

## Missing persons - Aussie style

**'Force of nature'** Janet Harper. The second Aaron Falk investigation. Aaron's case is hinging on financier Alice Russell, but Alice has gone missing while on an "Executive Adventures" outward-bound course with four fellow female employees in the rugged Giralang Ranges. The women quickly lose their way, geographically & emotionally, described as a *rapid descent into feral chaos*. It is the women's fractured relationships, the hostile bewildering environment, and the chance that a serial killer of women still inhabits the area that all build the tension.

The classic **'Picnic at Hanging Rock'** by Joan Lindsay (yes we still have copies). Just about everyone is familiar with the plot—a group of school-girls from a prestigious ladies college travel to Hanging Rock for a Valentine's Day picnic. At the end of the day 4 of the girls and a teacher are missing among the crags.

Just down the road from Hanging Rock, is the third in the journo Georgie Harvey & policeman John Franklin rural crime series— **'Into the fog'** by Sandi Wallace. This time three children have gone missing from a police-run camp for troubled children, in the Dandenong Ranges, during a wild storm. Feeling responsible for the young siblings, Daylesford cop John Franklin abandons his post to join the search. Someone knows something— Franklin and Georgie find cyberlinks to a serial predator and another missing girl.

**'The Bluffs'** by Kyle Perry, set in the rugged Western Tiers of Tasmania, where some state the tiger still exists. A group of 6 teenage girls go missing, in the same area where 30 years previously 5 young girls also disappeared. When a body is discovered mauled at the foot of a cliff, suspicion falls to a wild animal — but that does not explain why she was found barefoot, her shoes at the top of the cliff, laces still tied... Just like 'Picnic' the end does not answer all your questions.

Another missing person novel that draws on the Tassie Tiger is **'Wintering'** by Krissy Kneen. This time, set in the hamlet of Southport and the Hastings karst cave system, at the bottom of the world.

In all these stories, the landscape is both the setting and a character, at times beguiling and at others menacing. Mysteries with possibly unnatural forces at work.

