
The truth no one wanted you to hear
THE DEADSOUL PROJECT
THE NIGHT HOUSE FILES
"Ingenious, brilliant and terrifying"
JONATHAN STROUD
"X-Files meets Alien"
PHIL HICKES
Dan Smith
Illustrated by Luke Brookes


The Night House Files
CLASSIFIED

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# THE DEADSOUL PROJECT

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Barrington Stoke

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For the truth seekers

## The Night House Files

Officially, the Night House does not exist. But it is real. It is an old and secret organisation that investigates the truth behind strange events around the world; events that include the paranormal, the extra-terrestrial and the bizarre. Events that governments do not want you to know about. The findings of these investigations are filed and kept safe by a mysterious person known only as the Nightwatchman. Once a year, the Nightwatchman delivers a file to me. My job is to turn the contents of the file into a story so that you can know the truth. That is the Nightwatchman's wish, and I dare not disobey.

The following story is taken from File ME347: The Deadsoul Project.

Everything you are about to read is true. The names of people and places have been altered to protect the innocent.

News article taken from the EVENING CHRONICLE,

dated 8th August 2024

# Alpine Heights Demolished!



Yesterday, a small crowd turned out to watch the demolition of a tower block that has long been an eyesore on the outskirts of the city.

The multi-storey building was known as Alpine Heights. It was built in 1968 to tackle a shortage of affordable housing in the city, but the building was never fully occupied. During the 1970s, some of the empty flats were used as temporary homes for soldiers awaiting

family accommodation at Lightpipe Garrison army base. However, Alpine Heights was abandoned in 1977 after a health incident that resulted in a large number of deaths.

There are many local legends about the incident at Alpine Heights in 1977, but very little is known about what actually happened.

Left unoccupied since the incident, Alpine Heights fell into disrepair and decay.

Yesterday afternoon, the building was demolished in a controlled explosion and bulldozers moved in. The land will be used for the construction of luxury flats in an effort to regenerate the area.

One local who came to witness the demolition commented: "I'm glad to see the back of it. There was something wrong with that place. Something bad."

# 47 Years Earlier

Tuesday, 1st February 1977

6.15 p.m.

Kyle Dempsey stopped under a streetlight and looked across the deserted road at the building in front of him. *Alpine Heights*. The name made it sound like a lovely place – clean and fresh and welcoming – but it was exactly the opposite of that. Alpine Heights was a dirty grey tower stretching up into the dirty grey sky. Half the flats were empty because the mould was so bad, the bins were always overflowing and the walls were plastered with graffiti.

Oh yeah, and the lift smelled like pee.

As always, Nelson and his gang were hanging

around the entrance, under the concrete canopy, doing wheelies on their bikes.

Lauren stopped beside Kyle and kicked a stone into the long grass beside the path. A startled magpie flew up to perch on a nearby streetlamp.

"What will happen to us?" Lauren asked. Her voice was small in the icy rain. "Where will we go?"

Kyle looked down at his younger sister and sighed. "You're not going to miss this place, are you?"

"No, but … really. Where will we go?"

"We'll be fine," Kyle said.

But right now, nothing was fine. Their whole lives had been turned upside down after they received the news on Sunday. The news about Connor.

Since then, Mam had done nothing but cry.

She was at Aunty Irene's house right now, probably still crying, so Kyle had brought Lauren home because he knew he had to get her away from that. She was only eleven, and he could see how much it was upsetting her.

Mam would be home soon enough, but for now Lauren could have some space to think about how she felt. Kyle needed some time too.

"I sort of feel bad," Lauren said. "I won't miss him. But I'm sad for Mam."

Kyle knew exactly what she meant. Mam had married Connor last year, and even though she kept telling Kyle and Lauren to call him "Dad", he wasn't their *real* dad. Their *real* dad had been killed by a hit-and-run driver the year after Lauren was born. Kyle didn't really remember him but always imagined him as kind and clever and quiet. Connor, on the other hand, was a brute who took every chance to make Kyle feel small and unimportant.

"When I was your age, I was boxing lads twice my size," he would say. Or, "What you reading a book for? You should be out causing trouble." Or there was his favourite, "Get me a drink out of the fridge, squirt."

And then there was the time in January when

Kyle and Lauren had come home from school and Mam had a black eye. She said she'd bumped it on the door, but the look on Connor's face made Kyle think it had been something else.

After that, Kyle tried to make sure Lauren was never alone with Connor Fleming.

"Come on," he said, putting an arm around his sister. "Let's go watch some telly. Maybe *The Tomorrow People* is on. I'll make hot chocolate, and there's Mini Rolls in the cupboard."

"OK." Lauren nodded and wiped the rain from her face.

As they approached the entrance to Alpine Heights, Nelson cycled over the road and started circling them on his bike. The rain flattened his spiky hair and glistened on his black leather jacket.

His tyres swished on the wet concrete path.

"All right, Soldier Boy?" Nelson said as he went round and round. "You going up?"

Nelson always called Kyle "Soldier Boy"

because Connor was in the army. He was stationed at Lightpipe Garrison just a few miles away, but there wasn't enough family housing on the base, so the army had put them in Alpine Heights until "*something becomes available*". Connor stayed on the base during the week and came home at weekends, but last week he had been sent to Northern Ireland and would never be coming back again.

Kyle wasn't sorry he was gone, but, like Lauren, he was sad for Mam.

Nelson stopped his bike in front of Kyle and Lauren, blocking their path. He was short and stocky, with mean eyes. A padlock on a chain hung around his neck, and a skull dangled from the piercing in his left ear.

Lauren squeezed close to her brother.

"I'd normally make you pay a toll," Nelson said.

Kyle was thirteen and small for his age. Much smaller than Nelson.

"Aye," Kyle said, smiling and looking Nelson

right in the eye. “But you never charge me because we’re friends, right?”

Nelson frowned. He blew a large bubble with the gum he was chewing, then looked back at his gang.

He sucked the bubble back in. “Well, I wouldn’t say we’re friends exactly. But I like you, Soldier Boy. You can go past.”

Nelson cycled back towards the entrance.

“I said they can pass,” he shouted to his gang. “It’s all right.”

“Come on.” Kyle spoke quietly to Lauren. “Let’s go.”

They followed Nelson over the road and into the shelter of the concrete canopy at the front of Alpine Heights.

“I’ll see you later, Soldier Boy,” Nelson said.

“Aye,” Kyle replied as he pushed open the heavy door and went inside. Then he and Lauren crossed the dirty lobby and pressed the button to call the lift.

When it arrived, Lauren took a deep breath and

held it all the way up to Floor 11. It was the only way to avoid the awful smell.

Escaping the lift, they trudged along the corridor to Flat 11C.

As soon as Kyle unlocked the door and stepped inside, he knew something was wrong. He wasn't sure *what*, but it made the hairs on the back of his neck stand on end.

6.27 p.m.

"Stay here," Kyle whispered to Lauren.

"What? Why?"

"Just do it," he said, reaching for the rounders bat Connor kept by the door *in case of emergencies*.

He gripped it tight and crept along the passage towards the large front room. It was mostly dark in the flat, with just a little light from the city beyond the windows, but it was enough for Kyle to see where he was going.

He eased open the door to the front room and peered inside.

Like all the other flats in Alpine Heights, 11C was small, with two bedrooms, one bathroom and one large front room. The front room was divided by a breakfast bar, separating it into a living room and a kitchen.

Right now, the living room was empty, but when Kyle looked over the breakfast bar into the kitchen, he saw a shape that shouldn't be there.

Someone was sitting at the kitchen table.

Kyle took a deep breath to steel himself.

"I've got a weapon," he said, raising the bat. "And I'm not scared to use it."

The large person didn't move and the room was in shadow, so it was impossible to tell who it was.

"I'm warning you," Kyle said. "Get out or I'll hurt you."

The person still didn't move.

Kyle edged into the living room, staring over the breakfast bar at the figure sitting in the kitchen.

With his right hand still firmly gripping the rounders bat, he stretched his left hand towards the light switch. When his fingers found the smooth plastic, Kyle flicked the switch and the room burst into light, and—

His breath caught in his chest.

Two days ago, Mam had received news that Connor Fleming had been on patrol in Belfast when a car bomb exploded right next to him. The army said it had been a massive explosion and that Connor had died instantly.

But there he was, clear as day, sitting at the kitchen table.

6.33 p.m.

Kyle stood still, with the rounders bat raised above his shoulder and his mind filled with questions.

"Connor?" The word escaped his lips before he could stop it.

The person at the table slowly turned his head to look right at Kyle.

"You're … here," Kyle said. It wasn't a question but a statement. As if by saying it out loud Kyle could convince himself that Connor actually *was* sitting at the kitchen table, dressed in his army uniform, even though he was supposed to be dead.

As reality sank in, Kyle felt a cold, creeping dread in his stomach that began to spread. Something wasn't right about Connor. He looked *wrong* – in the way the corners of his mouth lifted to form an awkward smile, and the way there was nothing in his blank, staring eyes.

When the smile didn't quite work, Connor opened his mouth, but instead of speaking, his mouth just grew wider and wider until it couldn't open any more. And he sat like that, head turned, mouth wide open, staring at Kyle.

Kyle stayed where he was, mesmerised and terrified.



"Cuh ... Connor?" Lauren's quiet voice broke the spell as she edged into the living room.

As soon as Connor saw her, his mouth snapped shut, his teeth coming together with a loud "clack". There was a brief pained expression in his eyes, then he turned to face the wall.

Lauren came to her brother's side and stared across the breakfast bar into the kitchen. "But ... I don't get it. They said he was *dead*."

Lauren whispered the word "dead" as if she didn't want Connor to hear, but Connor's head twitched once when she said it.

"Come on." Kyle took Lauren's arm and backed away without taking his eyes off Connor. He led her back along the passage into their shared bedroom.

The room was just big enough for two single beds pushed up against opposite walls, with a bedside table next to each one. Lauren's was home to a tangle of plastic jewellery and a pile of *Jackie* magazines she had found in the bin at school. She

never had enough money to buy a new magazine and couldn't understand why anyone would have thrown them away. Finders keepers.

Kyle's bedside table was empty apart from a copy of *The Rats* by James Herbert. It was face-down because Lauren was scared of the picture on the front cover: a savage-looking rat with massive teeth and beady eyes.

There wasn't much else in the bedroom apart from a chest of drawers and Jasper: a raggedy pink rabbit that lay on Lauren's pillow.

Once inside the bedroom, Kyle closed the door and stood with his back to it.

"What's going on?" Lauren asked. "He's supposed to be dead, isn't he? And he looked weird. Like he was … empty, you know?"

Kyle shook his head. "I dunno. The army must've made a mistake. Must've been someone else who died in that bomb. Or …" Kyle stopped and rubbed his face with both hands. "I dunno."

“Maybe he’s a ghost?” Lauren sat down on her bed and scooped Jasper into her arms. She hugged him as she chewed at the skin around her fingernail.

“There’s no such thing,” Kyle said, coming to sit down beside her. “And stop doing that.”

Lauren reluctantly took her finger from her mouth, and they sat in silence for a while, both of them trying to understand what didn’t seem possible. How could Connor be there in the flat when he was supposed to have been blown to pieces three days ago in Northern Ireland?

Kyle stared at the *Jaws* poster on the wall above his bed and listened to the white noise of traffic from the city outside. It was a constant sound, like the distant voices, footsteps and banging of doors that made up the soundtrack of Alpine Heights.

“We should call Mam,” Lauren suggested after a while.

As she said it, the overhead light in the bedroom flickered. There was a “pop” from

somewhere in the flat, like the soft and airy sound of a saggy balloon bursting.

Without a word, Kyle stood up and went to put his ear to the door.

"You hear anything?" Lauren asked, getting up.

Kyle touched a finger to his lips and shook his head. He stood for a while longer, listening, then eased the door open. He grabbed the rounders bat from its resting place against the wall and looked out.

The light was still on in the kitchen. The glow of it reached into the passageway, tempting Kyle towards it like a moth to a flame, but there was an eerie atmosphere in the flat. Something dark and dangerous. And there was a slight chemical taste to the damp air. Kyle wanted to stay exactly where he was, but he had to go out. He had to look because he had to protect Lauren. She was his little sister. His responsibility.

He crept out of the bedroom, stepping over the place where the floor creaked, and gestured at

Lauren to stay back. Lauren followed him anyway, staying close as they inched silently along the worn carpet towards the living room. As they came closer, Kyle leaned forwards to peer across the breakfast bar into the kitchen.

Everything was exactly as it had been, except for one thing.

Connor Fleming was gone.




"Where did he go?" Lauren whispered as Kyle edged into the kitchen to check behind the breakfast bar.

"He's not here," Kyle said, returning to the living room and checking behind the long curtains either side of the window. "He must have gone out the front door."

"I didn't hear him – did *you*? And the floorboard didn't creak."

"He stepped over it then," Kyle reasoned.

"He never steps over it," Lauren reminded him.

"Well, this time he did. And then he closed the door quietly. It's the only thing that makes sense."

Lauren noticed that Kyle was still holding the rounders bat as if he was ready to hit something with it. She folded her arms around herself and shivered.

"What's that smell?" she wondered. "You smell it too, right?"

"Aye. I smell it. Like chemicals or something. Like the lab at school."

"He was a ghost," Lauren said. "That's why he's gone and that's what the smell is. It's … ghost smell."

"Ghost smell?" Kyle scoffed. "What the hell are you talking about?" He stood by the window, wondering what to do. It was dark outside, and he could see his own reflection frowning back at him in the glass. Lauren was standing behind him, arms folded, biting her lower lip.

"We should call Mam," Kyle said, turning away

from the window and going to the little table beside the sofa where the telephone sat.

He picked up the receiver and put it to his ear, then his frown deepened. "No dial tone," he said, taking the receiver away from his ear and looking at it. "That's weird."

"There's a book in the school library about ghosts," Lauren told him. "It says they cause problems with electricity. Maybe that's what happened. The lights flickered, remember? Maybe it did something to—"

"Connor isn't a ghost," Kyle snapped at her. "There's no such thing, Lollipop. It was *him*. Connor. We both saw him."

"Don't call me Lollipop; I'm not five."

"All right. Sorry. Lauren. *Lori*." Kyle banged the telephone receiver back into the cradle and picked it up again. Still no dial tone.

Kyle slammed the telephone down again and turned to his sister. She looked small and afraid,

with her skinny arms wrapped around herself. Her curls were flat from the rain, still plastered against her pale face.

Kyle took a deep breath. “Sorry. I shouldn’t have got annoyed. Come on – why don’t we go out?” He put his hand in his pocket and pulled out a fistful of loose change. “I’ve got enough for chips.”

“Can we have scraps?” Lauren perked up at the thought of hot food.

“Uh-huh.”

“And gravy?”

Kyle counted the coins. “Aye. For sure.” He forced a smile, trying not to let Lauren see his fear, but, like her, he was creeped out. He didn’t want to be in the flat one second longer than necessary.

“OK.” Lauren quickly turned round and headed for the front door. “Come on then – I’m starving.” She pulled it wide and waited for Kyle to catch up.

## 6.56 p.m.

The air in the corridor reeked of bin juice because no one ever cleaned the rubbish chutes, but Kyle didn't mind – anything was better than the weird smell inside their flat.

As he closed the door behind him, the lift clattered open further along the corridor. A severe-looking woman emerged, removing a plastic rain cover from her permed black hair. She stuffed it in her handbag and walked briskly towards them. The woman didn't live in Alpine Heights, but Kyle recognised her because she came every morning and evening to help Mrs Patel, who lived next door in 11D.

The woman's green mac left a trail of drips, and her white trainers squeaked on the tiled floor. The lift clattered shut behind her.

"Good evening," she said with a tight smile as she passed Kyle and Lauren, and went to the flat next door. She knocked hard three times, then took

off her rain-speckled glasses and dried them with a handkerchief while she waited.

Kyle and Lauren had just reached the lift and pressed the button to call it back when they heard the woman knock on the door again.

Kyle looked back and caught the woman's eye.

"Excuse me," she called to him. "There doesn't seem to be any answer."

Kyle shrugged. He wasn't sure what she expected *him* to do about it.

"Mrs Patel isn't answering her door," the woman said, as if to explain herself. "Have you seen her or heard from her today?"

Kyle shook his head.

"I just thought, with you being her neighbours, you might have heard something?"

"No," Kyle replied. "Sorry."

"My name is Mrs James," she carried on. "I'm Mrs Patel's care worker. Strange that she won't answer her door. She *always* answers her door in

the evening." As she spoke, Mrs James opened her handbag and rummaged inside before pulling out a set of keys. They jangled as she found the right one and slipped it into the lock. She turned it and pushed, but the door remained firmly shut.

"She must have bolted it from the inside," Mrs James said, looking back at Kyle and Lauren. "I've told her not to do that."

Just then, the lift arrived, so Kyle and Lauren stepped in and let the door shut behind them. As it closed, Kyle heard Mrs James talking to herself.

"I hope she's all right," she said.

But what she didn't know was that *nothing* in Alpine Heights was all right any more.

Nothing at all.