



THE SCHOOL CATS

by Catherine Olver

The library cat

climbs, balancing on pauses
quieter than commas,
slinking inkily as print.
Her name is missing
from the catalogue.
To look her up, look up
between the spines:
two olivine eyes.
Her insubordinate claws
draw in the library's dusty margins.
She twines enticingly around the ladder.
Her tall tail leads me up— up—
to where I'm not aloud.

The cafeteria cat

ice-creams her nose. She yawns,
then jet-propels from my dinner tray—
but the pudding-thief streaking away
forgets to lick off her magnetic socks.
She leaves a sticky trail of lunar soil
and my moon-empty bowl rolling
off the table, into space

The lab cat

is fantastically reactive.
A pupil grew him for a science project,
snipped DNA to make a special pet,
drip-fed the scratchy kitten by pipette.
If you touch him suddenly,
he goes experimental:
a hissing bunsen burner spitting
hydrochloric acid,
his fur all stands on end and sparks
with static,
every whisker an electric wire.
Will he purr, or will he start a fire,
if I try to stroke him backwards?

