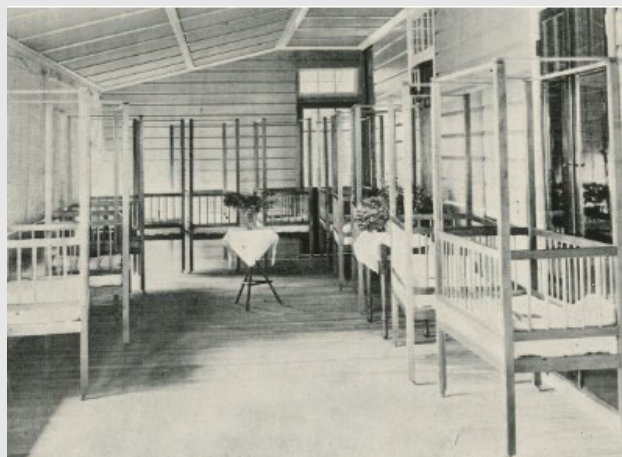




*The Lynne Grove House is a historic property in the Corinda area.*

*It was built about 1883 by Robert Francis Hassall as a family home. It was sold several times, and during the First World War, the owner, Laura Duncan (pictured below) donated the house for use as Corinda Infants' Home, which was established to care for children whose families couldn't support them. It is in this time period that this story is set.*



Information and pictures from <https://www.housedetective.com.au/lynnegrove>

## The Mystery of the Lynne Grove House

Noisy footsteps advanced toward the front steps of the sweeping white Queenslander.

“Home sweet home,” announced a young black-haired girl. That was Alice. Alice was born in China, and came to Australia with her uncle. Unfortunately, he couldn’t continue to care for her once the war started, so Alice now lived and worked at the Lynne Grove House.

“I can’t wait to relax! The history lesson today was so boring,” exclaimed Sarah, climbing the stairs to the veranda. Sarah was a similar age to Alice – around 10 or 11 – but much taller, with a pale complexion and long brown hair.

“What do you mean boring? The Bastille is fascinating!” cried Joy. Joy, the most intelligent girl in the school, sported a mop of curly brown hair, but stood a head shorter than her friends.

Like Alice, both Joy and Sarah were “left behind children” who lived at the Lynne Grove house.

“Well, I’m glad to be home. I can’t wait to see Laura! I wonder what treats she’ll have for us today,” giggled Stephanie, pushing her way into the kitchen. Treats were hard to come by these days – war rationing was serious business. But Laura always managed to whip up delicious treats for the children.

“Hello girls! How was your day at school?”

“It was great Laura. We learnt heaps. I’m sure Joy will tell you *all* about it at dinner.” blurted Stephanie, before trailing off. Sniffing, she whipped her head around.

“Don’t hurt yourself,” laughed Laura, reaching down to unveil a tray full of striped mint lollies.

Joy screamed out in delight “Yay! These are my favourite. You’re the best chef around Laura!”

Alice sang her agreement and as they each grabbed a few candies, Laura instructed the girls to change into their dinner dresses and to check on the younger kids – as was their job at the home.

They dressed in their homemade linen smocks and then poked their heads into the babies' room. After tickling their tummies and giving lots of kisses, they moved on to visit the teeny toddlers. Alice – the bravest – changed the nappies, while the other girls worked on feeding and entertainment.

Exhausted, the girls moved on to the final room – the pre-schoolers. It was here that the trouble began.

The moment they opened the door, a puddle of crying children ran up to the girls. Stephanie froze in fear, while Alice bobbed down, trying to hear the crying children better. The noise ceased when Joy blew a piercing wolf whistle.

“Okay, John, tell me what’s happened,” she ordered calmly.

“Jack’s missing!” he blubbered. “We were playing hide and seek, and now no one can find him!”

*‘Oh no’* thought Joy. Suggesting that Alice stay and look after the rest of the pre-schoolers, Joy and Stephanie huddled together.

“Should we tell Laura?” asked Stephanie.

“I think we must” replied Joy.

In Laura’s office the two girls explained everything. This had never happened before. With a cool head, Laura directed the girls to search the house, but they couldn’t find Jack anywhere! Stephanie had horrible thoughts whirling through her head.

*Could Jack have been kidnapped? Why? What would they want him for?*

Noticing how stressed Stephanie looked, Laura walked over to her. “It’s going to be alright. We *will* find Jack. Let’s check outside. I am sure he’ll be somewhere close.”

It’s then that they realised the back door was swinging open in the breeze.

“He must have gone out this way!” exclaimed Joy confidently. They checked the front yard, the backyard and by the tree-swing, calling his name the whole time, but there was no sign of Jack.

Then, from the distance, they heard the groaning of the front gate. Running towards it, they saw a tiny figure tottering towards the house. "Jack!" they shouted again.

The figure looked up and ran towards the girls.

"Laurie! I was so scared!" sobbed Jack, as Laura scooped him up in her arms.

He explained how, during the game of hide-and-seek, he thought he heard the sounds of the iceman, and wanted to pat his horse.

"I r-raced out to find him, and w-went out the gate and down the road, but then I just g-got completely lost." stammered Jack, still clearly stressed, but also enjoying the attention.

"Well now that you're back with us, why don't we all head inside and have supper? I've made mashed potatoes with roast beef, and pudding for dessert!"

*The End*

**Word count: 747**