

# The Buchanans Go to Punchbowl

*In a short-short stories workshop I took a couple of years ago, one of our assignments was to write a story that borrowed characters from a famous story. Obviously, I borrowed characters from Gatsby. The story is a reference to this passage:*

"I never loved him," she said, with perceptible reluctance.

"Not at Kapiolani?" demanded Tom suddenly.

"No."

From the ballroom beneath, muffled and suffocating chords were drifting up on hot waves of air.

"Not that day I carried you down from the Punch Bowl to keep your shoes dry?" There was a husky tenderness in his tone... "Daisy?"

In the years after Hawaiians used the place for human sacrifice and before the dedication of the National Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific in its center, the Buchanans visited Punchbowl Crater. The newly married couple was on their honeymoon, and, having driven up the outer slope, had hiked a short trail to the summit. From the top they looked over the city of Honolulu, beyond the acres of vegetation toward Diamond Head, and down upon the great expanse of the Pacific Ocean.

"Oh Tom, it's so peaceful up here. Couldn't you stay forever? What do you think is on the other side?"

"Don't be silly, Daisy. California's on the other side."

She said nothing, choosing instead to breathe in the humid air. Perhaps it was the endless ocean before her and the mysterious thing she found herself searching for hidden beyond the horizon, or maybe it was the patches of clouds moving quickly through the sky, but something made her feel small.

"I want to find the cannons before it rains," Tom said. It had rained every day since their arrival a week earlier.

"You just want to go back to the hotel and drink." Daisy could see the Moana Hotel, a solitary and stately white building on the beach.

"Well, so what? That's what we're paying all that money for," he said.

She thought about the hotel and how it stood over the ocean at the water's edge. She had felt a sense of safety of comfort, something she couldn't fully grasp, but liked immediately. She had called it love when she lay on the beach watching Tom thrash around in the whitewash near the shore.

"There are no cannons, Tom. Let's go back." She wanted that feeling again.

"The concierge said there were cannons. From the old Hawaiians' parties or something."

"Cannons are awful. And it's starting to rain anyway."

Before they left, the Buchanans looked over the ocean again, where the sun looked like a big red moon slowly sinking into the sea.

"Carry me to the car, Tom. I don't want my shoes to get wet."

As he lifted her, Daisy threw her arm over his shoulder. She felt weightless and happy. They descended the trail, surrounded by the sweet aroma from the star-shaped yellow plumeria. Inhaling the place and feeling the bounce of Tom's steps, she knew their love was somehow connected to the place, and she was certain she, Tom, and the Punchbowl would go on forever, full of love and full of life.

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