

Flirting Through Summer Jobs

JESSICA BUNDSCHUH

Origami objects always begin with two base folds,
the Mountain & the Valley, to lead to any number of outcomes.

—*A Catalogue of Simple Pleasures*

I. Phoenix, AZ, 1983: *The Mountain Fold*

Bobby Ball Agency on East Thomas Rd
sent me on the casting call for 12-year-olds
where none knew we'd practice kiss
a stranger from a row of boys set loose

by clipboard talent agents. For a camera
kiss, Wrigley corporate taught us *the fold*:
“Fold a stick of gum, scored like a spear,
in thirds on your tongue: back, front, back;

stare in middle distance, where spearmint
resides—*The cool refreshing feeling puts
a little lift in everything you do ...—*
& lean in for the peck.” Wait, here:

where I learn to master a tongue-fold
to company standards, feigning disinterest

in the salty trail of Todd's or Keith's lips,
his Origami Mount Fuji stowing away
fold infrastructures to support future folds.

II. Anchorage, AK, 1986: *The Valley Fold*

36th Ave Micky D's sourced *real* cheesy eggs
to poach for the morning McMuffin, surprising
us lower-48ers summering in Alaska &
matching in uniforms, our wide collars open.

On cig breaks, boys on grill crew showed us
counter girls flexing flouts to corporate regs,
sweaty underwear discarded from below
polyester waistbands, trainee hats creased

in Mc-apron pockets, spotted with grease.
Every *first* gathers here, in narrow pleats,
like my own paper crew hat, flattened
then repurposed into a 4th-of-July fan,

enfolding the permed *me* then—flustered
by buttocks confined to stripey pants
sans buffer—with the *me* now, aligning
valleys of memory inside a napkin where
every fold constrains a space for the next.

III. Carefree, AZ, 1988: *The Mountain Fold*

Sighing behind a polished plate glass
at Hum & Ho Rd, I measured Sweet
Suzan's choc-chip dough, spaced apart

on buttered sheets: a sugary series

of neat inversions in a doughy row
of lover's knots that expand in heat,
then curl in, like my torso bent waist deep
inside our glass-dome display counter:

I tested each signature ice cream
with a fistful of spoons; from mint chip,
cherry mascarpone & coconut, to fudge
ripple, I dragged my industrial scooper

to coax out the peanut-brittle nuggets
until late customers triggered our bell
& I bumped my head on the cold glass
of these odd summer gigs, unpleated so

folds can be unfolded with histories intact.

About the Author

Jessica Bundschuh's poems have appeared in *The Paris Review*, *The Los Angeles Review*, *The Moth*, *Long Poem Magazine*, *The Honest Ulsterman* and *Shearsman Magazine*. She teaches at the University of Stuttgart in the English Literatures and Cultures department and holds a Ph.D. in Creative Writing and English Literature.



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