys these intellectual duels, I'm afraid I don't have the patience for that.

(taking a sword and pointing it  
at MARIE)

What are you up to? Out with it!

MARIE

There is no need to threaten me. I am perfectly happy to tell you what I am up to. I am going to assassinate the Prince of Wales in the rooms of Sherlock Holmes.

(BLACKOUT.)

END OF ACT ONE