

Girl Sleuth

By Brenda Hillman

A brenda is missing—where is she?

Summon the seeds & weeds, the desert whooshes. Phone the finch

with the crowded beak; a little pretenda

is learning to read

in the afternoon near the cactus caves. Near oleander & pulpy

caves with the click-click of the wren & the *shkrrrr* of the thrasher,

a skinny pretenda is learning

to read till the missing brenda

is found. Drip of syllables like olives near the saguaro.

Nancy Drew will find the secret in raincoats & wednesdays

& sticks. Nancy whose spine is yellow

or blue will find the brenda in 1962,

Nancy who has no mother,

who takes suggestions from her father & ignores them.

Gleam goes the wren ignoring the thorn. They cannot tell the difference.

Click of the smart dog's nails on linoleum.

Nancy bends over the clues,

of brenda's locket & dress. Word by word

between syllables a clue. Where has the summer gone, the autumn—

are they missing too? Maybe Nancy

will parse the secret & read the book report on Nancy Drew:

"neat pretty sly cute." Syllable by syllable

& still no brenda! Nancy

puts her hand to her forehead; is the missing

girl in the iron bird? is the clue to the girl in the locket?

