

## smoke<sup>adv</sup> aunt em /1/ barging in

**AUNT EM:** Is your name Paul Benjamin?

**PAUL:** What can I do for you?

**AUNT EM:** I just want to know **what you think you're doing**, mister, **that's all**.

**PAUL:** How **the hell** did you get into the building **anyway**?

**AUNT EM:** **What do you mean**, how'd I get in? **All I had to do** was push the door and walk in. It doesn't **take** a **rocket scientist** to **figure that out**.

**PAUL:** The **damn** lock's broken again. And so you just **barge in on strangers**, **is that what** you do?

**AUNT EM:** **Actually**, I'm looking for my nephew, Thomas.

**PAUL:** Thomas? Who's Thomas? I **can't think of** any Thomas **that** I know.

**AUNT EM:** **Don't give me any of that**. I know **he's been** here. **You can't fool me**, mister.

**PAUL:** I'm telling you, I don't know anyone **named** Thomas. No one **that** you would know **anyway**.

**AUNT EM:** Thomas Cole. Thomas Jefferson Cole. My nephew.

**PAUL:** **You mean** Rashid?

**AUNT EM:** Rashid? **Is that what** he told you **his name was**?

**PAUL:** Well, **whatever his name is**, he's not here **anymore**. He left two days ago, and I **haven't heard from him since**.

**AUNT EM:** And what was he doing here **anyway**? **That's what** I want to know.

## smoke<sup>adv</sup> aunt em /2/ a whole new life

**AUNT EM:** Why is a man like you **messing around with** a black boy like Thomas? Are you **some kind of pervert** or what?

**PAUL:** Look, lady, **I've had just about enough of this**. If you **don't calm down**, I'm going to **throw you out**.

**AUNT EM:** I just want to know where **he is**. I **haven't seen** him **or talked** to him since last week.

**PAUL:** **As far as I know**, he went back to his parents.

**AUNT EM:** **Is that what** he told you? His parents?

**PAUL:** **That's what** he said. He told me he **lived** with his mother and father on East Seventy-fourth Street. Yes, he **may have lied** but **there was no way for me to know**.

**AUNT EM:** I always knew that boy **had an imagination**, but now **he's made up a whole new life** for himself. **Do you mind if** I sit down? **I guess** I should explain **who I am** and how I know Thomas. **He's been living** with me and his uncle Henry **since** he was a baby. **In case you're wondering**, we don't live in Manhattan. We live in the **projects**. His mother's dead, and he **hasn't seen** his father **in** twelve years.

**PAUL:** I **can't believe** I **fell for** all those lies. I **shouldn't have let** him go.

**AUNT EM:** **Which brings me back to** my **original** question. What was he doing here **in the first place**?

**PAUL:** I **was about to get run over** by a car, and your nephew **pulled me back**. He saved my life. I **sensed** he **was in trouble**, so I **offered to put him up** for a few days. Maybe I **should have pressed** him a little more, I don't know. I **feel pretty stupid about** it now.

**AUNT EM:** **He's in trouble, all right**. But I **don't have** any idea what **it is**.