

Denise's kids  
Bob & Peep & Rants

influenced by Joe

she's keeping  
mana find  
from babies

I wonder for maybe the tenth time why  
the Mama Wren holds that worm in her  
beak, while I saw, sitting watching her  
flutter low over the scoop of the roof, then  
dive fly high, spying me. Up on the roof  
where the sun is shining, but it's raining.

I think I should go inside & let her  
take that worm to her babies in the nest at  
the top of the carport Bob built when he was  
living here. I think I should go inside where  
Bob & Peep & Rants are through watching Secane  
Street and waiting for supper. Besides,  
Joe Dan might be calling any minute. I  
don't want to miss that, I want to get  
the boys fed & down before Joe calls.  
Joe comes over. He might come over.  
And then . . .

I picture what it'll be like . . . what it  
would be like . . . before Bob & the babies. Just  
me & Joe Dan making love in some room I  
can't picture outside of their Holbox home  
I moved into with Bob, 4 years ago. Not  
at Manai's. Not with all of my sisters &  
brothers & under droopy over after supper. That  
evening may thinking about them.

I go on into the kitchen -- thru the carport  
door where the high chair catches its sunning. Rants  
is rubbing his eye & whining "mana". Bob Peep toddles  
behind her -- dumb looking as Bob



Jennifer's little boy  
Ranks

"No juice till after supper," I say to Ranks.  
And he plops on his diapered seat, squalling  
while I go to the cabinet under the sink I  
take pulper among the cone of, what...? Soup.  
Chicken noodle-oo, which I know he won't eat.  
Knocking over a stack of Gerber's carrots I  
know Bo Peep won't eat either.

"Well, I'm offering it. Like the doctor said.  
"Just keep it; if they're hungry they'll eat."

The phone <sup>potable</sup> over the ~~comfy~~ trash can  
rings and I pick it up, wally & talking to  
Joe Don while trying to talk above Ranks's  
whining squalling & Bo Peep's chirping. I  
feel embarrassed about the background sound  
Joe Don's heavy, try to talk over it,  
laughing too loud. I have an inkling of what  
red boys like Joe Don are considered class.  
A banker's son, whose attention makes me  
feel alone ~~there~~ <sup>there</sup> & accidental mismatch.

Bo Peep latches to my leg, tugging my thigh.  
I pat her on the head, open a can of peas,  
pour it into a bowl from the drain & pop  
it into the microwave. Suddenly red ~~at~~  
Ranks for handling.

"Go to your room, ~~right now!~~"

<sup>Now</sup> Joe Don will see the ~~firm~~ certain  
side of me, my certain matter. And  
say how smart I am, how up to date on  
nothing I am, that being a ~~spokes~~ <sup>spokes</sup> is okay  
with him. Her meant, the ~~best~~ of women



the TV talk show - maybe breast is OK now.  
The two 90's it's a heck to be a ~~stranger~~.

~~Strong mother~~ ~~career woman~~ ~~with family~~  
But my job at the battery factory ~~is a mess~~ ~~and I don't know what they want~~  
Rants ~~scratching~~ ~~with his~~ ~~head~~ ~~hairs~~  
from over ~~the~~ ~~top~~ ~~of~~ ~~his~~ ~~head~~ ~~and~~ ~~Bo~~ ~~peep~~  
toddler after him. "Bubba! Bubba!"

"If this ~~is~~ ~~the~~ ~~microwave~~ I step back leaning  
against the stove ~~with~~ ~~it~~ ~~a~~ ~~countertop~~ ~~by~~ ~~me~~  
that seem sophisticated ~~modern~~ ~~to~~ ~~me~~ ~~but~~ ~~wouldn't~~ ~~to~~  
Joe Dan ~~believe~~, well don't know what is  
sophisticated, what his ~~Marah~~ ~~store~~ ~~would~~  
be like. Whether she cooks, ever.

"They'll go down in about a hour," I say to Joe  
"Right after I feed them."

"I don't know how you stand it," says Joe  
Dan. "All that racket!"

"You know how children are."

"Not me. I ~~wouldn't~~ ~~want~~ ~~to~~ ~~have~~ ~~any~~. Too  
much trouble."

~~She~~ ~~steps~~ ~~into~~ ~~Rants~~ ~~yells~~ ~~at~~ ~~Bo~~ ~~peep~~,  
hear Bo peep toddler look down ~~the~~ ~~hall~~, Rants  
behind him. A power Ranger ~~flies~~ ~~ahead~~ ~~of~~ ~~Bo~~  
peep from ~~the~~ ~~hall~~. Bo peep squeals, toddler  
falls ~~and~~ ~~grabs~~ ~~my~~ ~~leg~~. The microwave beeps.  
The light goes out, I open the door ~~and~~ ~~take~~ ~~out~~  
the hot ~~chicken~~ ~~nozzle~~ ~~ros~~. Now I've ~~have~~  
to cool it. Joe Dan is listening to Michael  
Jackson - ~~mumbling~~ ~~into~~ ~~the~~ ~~phone~~. Animal  
Quartz's ~~I~~ ~~don't~~ ~~like~~ ~~Michael~~ ~~Jackson~~.  
I don't like him - child abuser, - or  
his music. I don't say so.



Suddenly "I'd men says if I want  
to work for Skobier I gotta tow the line."  
Jordan wants for me to speak.

"What's he mean toe toe line?"

"Hell, I don't know. I'm daft what  
he tells me, if you know?"

"Yeah." Then to Ranks trying to  
climb up the high chair. "Ranks! No! Wait!"  
I get soap steam. I go to the refrigerator  
dragging the soap & take a half half-circle  
of ice from the freezer. Plop it  
into the soap.

Ranks is bawling again, stalling off down  
around the corner of the hall.

"I don't see how you stand it,"  
say Jordan. "I'd go crazy."  
"I am."

"Why don't you call up your ex, make  
him take them."

"Weebus," I say. "He gets them  
on the weekend."

"Flat out? Fair. Two da-ays!"

"He's got that little trailer you  
know?" I was sayin' that about half a trailer  
makes me all seem poor -- poor white trash.  
Sets up a companion desk Jordan I had found  
I Skobier Battery Factory.

"You coming in tonight?" "I say:

"Night."

"I'm gone here then done in about 30 minutes?"  
I carry the cold soap to the high chair,  
let Ranks high & set him in the seat. Two



knee knock against the tray. He cries  
I slap his leg, say nothing. I dodge  
down the hall into my bedroom  
mouth piece to keep Joe from hearing Renato  
crying. What's Renato & Bob & B's  
~~thought my presence that trail~~ pushed me into the  
my dark bed room. A carpet of clothes,  
stale bread on the night stand Bob &  
I bought an antique, which I doubt.

"I gotta run by the under store first,"  
says Joe & Don, "take back these movies  
I got over the weekend. You know?"  
"I'll be here," I say & hang up after  
he hangs up. Never first.

(long night with the boys & long friend --  
karaoke, etc.)

(got inside her head) (girl in NC)