

sly ^{the} **Sleuth** and the Pet Mysteries



by Donna Jo Napoli and Robert Furrow
illustrated by Heather Maione

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Summary: Sly the Sleuth, also known as Sylvia, solves three mysteries for her friends and neighbors, all involving pets, through her detective agency, Sleuth for Hire.

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The artwork for this book was created with pen and ink.

*Watercolors and colored pencils were also used
for the jacket artwork.*

*To Taxi.
Love, Robert and Mamma*

*For my children, Luke and
Lindsay, with love
—H.M.*





Case #1:

Sly and the Fat Cat



My Name

I was born Sylvia. My parents called me Sylvia.
My friends called me Sylvia.

A couple of years ago a new family moved in
next door. They had a son, Brian. Brian was two
then. (He's four now.)

Brian couldn't say "Sylvia."

He called me Thi. Then Si. Then Sly.

I liked that. And the name stuck. Now everyone
calls me Sly.

What's in a name?

Who knows.

But my friend Melody plays the piano. And my friend Jack is always jumping out of places.

And I am a sleuth.

A sleuth must sneak around. And gather clues.
And be smart enough to figure out what the clues mean.

A sleuth must be sly.

I am Sly the Sleuth.

So maybe there's a lot in a name.



My Agency

I run an agency called Sleuth for Hire. I solve problems. But I am picky. I take only cases that

are fun. And only cases a cat would care about.

Why?

I like cats. Cats sneak around, like sleuths.

And I have a cat. Her name is Taxi. She's my buddy. Every sleuth needs someone to talk to. Taxi is a good listener. She purrs when I tell her how I solved a case.

When I want her, I go outside and call, "Taxi, Taxi." Strangers passing on the sidewalk think I am crazy. But that's okay. It's good for business. My father says there's no such thing as bad advertising. The important thing is that people remember you.

Taking My First Case

My first case was about a fat cat. It happened just a week after I had announced the opening of my agency.

Kate stopped me on my way to the playground with Melody. "My cat is fat and getting fatter."

“So what?” I said.

“I don’t want her to be fat,” said Kate. “It’s not good for her.”

“Feed her less.”

“I do,” said Kate.

Melody pointed her toe. “Bring her to my house and I’ll play the piano and she can dance off her fat.”

“My cat’s too fat to dance,” said Kate. “She can hardly move.”

This seemed like a pretty dumb case. I didn’t want to take it.

But then Kate said, “I’m worried.” She looked like she might cry. She added, “I love Clarissa.”

I believed her. No one would name their cat Clarissa unless they loved her. And I understood, because I love Taxi.

“Let me think about this,” I said.

Melody and Kate went on to the playground.

I went home. I stood on the front step and called, “Taxi!”



A man on the sidewalk looked at me, then looked away fast.

Taxi came running.

I rubbed her behind the ears and on her back right above her tail, which is her favorite spot.

Brian came over from next door. "Play with me."

"Not now," I said. "I'm thinking."

Brian screamed, "Think stink." He pulled Taxi's tail and ran away.

This case was about a cat. And it was about food. Taxi was a cat and Taxi loved food. So I knew Taxi would like listening to me talk about this case. Probably any cat would.

I went to the playground and found Kate.

"Okay," I said. "Take me to see Clarissa's food dish."

Clarissa

Clarissa's food dish had her name on it, drawn in big letters with a blue marker. It also had

pictures of fish drawn in green marker. It was pretty. And it was empty. And clean.

“Did you wash this dish?” I asked.

“No. Clarissa always licks it clean.”

Wow. Clarissa was quite a cat. The dish was perfectly clean.

“It’s time for Clarissa’s breakfast,” said Kate. She put one-third of a can of cat food in Clarissa’s dish. Then she added a small handful of crunchy, dry cat food.

“That’s all?” I asked.

“Yup.”

“How many times a day does she get a meal like that?”

“Breakfast and supper,” said Kate.

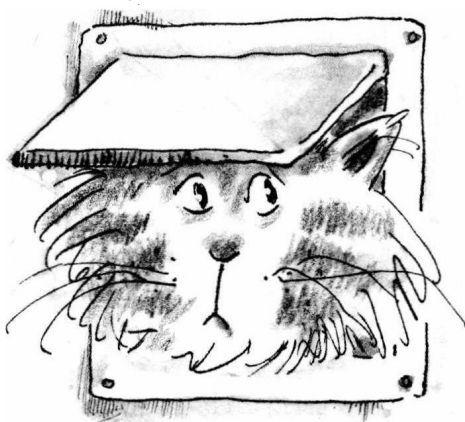
“That’s all?” I asked.

“Yup.”

That was less than Taxi ate, and Taxi wasn’t fat. “Clarissa should be a thin cat.”

“The vet said that too,” said Kate. “But see for yourself.” Kate went to the window and called, “Clarissa, breakfast!”

The next thing I knew, a very large fuzzy gray head came through the middle of the rubber cat door. Clarissa looked around. "Meow," she said. Then her two front legs came through. "Meow!" she said louder. She was huge. And she was stuck.



Kate grabbed Clarissa's front legs and gently pulled her inside.

Clarissa was the fattest cat I'd ever seen. And she didn't have a collar. People who love their cats put collars on them. "Why don't you have a collar on your cat?"

"It pops off," said Kate.

"How can a collar pop off?"

Kate opened a drawer and took out a collar.

Clarissa was eating away happily.

Kate put the collar on Clarissa. Clarissa's neck was so big, the collar barely made it around.

As soon as it was on, Clarissa stopped eating. She worked her front paw under the collar. The clasp gave and the collar popped off. Clarissa went back to eating.

Easy Answers

Clarissa ate every morsel in her dish. She licked the plate. Then she sat and cleaned her paws and face.

Kate petted Clarissa tenderly.

"Clarissa is even fatter now than she was when she came in," I said. "How will she get out her cat door?"

Kate opened the people door and Clarissa waddled outside. "Can you help me figure out what's making Clarissa so fat?"

“Maybe she’s going to have kittens,” I said.

“The vet said she can’t,” said Kate.

Oh, well. So much for easy answers.

We stood side by side and watched Clarissa lie down in the sun.

A couple of sparrows hopped about in a bush.

I got an idea. It was a long shot, but it was worth a try. “Do you have stale bread?” I asked.

“What?” said Kate.

“You know, bread to feed birds. Got any?”

“Sure.” Kate opened a bag on the counter. She handed me a piece of old bread.

I crushed it in my hand and threw the bread crumbs on the ground near Clarissa.

Clarissa looked, but she didn’t move.

The sparrows flew down and ate the crumbs.

Clarissa watched them. Then she rolled onto her back.

“Well, your cat didn’t get fat eating birds,” I said. “I bet she’d be too slow to catch them even if she tried.”

“Poor Clarissa,” said Kate.



The Search for clues

Clarissa slept.

While she slept, I went around the yard looking for clues.

Kate followed me. "What are you doing?"

"Looking for clues."

"Like what?"

"I don't know."

"What good is it to keep looking, then?"

This was not an encouraging question to hear on my first case. I held my head high. "That's what sleuths do," I said.