

can sociology ?

can fiction?



So Fi

a sociological fiction zine
EDITION I
June 2017

So Fi
Edition 1
June 2014

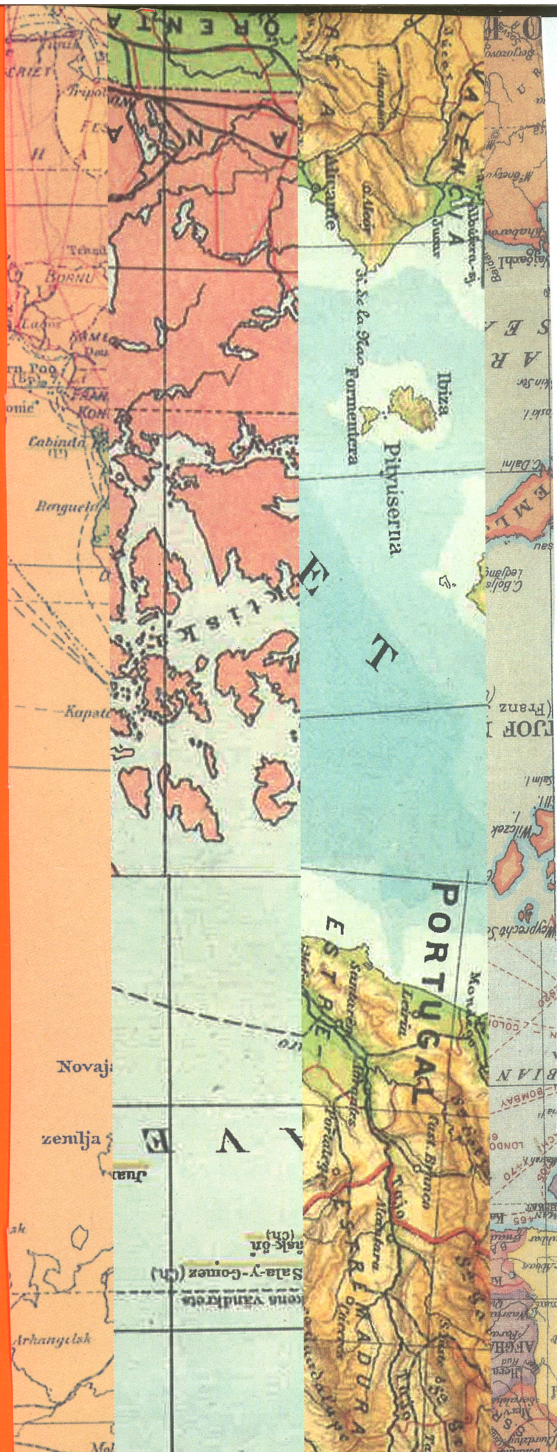
Created and edited by
Ashleigh Watson

in
London, U.K.

Guest editorial by
Patricia Leavy

online at
sof.zine.wordpress.com

#sofzine



Keen to
contribute?

So Fi Edition 2
launching
December 2017

see
sofzine.wordpress.com
for submission
dates and details



Navy Rum

Karl Johnson

The Navy Rum has appeared on the table, shifting the course of the evening. My Step-Mum must've gone to bed. It's just me and Dad at the kitchen table now. With the weather, outside in the dark.

How's my work going? Have they made me a permanent job yet? Can he call me *Professor* now?

I perform my edited explanation – he must've forgotten; I'm sure this is the fifth time we've had this conversation in the last year – about how it's like this for a lot of people starting out these days, and about how I haven't been able to get funding for a PhD. I'm happy where I am and I really enjoy the bits of lecturing and project work I'm trusted enough to do. The money's not as much as the 'proper' staff get, but I'm lucky to be in my position and my Head of Department wants to keep me around. Anyway, I don't know if anywhere else would think I was any good.

Ah, do I need any money? Would I be better off somewhere else if it was full-time?

He's missed my imposter sub-text, and stuck to the basics of what my job tangibly gives me. At Mum's yesterday, she'd asked how she should explain my job to her friends, now that I think about it.

Kat & Jane

Shaun Huston



Kat is late.

She isn't late often, and even today she'll probably only be ten minutes past, but she's uneasy about how her boss, Matt, will react.

Kat thinks about Jeff and Scott, who pretty much get away with whatever. Playing games at their desks. Long lunches. Chatting, sometimes loudly, over their cubicle walls. She's seen Matt leave work with Jeff and Scott, all laughs and fist bumps.

On the other hand, Jane, her best friend since starting this job, came back late from lunch last week. Matt called her into his office. Kat could see, and sort of hear, Matt yelling at Jane. Kat took Jane out for drinks that night. They didn't talk about the yelling so much, but they did talk about how Jeff and Scott never get yelled at even though they're the biggest screw-offs in the office.

Then there was Eduardo. Eduardo got fired after coming in late, quite a lot, a couple of months ago. His kid was in the hospital. Kat covered for him a few times. So did Jane. They were both fine with that. Matt knew all this and fired Eduardo anyway.

Kat picks up her pace and finally arrives at the office. She takes a deep breath and opens the door.

#

Kat is late.

This was becoming a habit, and it was starting to fill her with dread.

Kat works at the Emma Goldman Brewery Co-operative. The brewery is owned and operated by a group of twenty women and

48

45

five men. Everyone is a worker and an owner. Everyone rotates jobs. There's no boss to be mad at you for being late.

What Kat fears is letting everyone down.

She knew that someone, probably Jane, her best friend since college and sister in the co-op, would start to notice her repeated lateness. This wouldn't be Jane's first time seeing Kat fall into a pattern like this.

Kat thinks about Audrey, who had a knee injury a couple of months ago. Everyone else picked up the slack and made sure she had company while she recovered. What did Jane call it? Oh yeah. "Serial reciprocity." Basically, you're there for everyone and everyone is there for you. Kat thinks that she might need to be on the other side of that for awhile.

That thought made her anxious.

Anxious because, unlike with Audrey's knee, you can't see what's keeping Kat from getting out of bed on time. Anxious because she doesn't want to think, let alone talk, about the depression welling up inside of her.

And there it was, Kat sighed to herself.

Kat arrives at the brewery and sees Jane through the glass door. Jane smiles and waves. Kat returns the gestures. She's sure Jane sees how forced they are. She takes a deep breath and opens the door.

#

Kat is late.

Even though she has a permit to be out in public, alone, she needs to be at her station in less than twenty minutes and she's cutting it short. In truth, her permit is more privilege than right. If an Enforcer wants to detain her and find her in violation, he can.

Her friend Jane was out past her permit a few months ago. Kat hasn't seen her since. At her lowest moments, Kat thinks that Jane is dead. At other times, she thinks maybe Jane has just been moved to another House, or, placed into a marriage auction.

Death aside, that's the fate Kat most wants to avoid.

Not that being auctioned off is the only way to end up married. A man could propose, too. If that happened, she could decline, but the Judicial Authority would have the final say. The man could be found unfit, but that was rare, and, in any case, no one would care about her preference.

No, Kat has a plan.

The most content, maybe even happy, person Kat knows is Miss Graham, the head of her House. Kat wants to be Miss Graham. But to do that, she needs to stay unmarried. This means she can't attract male attention and needs to stay out of trouble. Being late would be getting into trouble.

In two and a half years, at twenty-five, she can apply to be emancipated. If that's granted, she will be free to decline proposals (the odds of getting one will start to decline, too). That's the track to stay on.

Kat is shaken out of her thoughts by another woman (girl?), in pants (!) and a shirt (!), running (!) up the sidewalk.

Kat is stunned.

The girl brushes past Kat and says, "You don't have to do this."

Two Enforcers appear from around the corner. A couple of the men on the sidewalk try to grab the girl, but she feints and dodges past them before disappearing into an alley.

Kat unfreezes and starts walking again (why didn't she take the tram?). What did that girl mean, "You don't have to do this"? She pictures Jane. Kat can feel herself tearing up with anger and sadness.

Damn that girl.

Kat finally arrives at the manor. She walks around to the servant's entrance, takes a deep breath, and opens the door.

Thanks to Anne-Marie Deitering for her editorial suggestions and revisions.