

“Australia's the key to the whole game.”—Hugo

“We climbed, and we climbed; oh, how we climbed.”—Brian Eno, *Taking Tiger Mountain (By Strategy)**

“Get” *Lost* #19

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Is there nothing YouTube piracy can't achieve? Someone [set the title track of Brian Eno's *Taking Tiger Mountain \(By Strategy\)* to an altered clip](#) of a movie I hadn't known of from a novel by the same name I'd also been unaware of: *Picnic at Hanging Rock* by Joan Lindsay. It looked interesting enough that I had to investigate, whereby I learned that it had a posthumously published epilog purporting to have been the solution to the mystery of the novel (the permanent disappearance of a group of hikers), having supposedly been a chapter cut out of the ms. at the editor's suggestion to heighten interest. The solution was that the hikers had entered (or been sucked into) a passage to another universe. However, some readers disbelieved either the provenance of that epilog or that the novel's author had actually “meant it”.

Among the skeptics is Brett McKenzie, who had (independently of reading the purported epilog) come up with [her own solution to the novel's mystery](#), which she was convinced its author had intended readers to figure out. I quote:

The solution to the mystery relies on the following three important assumptions:

1. The novel *Picnic at Hanging Rock* is a work of fiction. It was probably loosely based on a real event, but that real event may have had little resemblance to the finished storyline in the novel.... Because the novel is a work of fiction, Lindsay can be as descriptive or as vague as she wishes, and she uses this to her advantage in telling the story.
2. Joan Lindsay knew what happened to the missing people. It is worthwhile stating this because some people may argue that even though the novel is a work of fiction, Lindsay may have decided that the novel is about an unsolved mystery where even she didn't know what happened to the missing people. This thesis, however, assumes that Lindsay did know what happened.
3. Lindsay gives the reader clues in the novel to what happened to the missing people. If you believe the first two assumptions, it is easy to believe this one. That is, if the novel is a work of fiction and Lindsay knew what happened, then surely she would drop clues to it. This is important, because people will read a novel differently if they believe there [are] clues that they should be looking for!

Given the assumptions, the hard part is finding the clues. The solution becomes reasonably obvious, however, when you place importance on the similes that Joan Lindsay uses and the themes she develops throughout the novel. The interpretation of the similes are the key to finding the real solution, which is confirmed by a logical analysis of the events described in the novel....

If you believe that Joan Lindsay wrote *Picnic at Hanging Rock* knowing what happened to the missing girls and Miss McCraw, then the solution documented here, or a close *variation* of it, can be the only plausible solution. This solution is consistent and believable, and can be justified by numerous quotes from the novel.

The mystery does not have to be explained using inconsistent, supernatural, or far-fetched reasoning! Attempts at doing this degrade the reputation of both Joan Lindsay and of the novel itself, which has charmed readers since 1967.

For those who may have doubted that the story was fiction, it has been pointed out that the calendar date given for the disappearance had it as an impossible day of the week, apparently the author's way of assuring those who might check.

Gee, where might we have encountered all those conditions elsewhere? I'd been looking high and low for precedents to *Lost*, and this one fell into my laptop about a year ago. But I still had no justification for considering it a clue until recently it occurred to me that this was what the Ayers Rock/Uluru allusion on *Lost* was about: a sly way to point to *Picnic at Hanging Rock*. Ayers and Hanging rocks aren't close to each other, but they're on the same continent and are similar geologically and touristologically. People compared them when a notorious real-life disappearance occurred at Ayers, and some people even conflate the locations. The allusions from *Lost* extended into character names: John Locke for Joan Lindsay and Danielle Rousseau for Yvonne Rousseau, the author of [some of the other fan attempts to solve the mystery](#) of *Picnic at Hanging Rock*.

Once you'd decided to make *Lost* an unsolved mystery, you too would have looked for precedents if you didn't know them already, although at least someone on your staff schooled in mystery fiction & film would've known about *Picnic at Hanging Rock*, especially given the cottage industry and pastime that'd grown up around it. Would you have included such meta-clues, operating at such a degree of abstraction, to a story that had no connection to yours (other than that they were missing-persons stories, ho-hum), just to indicate the concept of a fiction mystery's story's supplying no overt solution but encoding a hidden one meeting McKenzie's criteria? The creator who alluded to the loss of locomotive 115 on Sept. 22, 1892, with such an indirect connection to *Lost*, surely would have!

Then I watched the movie. I can see where you might've been alluding to the time-anomaly/magnetic property bit echoing the stopped watch (but more so "The Horror of the Heights" with the magnetic anomaly), and how Hugo might've been made a little Edith-like, plus your echoing the prominent placement of swans, but not much really stuck out; in fact it reminded me more of *Jaws* plot-wise. It could have been a reinforcing clue to another of the Tales of Terror, "The Terror of Blue John Gap", but even that's a stretch. So I'm left to conclude the resemblance was intended at meta-clue based on the meta-literature on *Picnic*, telling me I was on the right track to look for a hidden non-magic solution. But anyone who perceived such a parallel would already have deduced that.

So was *Picnic's* Chapter 18 (the fantasy false conclusion) part of *Lost's* season 6? Or is a phony epilog to *Lost* still to come before your de Lernac reveals the truth?

Meanwhile I've thought of an alternative to the scenario whereby a "crash survivor" emerges claiming to be Alvar Hanso: A "survivor" claims that Alvar Hanso died or is still missing, but meanwhile told-me/supplied-me-with-this-document-of instructions for what to do with his business empire. It's a weaker reed to lean on, but perhaps more feasible if no suitable candidate for plastic surgery was available.

Yours Truly,
Robert

* I don't think "Taking Tiger Mountain" has anything to do with *Lost*, and the YouTube laying the music over *Picnic* was put up only after *Lost* had finished its run. I just like the metaphor of climbing for solving a mystery, and the music and video are both beautiful. The lyrics do fit serendipitously the story of the building of the Russian-American telegraph, "forcing the lines through the snow" of Russian America (now Alaska) and over Tiger Mountain outside Seattle.