

LETTERS TO AFGHANISTAN

by Stella Baker

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**Letters to Afghanistan is a parody of
the DWP**

-----BLOCK 1-----

SCENE

An office at the Job Centre.

MISS PARKER arrives and knocks at the door.

OFFICIAL: Come in.

MISS PARKER enters and hands over a letter to the official.

OFFICIAL: Please sit down.. MISS PARKER.

OFFICIAL looks at computer then returns her attention to MISS PARKER.

OFFICIAL: Ah there. Now I have your file. Universal Credit. You're seeking work as agreed, right?

MISS PARKER: Yes I am.

OFFICIAL: And I understand that you've been assessed by the Independent Group to claim new style ESA.

MISS PARKER: Yes that's correct.

OFFICIAL: Ah. I now have your assessment report. Let me see, back injury, leg injuries, post traumatic stress disorder, head injuries, injuries to your hands, your left foot, then there's paralysis..

MISS PARKER: Yes I survived a car crash last year, and then a gas explosion.. I have been recovering ever since. I also have depression.

OFFICIAL: Yes, yes, I have that here.

MISS PARKER: But I'm still looking for work and signing into my journal. Every day.

-----**BLOCK 2**-----

OFFICIAL: Okay.. Well we have the assessment and our Decision Maker has made a decision..

MISS PARKER: Yes?

OFFICIAL: And they have awarded you zero points for mobility and zero points for everything else..

MISS PARKER: Oh.

OFFICIAL: But you will still get Universal Credit and as the Government has forced you to claim it, you're down as getting the transitional protection as well..

MISS PARKER: Oh good.

OFFICIAL: Only thing is, Brexit is going to cost us more than the Government thought it would, so Amber Rudd has decided to award one year benefit sanctions to all new Universal Credit claimants.

MISS PARKER: Oh no, what does that mean?

OFFICIAL: It means Amber Rudd is now officially more evil than Theresa May.

MISS PARKER: No. What I mean is, what am I going to do now?

OFFICIAL: Update your CV?

MISS PARKER: No what I mean what do I do now for money?

-----**BLOCK 3**-----

OFFICIAL: It depends. We have changed the rules for the Claimant Commitment. What have you done to find work?

MISS PARKER: I look for work, but I am not well enough yet and need more time.

OFFICIAL: Do you speak Lithuanian, or Polish?

MISS PARKER: No I don't.

OFFICIAL: Well the Department of Work and Pensions have done a study and found that knowing either Polish or Lithuanian is very helpful when it comes to finding work.

MISS PARKER: Oh I see. Well no, I'm sorry, I don't speak Polish or Lithuanian.

OFFICIAL: Well clearly you haven't made enough effort to find work. I think we will have to refer you for a sanction for failing to stick to your Claimant Commitment.

MISS PARKER: Okay. Surely I'm already sanctioned?

-----**BLOCK 4**-----

OFFICIAL holds up a photo of Donald Trump.

OFFICIAL: The Government (points to photo) has decided to reform the benefits sanction system.

MISS PARKER points at photo.. OFFICIAL checks and changes the photo to Boris Johnson.

OFFICIAL: They are introducing a new harsher benefit sanctions and jobseeking requirements.

MS SANTOS: Such as?

OFFICIAL: The Government has decided that there's too many people getting too much money on Universal Credit. Government ministers have decided to reform the benefits system so that the money goes to people who need it, such as banks and corporate directors who don't have enough money for bonuses, and they have decided to cut Universal Credit for claimants but carry on as before and continue to forget to pay most people some months. But we are creating jobs.

MISS PARKER: What jobs?.

OFFICIAL: Even more ridiculous Mickey Mouse corporate bullshit type jobs, such as Zero Time Off Contracts. We threaten to take away your benefits at every available opportunity to get you to work for free. But these new jobs pay food bank vouchers.

MISS PARKER: Which means?

-----BLOCK 5-----

OFFICIAL: What it means Miss Parker is that you will only be starving for three weeks every month instead of the whole month, and you will have no choice but to work for your Universal Credit.

MISS PARKER: But what if I don't work?

OFFICIAL: It's simple. You get sod all.

MISS PARKER: But I'm still recovering, I can't work.

OFFICIAL: It doesn't matter if you are ill, or disabled, or injured, or sick, you still have to work.

MISS PARKER: But seriously, there's no way I can work.

OFFICIAL: Why not Miss Parker?

MISS PARKER: I have post traumatic stress disorder.

OFFICIAL: So what.? So will everybody else once a No Deal Brexit is passed.

MISS PARKER: No really, it affects me.. I have flashbacks and sudden periods of rage.

OFFICIAL: That's got nothing to do with post traumatic stress disorder.

MISS PARKER: It hasn't.

OFFICIAL: No, you're getting flashbacks and sudden periods of rage probably because Jeremy Corbyn can't decide where he stands on Brexit Try changing your leader.

MISS PARKER: But I have frequent periods of anti-social behaviour.

OFFICIAL: Oh do you? That's excellent.. (checks computer) Oh dear, I was sure that the Brexit Party was still hiring staff.

MISS PARKER: But I'm depressed and suffer from insomnia and have periods of drowsiness during the day.

OFFICIAL: Okay, just checking (checks computer) No sorry, no positions available in BT Customer Service either. Not even at their new offices in Wembley

MISS PARKER: But haven't they started moving jobs to India?

OFFICIAL: Not that I know of. You must be thinking of their new Wembley office.

MISS PARKER: But I .

OFFICIAL: So too do people who voted Conservative at the last election. Here we are.. Can you do office work? I have something here in a benefits office dealing with Crisis Loans.

MISS PARKER: Oh no.. no.. I can't do that.. I struggle with my mobility as you can see and struggle to get about.

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-----**BLOCK 6**-----

OFFICIAL: Oh why didn't you say at the start?

MISS PARKER: You didn't ask.

OFFICIAL: We have special policies for people who are disabled, blind, or who cannot move around.

MISS PARKER: You do? Oh good..

OFFICIAL: Yes we pick on them first. It's was a special directive by erm.. what's her name, you know, the previous Secretary of State for Work and Pensions with the blonde hair and Scouse accent who got on everybody's tits. .

-----**BLOCK 7**-----

OFFICIAL: So now I know you've got a mobility issue I agree you're not suitable for office work.

MISS PARKER: But will I get paid?

OFFICIAL checks computer and then hands MISS PARKER three envelopes.

OFFICIAL: Yes you will. Please sign here.

OFFICIAL hands a slip of paper to MISS PARKER who signs.

MISS PARKER: Oh good. Thank you.

OFFICIAL: You have work. You need to deliver these envelopes.

MISS PARKER: Okay.

-----**BLOCK 8**-----

MISS PARKER picks up envelopes and reads them.

MISS PARKER: Kandahar Province. Is that one of those new housing estates in Tottenham?

OFFICIAL: No I'm afraid it's a little further to the east..

MISS PARKER: Essex?

OFFICIAL: No.. Afghanistan.

MISS PARKER: Afghanistan?

OFFICIAL: Yes Afghanistan. It's a country in Asia, between Iran and Pakistan.

MISS PARKER: Oh.. but can I post them?

OFFICIAL: No you can't. The Government has just sold Royal Mail off to the Americans. Amber Rudd wants to get the disabled into work. So we use the disabled instead. Including for airmail and international parcels.

-----BLOCK 9-----

MISS PARKER: But how do I get there?

OFFICIAL: You have a wheelchair don't you?. We'll still try to see if we can pay you. Unless of course we forget..

MISS PARKER: But what if I can't?

OFFICIAL: No benefits.

MISS PARKER: Hey one moment. Isn't there a war in Afghanistan? Isn't that where the fighting still is?

OFFICIAL: That's correct.

MISS PARKER: But it's dangerous.

OFFICIAL: But you've survived a car crash, and a gas explosion, you will do okay.

MISS PARKER: But..

OFFICIAL: And with your mental issues the terrorists will have no chance.

MISS PARKER: But..

OFFICIAL: Look on the bright side.. We're not sending you out there with bacon sandwiches.

MISS PARKER: But how do I get there? I can't afford to get there.

OFFICIAL: Why?

MISS PARKER: Because I don't have enough money..

OFFICIAL: Fill out this form and apply for a Budgetting Advance. New rules apply.

MISS PARKER: Can I apply for a Budgetting Advance?.

OFFICIAL: Yes, simply fill out the form, get a print out from a cash point which shows your bank balance, and bring in the contents of your rubbish bin. We will consider your application.

MISS PARKER: Okay. Thank you.

MISS PARKER leaves.