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Jennifer Battles

Is that Ben I see?
Peeking from behind
Kitchen pots and pans,
Whisk in his hand,
Serene gleam in beady eyes.

Wonder if he went to visit
A movie star cousin
In a foreign city,
Learned new recipes,
Taught inmates to fricassee.

Hey Ben, said I
Whatcha been doing?
Haven't seen you in a while...
Are you moving back in,
Give up life in the sewer?
Good Gracious No! said Ben,



A curl to his lip
And twitches of his long tail.
Tried living up here—
Life below is so much better!

The food from the kitchen
I could not eat.
Concrete on the yard burned my feet.
Smell in the building after a rain,
Sewer life homesick was my pain.

Came for a visit, said Ben.
Missed seeing my peeps,
Baking them a cake.
Fred and Sue and the rest—
Missing friends sure was a test.
Who are you talking about? asked I
With a frown on my face,

Confusion in my eyes.
The family of cockroaches, said Ben,
Live in the walls and roam the halls.

Haven't you met them? asked Ben.
Most certainly have, said I.
Don't mess with their turf.
Want no trouble, no cause for alarm—
Biggest carry shanks you see.

Goodbye, said Ben,
It was good seeing you.
Will I see you when I visit again?
I'll be here, said I,
Parole board would rather eat shit
Than let someone GO!