


SOMETHING UPSTAIRS



 SCHOLASTIC

AVI

AUTHOR'S EXPLANATION

This is the strangest story I've ever heard.

Since I write books for young people I often visit schools. It's good to get out of my writing room and into the world where my readers live. Besides, I like kids.

During these visits it's not unusual for grown-ups as well as kids to tell me stories about their lives, stories they think will make good books. Even if I don't get ideas to write about, at least I have a chance to meet some interesting people.

One day, on just such an occasion, in Providence, Rhode Island, a teacher took me aside.

"I have a boy who's very anxious to meet you," she said. She acted as if it were a secret.

"I hope you can fit him into the schedule," I

said politely. Inwardly, I groaned. The day was already too full.

"He insists on a private meeting."

"I'm really not sure . . ."

"He's read all your books."

"All?" I said doubtfully.

"All," she insisted. "He's got it into his head that you're the only one who can understand him."

I have to admit I was flattered. And curious. I murmured a "Well, maybe . . ."

The teacher gave my arm a squeeze. "Wonderful," she said. "You could take part of your lunchtime . . ." Off she ran before I could tell her I'd rather have all my lunch.

It was not to be. Halfway through my meal I felt a tap on my shoulder.

"Avi?" It was the teacher, with a boy in tow. "This is Kenny Huldorf," she said. "Kenny, this is Avi."

There was nothing unusual about Kenny Huldorf, not at first sight. He was on the small side perhaps, but there was every indication that he was about to double his size any moment. His hair was short and light. A few childlike freckles splashed his cheeks. And he must have been

pulled from gym, because his face was red and his shirt untucked.

"Hello, Kenny," I said and held out my hand.

He took it and gave it a tentative shake. There was a stare too. It's a look I've seen many times, and I can never tell if it's awe or disappointment.

"I've got a quiet room for your talk," the teacher informed us.

Reluctantly, I got up. In moments we were closeted in a small room, and before I could say a word she was gone, the door firmly closed.

Feeling trapped, but knowing there was nothing I could do about it, I motioned Kenny to one of the two chairs.

He sat down. I sat down. We looked at each other. The truth is, I think neither of us felt the other was very promising, though *he* was the nervous one. From his pocket he drew out a key chain and started to fiddle with it. I decided it was up to me to begin. "I understand you wanted to speak to me," I offered.

"I've read all your books," he got out, still playing with the chain.

"Hope you enjoyed them."

He nodded, then said, "Did you do all that stuff in your books?"

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When 12-year-old Kenny Huldorf moves to Providence, Rhode Island, he quickly discovers that his attic bedroom is haunted! Night after night Kenny watches as glowing smoke rises from the floor to sculpt the form of a troubled spirit. The ghost — a teenage slave named Caleb — summons Kenny back in time to correct a century-old injustice. Kenny soon finds that his fate is entangled with Caleb's murder. Will he be able to right the wrong? Or will he remain forever trapped in history?

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the last tension-filled page.”

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