

## Week 7 Discussion

*edited minimally, for style and flow*

### “Resurrection Hardware”

**Cade:** I really loved the way that Kenan inserted himself into these stories with “Resurrection Hardware or, Lard & Promises.” There’s a brilliant mix of the mundane and supernatural here that makes these stories feel so believable. Obviously, the supernatural occurrences, such as the naked Black man haunting the 200-year-old house, or the boatman at the end, are not actual occurrences, but interspersed between these moments are descriptions of friends, antiquated magazines, college boyfriends, and seemingly real homages to his past that create a fantastic picture of how Kenan sees the role of Tims Creek and his writing in his life. No, these stories do not happen, but they have a very personal place in his life, just as personal as his own memories and relationships.

**Cheyron:** I feel like “Resurrection Hardware” is the most intimate story Kenan has written. As I read it, I could recall the interviews we read and watched, and I remember that set of memorial articles from the beginning of class. The main character’s name is Randall; he is a successful gay man who moved to New York and worked in print, surrounded by successful friends with an interesting love/hate relationship for his North Carolina roots.

**Tanner:** This was unexpected story to read from Kenan. Only being familiar with what we’ve read in this class, this book of short stories seems to Kenan taking a break from Tims Creek. I found it intimate as well as vulnerable. With *Visitation*, we get an almost alternate version of Kenan. As you stated in the week 2 group notes (I’m paraphrasing), Horace is what Randall might have been if he did not receive support and love from his family. To read a story written by Kenan and to have the character be so similar to him was such a fun read. I feel like I know more about him after reading it. I was also hung up on the haunting/ history of his home and how it almost played little to no significance to the story. I am thinking about the dinner at the end here. No one seems to care. The relationship seemed to be important to Randall, but not something that broke his heart when it was over. Perhaps he felt relieved that he would not feel insecure dating a younger person?

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**Cade:** I loved the melding of the fantastical and mundane in this story. It almost felt like a glimpse into his writing process, as if he has these near–science fiction visions at a lunch with friends, or like the impact of these stories that he writes has become a major part of his life, not just his work. It feels like a testament to the spiritual significance of his work to himself.

### “Now Why Come That Is?”

**Oakley:** In “Now Why Come That Is?” I questioned why Kenan chose a hog to “haunt” Percy and why the hog was only able to be seen at certain instances and not every time Percy saw it. Especially when Kenan writes, “all he had, he and his father had stolen and robbed for, and that he had no right to any of it; that he was next to nothing...and that he was really not very, very much at all, not even as valuable as a hog” (197). I think Percy is being “haunted” by a hog because he almost sees himself as one. I think that this line shows that he is feeling guilty for what he and his father have done.

**Cheyron:** This was by far the best haunting because I hate Percy. I think the hog is his conscience coming to the surface, which is why the “witch” couldn’t help him end the haunting, because his truth *is* the haunting. Like a hog, he and his father “ate” up anything and everything that they wanted and within their sights. I also think it is interesting that Kenan said hog, but it sounded more like a boar, which is more violent and deadly.

**Kyrsten:** I see the hog as almost a mirror, or a double, for Percy and his family overall. The hog becomes the reflection of Percy on the inside, as someone who has not been good, nor has he done good. In fact, we learn that he and his father seem to continuously do shady business, as we saw in the last book. Percy’s tactics have no boundaries, as this hog haunting has no boundaries either. It continues to follow and haunt him, mirroring what is inside. I like the line “Somehow, hearing Ab speak of the hog as a piece of a machine, a cog, an it, something that belonged to someone, and eventually on a plate, reassured Percy and filled in that momentary sense of a void; made him, oddly enough, whole again in his mind” (129). To add to this, in the following story, the final story, we learn that Malcolm Terrell, Percy’s son, has lost his home to the storm.

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Specifically, it has flooded with water, hog shit, and dead hogs, and I think this is meant as a small callback to this story of hog hauntings, and how the Terrells are coming face to face with consequences that they have not seen in the past. It almost feels as if this hog haunting is a spiritual warning, perhaps, of what is to come later during the hurricane.

**Kourtney** I, too, believe that the hog was haunting Percy because of the legacy of his family and the legacy his father left for him. What struck me as interesting as how he keeps saying, “I am Percy, the son of Malcolm,” and always mentioned his status in Tims Creek. It’s funny how he initially dismissed the hog, kind of like what he did with his father and Miss Tabitha. The wild hog was in a sense the big elephant in the room. His past is consuming him and waking him up to the poop that his family has created.

**Cade:** “Now Why Come That Is?” was probably my favorite story of the bunch, and I found the metaphor for manhood both hilarious and a little heartbreaking. Specifically, the “hog” as an unspoken innuendo was pretty brilliant. This hog only really seems to act out when being acknowledged, and typically this manifests in fleeing if not violence, such as in the church. I felt like this mirrored Percy perfectly, how he ran from the embarrassment of being proven wrong in the store, or how he will drink to avoid thoughts of his bullish (or “hog-ish”) father. Also considering the final story in which the Terrell farm, now helmed by Percy’s son Malcolm (Percy’s father’s namesake), was flooded in a hurricane with the corpses and refuse of dead hogs, this presents more generationally existential questions about masculinity and its aggression. It shows that sadly Percy, despite his very clear revelation at his misgivings near the end of the story, still was unable to break the Terrell curse of toxicity and exploitation.

### **“God’s Gonna Trouble the Water”**

**Oakley:** I did some research into the song “Wade in the Water” which is where the title “God’s Gonna Trouble the Water” comes from. Legend is that it was used to tell people escaping from slavery to get off the trail and into the water so that the dogs could not sniff out their scent. The song is also expressed as an idea of purification and a reaffirmation of life (such as baptism). In this story there is a hurricane that floods the town, kills Mrs. Streeter’s beloved vegetable garden,

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and takes Marisol's daughter from her. What do you think this title was intended to mean in reference to this story?

**May:** There's a place in the Bible that talks about how a certain time of the year God stirs up the waters and whoever comes into it can get whatever they need. Whether it be healing, renewing, to be made whole, to be able to see, there was life and restoration coming to those that stepped in the water. I believe Kenan was making a reference to this biblical story.

**Kourtney:** I think he was trying to connect back to the concept of rebirth. Washing away the old and moving into the end. The title "God's Gonna Trouble the Water" is a hymn that many church-going people sing, especially in older Black churches. It is also a saying which generally means that God is going to stir up the healing waters and put things in order. Hence the reason why this story was at the end of the book. The hurricane came in at category five and went only two places, Barbados and North Carolina. Kenan wrote each book to bring his (once) buried lineage front and center. With this book, he wanted to wash away the unsettling and disturbing parts of Tims Creek.

**Cade:** Considering the religious connotations of a flood in Christian mythology, it does almost feel like a wiping of the slate, the last we see of Tims Creek is an erasure of the old way (literally, in the case of the main character), and a very poetic destruction of the Terrell's rich estate.

**Kyrsten:** I think this storm has some representation in terms of wiping the slate clean, and as Oakley points out, we see that in one literal sense with Mrs. Streeter's garden being completely wiped out. She cannot bring it back to what it was, but she must now start anew, with different crops for a different time of year that will have a different yield than she initially planned for. I think, though, that this wiping clean through such a large and violent storm is also connected to Mrs. Streeter herself and the fact that she is a woman in her eighties. I point this out because she is what we could consider to be a part of the "old" Tims Creek – the more backwards, homophobic, and stagnant version we are introduced to in *Visitation*. However, despite her desire to come back home to this place she views as safe and as home no matter what, that home has been destroyed (more metaphorically than literally, but still destroyed), and thus it is no longer

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what it once was. We have discussed throughout how we see Tims Creek as its own character, perhaps as the overarching character throughout these stories, and I think this final story is truly meant to become a reflection of how the town can and will change. Over time it refuses to remain stagnant, that the world does not allow it to remain the same, and as you cannot stop a hurricane from coming, you cannot stop the change coming to Tims Creek.