

**ORPHAN CATS**

*(Alison Bashford)*

Sleek and silent,  
In dead of night,  
They prowl the rain-soaked alleys,  
To where the toppled trash bins lie  
Sidelong in the gullies.  
The pungent, putrid waste spills out  
O'er wet and stony ground,  
As one by one six half-starved cats  
Begin to gather round.  
Each with wildness in its eyes  
And hunger-hollowed belly,  
They spring upon the pauper scraps  
Scattered in the alley.  
Investigating empty cans,  
With ragged, jagged lids,  
Impatient paws send them clattering  
Into the gutter grids.  
Feasting on the glass-eyed heads  
Of skeletal bodied fish,  
They fight and scratch for every morsel  
Of their meagre supper dish.  
Excluding a one eyed tabby,  
Who goes by the name of Jack,  
Not one would dare  
To touch the fare  
Of the leader of this pack.  
And as the pale and milky moon  
Slips behind a cloud,  
These half-fed, half-bred felines wander  
'Neath the midnight's shroud.