



Something Upstairs by Avi

Subjects: Ghosts; Time travel; Slavery

Award: Sunshine State Young Reader's Award

Book Lists: Grade 6, Reluctant Readers

Props: Splinter with blood

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Kenny and his parents had just moved to Providence, Rhode Island from Southern California. It was the middle of the summer and both his parents were working. Kenny hadn't started school yet and he didn't have anything to do until he discovered—something upstairs. His parents had bought an old house that was built in 1789. The minute he walked into the house, he had felt a presence, but at first he didn't think anything of it.

He was really excited about this house. For the first time in his life he had some privacy. His room was the whole attic. He even had his own private winding stairs that went only to his room. There were two other little rooms off of his, but they hadn't been remodeled and were used for storage. His mother said that slaves lived in them in the olden days. There was a stain on the floor of one of the rooms and Kenny was curious about it. He pried up a splinter (*Bring out splinter*) and took it to a chemical lab, asking them to analyze it. The lab said it was human blood. (*Put splinter away*)

Kenny awoke one night and heard a shuffling, well, more of a scraping noise. He sat up in bed and tried to figure out where it was coming from. Getting up, he followed the noise to the little room with the blood stain. (*Read from the book*) "A white glow, almost shiny, and brightest on the floor, filled the windowless space, and what Kenny saw—or thought he saw—were two hands, then two

arms, reaching up from the stain, pushing away a box of his mother's old books that was sitting on it. These hands and arms seemed to be not flesh and blood but sculptured glowing smoke. It was as if, from under that box, a body was struggling to be free . . . it took an hour for the carton to be pushed away. Kenny watched it all. When the job was done, the hands reached from the floor, held onto the box, and . . . pulled. A head rose from the stain. Then came a neck. Then shoulders. The rest of the body. Soon the whole thing stood upon the floor—still and waiting. A soft, pale pulsing glow radiated from its body, a glow which formed a vague boundary between air and mass, in equal parts nothing and something." (*Put book down*)

It was a ghost, a memory, a boy named Caleb who had been murdered in the year 1800. He wanted Kenny's help to find his murderer. "But how could I help?" asked Kenny. "Even if I found a newspaper from 1800 in the library, they wouldn't print who murdered somebody. I'm sorry, but I can't help you." "Oh but you can," said Caleb. "If you will take my hand, I'll turn back into flesh and blood and we'll be back in August 1800." "Oh no, not me," said Kenny. "And you wouldn't be safe. The murderer would probably kill you again and maybe me, too. And even if he didn't, how would I get back to my time, here and now?" What would you do? Would you take the hand of a ghost and lead him back to the year 1800? (*Hold up book*) *Something Upstairs* by Avi.