

FELINE OFFBEAT  
Glenna Holloway

Just because you warmed yourself in an old beret  
on the floor of the Good Will shop--  
Just because a part-time cop  
thought you looked like Chevalier  
when his burglar-hunting flashlight beam  
was checking out your noise--  
And just because your wit and poise  
keep conning him out of cream  
and chicken or fresh-caught fish,  
don't think I don't know  
who you are and where you go  
when you blink, stretch and vanish.

Frenchy, you're not fooling me  
when April scents slant through the kitchen screen  
and elastic springtime shadows lean  
against the hickory.  
You take your stub tail to a farther home--  
silent tawn on quilted spade feet  
stalking an older untame beat  
your blood remembers-- nose in cool loam,  
dew and moss-green tang, claw in spicy bark.  
No, I can't catch you bellied in the meadow rue  
but sometimes you leave a tell-tale clue  
on the zagging trails you mark.

Your friend, the cop, can usually spot a fraud  
but you play the continental comic so well  
you've got him badge and baggage in your spell,  
you pagan appetite, big-eyed and pawed!  
He thinks you're an innocent white-chested loser,  
but generations back, say two or three,  
a brazen bobcat climbed your family tree  
and soon you'll be a bruiser.  
Now you've added full-grown rabbits to your diet.  
For days I've also missed that old horned owl.  
Your sleep-shredding sound is no house cat's yowl;  
you're also a master of quiet.

Our lawman calls you his mascot, his best one.  
He doesn't see the lurk-and-lunge-at-prey  
designed in your shoulder, neck and jaw at play.  
Still, I'll buy your act, book you for a long run.  
I know you're part savage and uncouth--  
well, Frenchy, I've got wildling genes myself,  
no sign of pedigree, but none of pelf.  
So we'll just share the strains of truth.