

A Snooper's Reward

Lady Detective, Book One

By

Sterling Scott

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Chapter 1 The Snoop

While no sound betrayed her approach, Mrs. Caldwell's cold fingers announce her discovery of my snooping as their grip upon my ear pulls my face away from the keyhole – away from my clandestine viewing of the new footman, James. The iron fingers continue their painful heave as my face is tilted to look into the icy stare of the household manager. As the painful upward drag upon my ear continues, I struggle to rise from my position of kneeling on the floor until I stand before a middle-aged woman who now hisses spindle into my face.

“Lottie... come quietly,” Mrs. Caldwell firmly commands, and then proceeds to drag me sideways along the hall.

Striving to keep my ear from being permanently damaged, I scurry crab-like behind the powerful woman with round features as she drags me through the door separating the men's quarters from the main servant's hall. We quietly pass the dining hall entrance where the sound of clattering dishes announces the preparations for breakfast. I am grateful that the cook, Mrs. Brown, and her kitchen maid, Millie, are too busy to observe the awkward nature of our passing.

Approaching the open door of Mrs. Caldwell's office, she pushes me through until I am pressed between her large frame and the back of her desk chair. She has left the door open as she asks me a most rhetorical question, “*What... my little harlot... were you doing?*”

I had awoken early and had decided to use the opportunity to wander about the house alone. After dressing, I completed my task of lighting the upstairs fires to begin warming the house from the early morning's chill. With my morning task completed and as no one else was yet about, I slipped into the men's quarters and directed my attention to James. I watched him through his bedroom door's keyhole.

The tall footman of about my own 25 years of age is particularly handsome, and on this adventure I specifically fancied to see his cock. His rather lanky frame results in accentuating the apparent size of his male member. Despite the possibility of an illusion, I do perceive it to truly be of greater size than the average cock. It is certainly more impressive than his predecessor's. While I'm no virgin, my experiences with direct interaction with a man's member are somewhat limited. However, I do perceive myself to be a connoisseur of male anatomy having observed all

of the men within the household nude at one time or another. Upon previous keyhole observations I have been rewarded with several such views of James' cock. I have even watched as he bathed it, and then stimulated his manhood to its fullest attention. Trembling, I watched as jets of his creamy seed sprayed forth upon a towel. This morning I had failed to notice Mrs. Caldwell's approach due to my stalwart concentration of the view through the keyhole as James was clearly preparing to repeat this maneuver.

"Nothing," I whine in response to Mrs. Caldwell's unanswerable question with as much innocence as I can muster. And then in a vain attempt to imagine an excuse for my posture as she had found me kneeling on the floor I add, "I was scooping up a patch of dirt."

To indicate her unacceptance of my excuse and my destiny, Mrs. Caldwell reaches backwards and retrieves her paddle that is hung upon a hook beside the door by means of a short leather lanyard. "Up with your skirt and over the chair," she informs me of my fate as she uses the paddle to point at the straight back of her chair.

Looking at the still open door, I stoop to gather the hem of my frock, but I pause before pulling it up to my waist.

"It will remain open, tart." She reads the question on my mind that has not yet found its way to my lips. "You afford no one else in this household any privacy and thus *none* will be granted *to you*."

I lift my skirt and expose my undergarments. *She is really angry.*

While I've experienced her paddle on several occasions for a variety of inattentions, she has always closed the door before. This time not only is the door to remain open, allowing everyone to hear my screams, but my *derrière* will be directed toward the open door for all those who pass by to observe. Using the bunched fabric of my frock as a cushion, I lift myself onto the chair's top edge. Due to my short stature of only five feet and one inch, this lifts my feet off the floor as I use both hands to support my inverted weight upon the chair's seat. As I learned during my previous experiences, this position makes it completely impossible for me to use my hands to protect my nether from her assault.

Compounding my agony, Mrs. Caldwell unties my drawers and pulls the two halves open to expose my bare alabaster flesh to her paddle *and* to any prying eyes. Further, she adds to my humiliation as she pulls this meager fabric down to my knees. The material would have fallen completely to the floor had I not instantly crossed by ankles to both capture my drawers and to

also hide as much of my cunny's folds from view as possible.

"The door, Mrs. Caldwell... *please!*" I beg her to reconsider closing the door.

"I told you last time that your next punishment would be more fitting to your crime than a mere paddling," is her only response. While she did not exactly tell me that my next paddling would be a public affair, she did indeed say these words when I was caught snooping upon James a month ago, a mere three days after his arrival into the household. While this current predicament is the third time I had been caught snooping, my risk-reward balance is completely in my favor as I have successfully completed at least a score of such stealthy observations without being caught. "You have the choice of quitting your position and leaving this employment this very minute with no reference – if this is truly too much for you to bear," she continues her lecture, offering me a possible avoidance.

However, her alternative is really no choice at all. I have been in the employment of Mr. and Mrs. Livingston for over two years and the possibility that I might gain another maid's position without a reference is completely nil. So, I respond in a near whisper, "Please proceed, madam."

Nary a heartbeat later the first burning smack lands upon my right cheek expelling a sharp shriek from my throat that doubtlessly has alerted the servant's quarters to these proceedings. Mrs. Caldwell pauses her assault to state the obvious, "Unless it is your intention to alert the entire household to your crime you will steady yourself and hold your tongue."

Clamping my jaw tightly shut in the same manner as I have closed my thighs, I await the next smack. Not to produce any melodrama, Mrs. Caldwell proceeds with haste to alternately apply her paddle with never before experienced force to my left and right butt cheeks.

She is really mad!

While I lack the presence of mind to count them, I manage to take the next twenty or so in the English stalwart tradition. But then she gets the best of me when my panting breaths force my mouth to open. Wail follows wail as the burning pain in my bottom tosses away all of my composure. Tears from my sobs stream down my face and along my nose where they drip down to pool upon the wooden chair seat. My ankles release their grasp upon each other as my feet struggle to kick; in an effort to swim through the air, I seek escape from the endless onslaught of pain. Needless to say, my drawers fly away and all semblance of privacy for my pink private parts is lost.

Oddly, I am able to regain some control over my shrieks when the image of James standing in the doorway admiring my most secret lady places floats into my consciousness. Whether he is actually watching or not, I don't know – but I find myself hoping that he is. And then, after five more of her worst, Mrs. Caldwell stops her attack.

While I gasp for breath between my sobs and streaming tears, I hear her cold voice close to my ear. “Lottie, I do mean for this tawdry behavior *to stop*. With fair warning, I am saying that the next time you will be displayed in the dining hall as Mr. Howard fillets your arse with his cane. Do you understand me?”

While actual speech is not yet possible through my choking sobs, I murmur something that I intend to be ‘yes’ and I nod my head.

Clearly she comprehends my meaning of understanding as she uses her fingers to apply one last hard pinch upon my burning bruised butt as she snarls, “See to it! Now, gather yourself and put the room back in order, and don't be late for breakfast.”

This threat of a fully public caning as my next punishment clearly shifts my risk-reward balance to the negative. Should I be caught again the punishment will be only shy of pure execution. However, how can I ever stop my driving *need to snoop*?

With this final comment Mrs. Caldwell returns the paddle to its hook and pulls the door closed as she steps through it.

After taking another minute to regain my breath, I push myself down from the chair back. Holding my hem high, I point my bottom toward the mirror and while looking over my shoulder I examine my flaming red flesh with blotches of purple bruises.

This is going to hurt for a long time!

I use my apron to wipe my tears from the chair seat and then return it to its proper place. Finding my drawers, I put them back on and then with a final wipe of my apron across my tear-streaked face, I open the door and slowly walk back to the dining hall.

I walk slowly because my bottom is still on fire and because I don't want to attract any more attention than I already have. While it is uncertain whether or not the others know of the nature of my crime against their sanctity, everyone certainly knows that I have been punished and someone has placed a pillow in my chair at the breakfast table. As I gingerly take my seat, the mistress's lady's maid, Harlow, James, and Mrs. Caldwell are already seated. While staring into my lap I quietly say, “Thank you,” for whoever provided the pillow. Quickly and unusually

silently the others in the household staff enter and take their seats. After a moment Mr. Howard, who is the butler and Mr. Livingston's valet, enters and we all stand while he says a morning prayer. Then we all sit and begin to pass the serving dishes. After a few tense moments the usual morning chatter begins.

The next day the worst of the pain has subsided, though sitting remains painful. Doubtless, I will be spending yet another night sleeping atop my bed covers with my nightdress pulled up to my waist. Last night, Mary, the other maid and my roommate, had placed a damp cloth over my still flaming red bottom to ease the pain sufficiently to allow me to find sleep.

Now in the early afternoon as I complete cleaning Mr. Livingston's bedroom, Mrs. Caldwell darkens the doorway announcing, "Finish quickly and put your things away. Your mistress, Mrs. Livingston, is waiting for you in the drawing room."

This is it, I'm to be sacked!

However, Mrs. Livingston herself would not bother with me. She would simply have Mrs. Caldwell throw me out the basement door on my ear. "What's this about?" I cautiously ask.

Mrs. Caldwell fixes her cold stare upon me and icicles appear in the air between us as she says, "Your snooping, what else?"

Will my mistress want to beat me herself?

Not to increase Mrs. Livingston's ire with my tardiness, I hasten to finish cleaning and put my bucket and brushes away. After washing my hands and changing my apron, I trot up the stairs to the drawing room. Standing quietly in the doorway, I wait to be acknowledged and invited inside the room. Mrs. Livingston and her good friend Mrs. Hygate are seated on the couch while another woman in a plain brown suit with a lacy white blouse under a matching brown vest is seated in a facing wingback chair. James is serving them tea and biscuits; he steals a glance at me though the three women continue their quiet conversation unaware of my presence. In a moment he finishes his task and takes his leave. As James walks towards me, the eyes of the unknown woman in the brown suit follow him, and that is when she sees me.

The unknown woman's steady, unabashed gaze continues to study me, and then Mrs. Livingston becomes aware of her guest's misplaced concentration. Mrs. Livingston halts her conversation with Mrs. Hygate, and both their attentions are also drawn to my presence. For a long moment the three women stare at me as though a bug under a magnifying glass. At long

last, Mrs. Livingston says to me, “Lottie, do come in and close the door.”

Slowly I enter the room and close the door. *What can they want that requires such discretion?*

I stand before them, looking at my shoes, struggling to keep my nervous hands still by my side. “Madam, I believe you asked to see me,” I say as a man might address his executioner.

“Yes, I did indeed, Lottie.” She says each word with a precise annunciation as she acknowledges my question. But, the three women only continue to stare at me. What seems to be a full minute later, but was probably only a few seconds, Mrs. Livingston continues, “Do you know Mrs. Hygate?”

What can this have to do with my snooping?

To admit to knowing of her is admitting that I listen in on private conversations between my mistress and her guests. However, to deny knowing about her is rather ridiculous because she is a frequent guest in the house.

How can this involve my crime of snooping?

“I-I recall having heard her name, madam,” I say with a nod toward Mrs. Hygate. I return my gaze to my shoes. “But, I’m certain that I have never had the honor of making her acquaintance.”

“Hmm,” is my mistress’s only response, and the three women resume their silent study of me.

“Have you ever been to Mrs. Hygate’s house?” the woman in the brown suit asks.

“No, ma’am, I don’t know where she lives.”

“Do you know her husband or son?” she continues to interrogate me.

“No,” I reply, wondering if I should admit to having overheard conversations where she talked about her son, David.

“What about her household staff – are you acquainted with any of her servants?”

“I don’t think so,” I answer, continuing to stare at the floor.

“You’re certain that you have never seen any of her family or staff?” the unidentified woman presses her questions. Her voice is firm and confident, yet somehow, I sense that she harbors a secret tenderness.

I glance at her and then return my gaze to the floor, “Madam, there is some possibility, of course, but I have never been aware of making any of their acquaintances.”

Again, only a “Hmm,” from her in reply. I study a scuffmark on my left shoe, hoping that no one else notices it.

Mrs. Livingston breaks the silence, “Lady Margaret Rowan has honored us with her attendance.” And she nods a polite bow toward the woman in the brown suit saying, “My lady, this is my maid Lottie, or actually, Charlotte.”

“My lady, forgive me for my insolence,” I say and quickly curtsy. Looking closely at her for the first time, I see that the material of her rather plainly colored skirt is of fine silk and the matching vest is ornately embroidered. Delicate lace embellishes the neck and cuffs of her blouse – she is indeed rich!

“Do you know of me?” she inquires.

“My lady, indeed I do as what Londoner, or nary what Englishman could not have heard of the lady detective who solved the Great Gold Robbery?” I say with excitement, meeting such a celebrity. “It was in the *Times*.” Lady Rowan is a London detective and through extraordinary contrivance she captured the thieves who stole £12,000 worth of gold from the Folkston railroad. While the robbery occurred two years ago in May of 1855, the identification of the thieves was only accomplished six months ago.

“Do you know how to read?” she asks with some incredulousness in her voice, as she must doubt that I really did read about her in the *Times*.

“I can make out enough of the printed words to gather the meaning of most stories, and if they take care with their letters, I can discern the handwriting of Mrs. Caldwell and Mr. Howard, my lady.”

“Mmm,” she muses and shortly adds, “Sit down,” as she points to a second wingback chair facing her.

I glance to my mistress and upon her approving signal, I gently sit in the chair wincing only slightly as the flames erupt in my fanny. The overstuffed chair helps immensely.

“I understand that you have a propensity for – snooping,” Lady Rowan flatly states.

It was a statement and I am not usually expected to comment upon statements made by my betters, but she does appear to be waiting for my confession. “Yes, ma’am,” I whisper.

Why in the world is such an esteemed detective investigating my crime?

“Indeed,” Mrs. Livingston adds sternly, “but, there won’t be *any more* of it. Will there, Lottie?”

“No, ma’am,” I say only slightly louder than a whisper as I hold statue still in my seat.

“Actually,” Lady Rowan continues with a sudden jocular tone, “in my business snooping is an asset.” And then she chuckles, though no one else considers this an invitation to join her in the joke. “Of course, a detective’s job is to snoop.” The four of us remain silent for a moment and then she somberly continues along the point of her visit. “Lottie, Mrs. Livingston has most graciously consented to my inquiry of you. Would you consider taking a temporary leave from your position in this household to work for me – snooping?”

“My lady, it would be an honor to assist you in any way possible,” my tongue proclaims before my mind can fully process what she might be asking of me.

“Bear in mind,” she cautions, “that if you are caught snooping you will be subject to an action similar to that Mrs. Caldwell administers, maybe worse. At a time like that you would be required to hold your tongue very still. You absolutely must not – no matter what the punishment – divulge the true intention behind your snooping. Trust me, if you wag your tongue and reveal any of my business, you will not feel the cane for only one day. I will have you imprisoned, where you will feel the cane *every day*. Is my meaning *perfectly* clear?”

I look straight into her eyes for the first time and firmly say, “Yes, my lady, I understand your meaning in full, and I still welcome the opportunity to serve you.”

“Excellent.” She smiles and leans back into her chair. “From this moment, you are in my employ. The business that we are about is in the service of Mrs. Hygate.” She gestures to the woman who, up to this point, had remained silent.

“Indeed,” Mrs. Hygate begins, “there has been some thievery within my household and as much as it pains me to say, I must suspect that one of my servants has been stealing my jewelry. Several items, all with gold and precious stones, have disappeared from my dressing room over the past month. After my diamond necklace was stolen two days ago, I hired Lady Rowan to investigate. She has suggested that I invite her – under the cover of a disguise – into my home for a brief stay. Her lady’s maid would then... snoop about the servants’ quarters to reveal the culprit.”

I nod again, although I do not fully understand what this has to do with me, and then Lady Rowan adds, “However, I don’t currently have a lady’s maid.”

All eyes steady their focus upon me.

“Mrs. Hygate told me of the thefts and their plan,” Mrs. Livingston injects, “and I

suggested *you*.” As there could possibly have been any misunderstanding in her words, she stabs the air with her finger, pointing at me.

“I see!” I exclaim, finally getting the point of the discussion. “You want *me* to be your lady’s maid, and snoop upon Mrs. Hygate’s servants,” I say looking into Lady Rowan’s eyes. “You want me to help determine which one is the thief.”

“Indeed,” Lady Rowan concludes with a chuckle.

“Madam, it would be an honor to be your lady’s maid, and to assist you in a detective investigation!”