



Carol's Story Identity



Identity

My name is Carol, and I am 16 years old. I live in a rural area where electricity is not predictable and people travel on bicycles or public means because they cannot afford their own cars. I should be a catch with my dimples, large soulful eyes, and full lips, but I contracted polio when I was five, and my legs were badly affected. Since then, I have lived a difficult life. While other children played and ran around, I crawled about and got left behind. The other kids teased me constantly, calling me cripple and mocking the way I had to drag my legs around on the ground. Unable to enjoy a regular childhood, I spent many hours weaving, crafting, and teaching myself to read instead.

I tried to attend the same school as my siblings but it was far away and nearly impossible to crawl there. The situation was even worse during the rainy season. I would slip around in the mud and sometimes I never reached school at all. My mother started keeping me home whenever it rained, and then I missed too much school to continue beyond primary.

Now I stay home all day. Sometimes I help my mother with small things like cooking, but she says I am not of much use. Many days, I am left alone in the house while everyone else is at school, work, or in town.

When people look at me, all they see is my disability, but I also have hopes and dreams. I love to read and want to study writing someday. I also long for friends and maybe even a boyfriend one day. But for now I just try to make the best of each day...

Go to Violence Strikes and take card 1.



Carol's Story

Violence Strikes 1



Violence Strikes 1

You feel confined in every way, stuck in the house while everyone else goes about their daily tasks. You like to sit on the front porch and get some fresh air, but many people stare at you when they pass by and the older boys in the neighborhood call you mean names and threaten you.

One day, when everyone else is gone and you are home alone, there is a knock on the door. “Yes? Who is it?” you call from where you are seated. “Carol, I have brought you some eggs,” a voice you do not recognize answers. Curious, you slowly move across the floor toward the door. When you open it a crack to see who is there, a particularly rowdy guy you recognize from the neighborhood barges in, steps over you, and slams the door shut, locking it behind him. Before you know what is happening, he picks you up and carries you back to one of the bedrooms. As you try to squirm out of his grasp, he tosses you onto the bed saying a crippler like you must get bored staying home all day and so he has come to entertain you. You try to cry out, but he covers your mouth roughly with his hand. You are pinned down and even your strong arms can’t fight him off. He opens his trousers, yanks down your underwear and forces himself inside you. You feel scorching pain. Even though only a minute or so has gone by, it feels like a lifetime. He holds your neck and warns you not to tell anyone. He threatens to kill you if anyone ever finds out and he runs out of the house. You hear the door slam and begin to sob uncontrollably. You will never be the same.

When you discover that you are pregnant a few months later, you don’t know how to explain yourself to your parents. Your mother is shocked and angry and your father calls you a whore and says he didn’t think any man would ever want you. They cannot afford to care for you and your impending child and tell you that you must move out as soon as possible.

If you decide to go stay with your older sister in the city, go to Family and take card 1.

If you beg your parents to let you stay home with them until the baby comes, go to Return Home and take card 1.



Carol's Story

Family 1



Family 1

Your sister takes you in but constantly reminds you what a burden you are. However, she does surprise you one day with a wheelchair which she got through her church. You are thrilled to be able to get around more easily, and you know the wheelchair will help you to find work one day. You know you will have to get a job as soon as the baby is old enough so that you can help your sister pay the bills and save for your child's education.

Your labor starts one morning when your sister is at work. You try to call her, but she doesn't answer her phone. You can't even wheel yourself outside to look for help because the pains get strong very quickly. You scream and shout, but no one comes. You feel more afraid than ever before, and you think you may die. Just as the pain becomes like an explosion between your legs, you feel something smooth glide out of you. You cradle your son in your arms as your sister comes into the house. She cannot believe that you had your baby alone on the floor. You ask to be taken to the hospital but she just calls an elderly neighbor over to help with cutting the cord. You are determined to get him his immunizations and keep him strong so he doesn't have to endure a life like yours.

Your son is healthy and grows well. But over time, your sister gets annoyed with a crying baby around and keeps nagging you about what a burden you are. You decide it is time to look for work.

Go to Chance and take card 1.



Carol's Story

Return Home 1



Return Home 1

Your parents are not happy, but they agree to let you stay home until the baby comes. You keep yourself busy by sewing small clothes and blankets and thinking about names. Even though your parents think the pregnancy is a curse, you are secretly looking forward to having someone to love who will love you back.

When your labor pains start, your mother calls the traditional birth attendant and you deliver quickly and easily. As your son suckles for the first time, you think of the rape yet feel thankful that at least something positive came from that horrible day.

After a few months, your parents remind you that they cannot take care of you and another child and send you to live with your older sister in the city. She is also displeased by the thought of having to take care of you, but at least she doesn't make you feel useless and even manages to get a used wheelchair donated from her church for you.

Your growing son is happy and healthy. You enjoy him, but you are getting bored and long for something more. Your sister often reminds you of her financial situation and is becoming increasingly irritated with you. You know it is time to seriously look for a job.

Go to Chance and take card 1.



Carol's Story

Chance 1



Chance 1

You have decided to go to town to see if you can get a job. You are very good with your hands after all. You have been waiting by the side of the road for over twenty minutes in the blazing sun, and every bus that comes by zooms past.

Finally, an empty taxi pulls over and the driver actually gets out of the car to come talk to you. He explains that he shouldn't really pick you up because he's on his way to the garage, but that you have such a nice smile that he couldn't resist. He helps you into the front seat, and you talk for awhile before he delivers you to the exact spot you were hoping to reach.

His name is Ibrahim, and you feel so wonderful when he drops you off in town. He seems to look past your disability. You are so distracted, thinking about him that you forget what you were doing and return home without making any progress on getting a job.

You start going to town more often to look for work, hoping to see him. You sit on his route and happily, he does often see you and pick you up. He even lets you ride for free sometimes. You sit in the front seat while he cracks jokes and tells you how pretty you are. Soon, you don't even pretend to be looking for jobs anymore and just ride around with Ibrahim for fun. It doesn't take long before he begins pulling the taxi off to the side of the road to have sex with you. Your feelings for Ibrahim are growing strong, but he wants you to keep the relationship secret. You know it is because he is ashamed for people to know that he is having an affair with a disabled woman. After a few months of this arrangement, you become pregnant. What should be joyous news turns tragic...

Go to Violence Strikes and take card 2.



Carol's Story Violence Strikes 2



Violence Strikes 2

Ibrahim comes to visit you one Sunday while your sister is at church. You make small talk as you prepare him some tea. You are feeling nervous because you don't know how he will react to the news, but you can't contain your secret any longer.

"I am pregnant with your child," you blurt out as he begins to drink.

"What? No, this must be a mistake. People like you cannot get pregnant," he shakes his head in disbelief.

"I am not trying to trick you. I have been pregnant before, and now I am pregnant again. I thought you would be happy. We could have a good life together.. " your smile fades.

"Are you out of your mind Carol?" he asks. "I would never marry you! No one can even know about us!" Ibrahim pushes his food away and stands up. "How can I even be sure the child is mine anyway? If you tell anyone about us, I swear, I will just deny the whole thing." He storms out the door without another word. You feel complete betrayal. You thought you loved him and had dared to hope that he might love you.

You don't tell anyone about the pregnancy but as your belly begins to swell, your sister demands to know the truth. When you explain, she is furious and even threatens to kick you out.

Go to Medical Care and take card 1.



Carol's Story

Medical Care 1





Medical Care 1

You try to reach Ibrahim over and over again. He never picks up his phone and when you go to town near his route, he is nowhere to be found. You slowly give up hope that he will return.

When the familiar pains of labor begin, you beg your sister to take you to the hospital. You arrive to find an overflowing room full of very sick people. Your sister tells you to wait while she shoves through the crowd to find help. People moving past you stare at your legs and your big tummy. Others jostle your wheelchair, and you roll further and further into a corner as you shudder in pain. Your sister finally returns with a nurse and you are carried to a small bed, crowded next to many others just like it. There is no privacy, and you can hear other mothers and nurses talking about you.

As your labor progresses, the doctor comes to prepare you for a caesarean section. When you ask what he is doing, he tells you that since you cannot push, you will have to be cut. You are furious, demanding that you can push just like any other woman and that your baby is not being cut out of you. The doctor shouts for the nurses to come over, and laughing, he points to you and informs them that you think you can push. It is not until your sister intervenes and explains your previous birth that the doctor agrees to let you try to push. He doubts that your body can endure the pain though and tells you that you are being stubborn.

You prove the doctor wrong and give birth to another baby boy, a real beauty. You try to call Ibrahim to tell him the news, but his phone does not seem to be working.

If you decide to look for a job to earn some money, go to Work and take card 1.

If you need some time to recover from the birth, go to Carry On and take card 1.



Carol's Story

Carry On 1



Carry On 1

Even though Baby Ibby brings you great joy, it is not easy looking after another child, and you have no money. You continue to call Ibrahim and look for him on the streets along his usual route, but he is nowhere to be found. Your sister is asking for you to contribute to the bills, and schools fees for your firstborn are due soon. You are overwhelmed and constantly worried.

One day, the baby falls seriously ill. At night he is shivering, his temperature is very high and he is throwing up. The only mosquito net that you own is torn and you figure that he has gotten malaria. You feel so guilty. With the little money you have hidden away, you send your sister's house help for some drugs to reduce the temperature. Waiting for an eternity for the house help to return with the medicine, night falls. Your son's condition is getting worse and you are stranded.

Finally, the house help arrives with medicine and you are able to bring Baby Ibby's fever down. He recovers, but you can't help thinking about what could have been. You know that you must change your situation.

If you decide to go to an NGO that supports people with disabilities, go to NGO and take card 1.

If you decide to look for work again on your own, go to Work and take card 1.



Carol's Story

Work 1



Work 1

Life with a new baby is very difficult, and you desperately need a job. Ever since Ibrahim abandoned you, you shy away from taxi drivers and instead wheel yourself along the busy street. You pass a number of stalls selling various things and you begin to approach them one by one, asking if there are any odd jobs that you may be able to do.

Some of the stall owners laugh at you before you even ask, others just ignore you, and one even chases you away. “What could you possibly do?” a man asks, and grabs hold of your wheelchair, pushing it away. You almost roll into the traffic, but you manage to put on the breaks before having an accident.

You are feeling defeated and wonder if you are just as useless as your mother always told you that you were. You decide to head home for the day when a woman with only one arm approaches you with a basket of fruit. You shake your head, intending to decline her offer to purchase food, but she stops you. She explains that she was watching the way those people treated you, and that she has a small craft stall where she weaves baskets and makes other small crafts.

She says that the money is very little, but she invites you to join her. You take up her offer and start the next day. You are even allowed to bring Baby Ibby with you to work. You become good friends with the shop owner, whose name is Furaha. Though you don’t make much money, you begin to save for your family and are looking forward to happier times...

Go to Violence Strikes and take card 3.



Carol's Story

NGO 1



NGO 1

There is an office situated about twenty minutes from your house. You are hot and sweaty by the time you arrive. As you pass through the front gate, you see a set of steps leading up to the front door. You ask the guard to help you, but he says he cannot leave the compound unattended and makes a phone call instead, informing you that someone will be down soon to help you.

You feel discouraged as you wait, but two women finally come outside and cringe when they see your wheelchair. They don't know what to do with you and end up carrying you awkwardly into the office with another woman who was entering the building, leaving your wheelchair outside. When they set you down in a chair, a woman asks how she can help you, and you ask to speak to someone about assistance or work. She asks you to follow her and walks down a hallway as you are left to find your own way. Without your wheelchair, you must resort to crawling on the floor and you hang your head in humiliation.

The woman leads you into a large office. A very serious looking man towers over you and helps you to a chair. He says that they are only able to offer referral services, not any financial support, for people "like you." He hands you a few brochures offering support groups and then tells you that he knows of some women with disabilities who run a small crafting co-operative.

Go to Work and take card 2.



Carol's Story

Work 2



Work 2

You feel so defeated after your visit to the NGO that you are not sure you have the energy to go and visit any of the places that were recommended to you. You would rather stay inside for awhile. But your sister continues to nag you and when you look at the state of your sons and think about how many things you need to buy for them, you realize that you must continue looking for work.

You show up at the crafting co-operative feeling nervous and excited. A kind-looking woman who uses a crutch to move around approaches you and asks if she can help you find something. You smile and explain that you were sent by someone to see if they might have any work. She invites you to come inside the small stall and speak to the woman who is in charge.

As you wait, you look around the stall and note that though small, the crafts are well-made and very beautiful. Although you once dreamed of becoming a writer, you feel that this will do for now. Another woman without an arm greets you warmly and asks what skills you have. You explain to her that you have been weaving baskets and sewing since you were a young girl. The woman looks excited and tells you that she has been hoping to hire someone with tailoring skills. She warns you that the money is small, but you are thrilled none the less when she says you can come back tomorrow. You feel like things are looking up...

Go to Violence Strikes and take card 3.



Carol's Story

Violence Strikes 3



Violence Strikes 3

As time passes, you establish yourself as a skilled artisan at the craft stall. You have made enough money to pay for your son's primary school fees, and Baby Ibby is walking and talking. You are even dreaming about finding your own place soon.

One night, you are wheeling yourself home from the craft stall. You stayed open a bit later than usual to help a customer, so it is already dark as you hurry to reach home. You hear footsteps approaching from behind you. You try to push faster, but in no time the man has reached you and grabs hold of your wheelchair. You cry out, but his other hand covers your mouth. "Keep quiet!" he demands as he begins to grope you, searching your clothes for money. Your heart sinks because you carried all of the money from the stall home with you since you were the last one there. He finds the small bag containing the day's earnings and also takes your personal money. He stands up and you think it is over, but then he knocks over your chair and kicks you in the stomach.

You curl your body into a ball but his next kick slams into your head and for the next few moments you cannot see. You feel blow after blow hit your body and you must have lost consciousness for a bit because when you wake up, you are alone on the ground and your wheelchair is nowhere to be seen.

Your body aches as you struggle to drag yourself the rest of the way home. Your sister is shocked by your condition. You are badly injured and can't imagine ever feeling safe again in the city.

If you want to forget what happened and keep working, go to Work and take card 3.

If you want to take a chance and return to your parents house where it is safer, go to Chance and take card 2.



Carol's Story

Work 3



Work 3

You are badly bruised and scared from the attack. You don't want to leave your sister's house, but you think the women at the craft stall must be worried about you. And you still have school fees to pay. When you show up at work a few days later, Furaha is very worried. Upon seeing your condition, she asks what happened. You tell her about the robbery and attack, and while she is unhappy that the money is gone, she is very kind and supportive. She apologizes and says that she never should have left you to close the stall and go home with all the money alone. You assure her that it is not her fault and can't believe how lucky you are to have such a friend. Then Furaha invites you to come with her to a support group that she attends twice a month.

You are hesitant, but you begin to attend with her and find yourself amazed to meet so many other people with disabilities. After one of the sessions, the leader calls you over and says that she is impressed with you and would like to help you go back to school. You are excited by the opportunity, but the lessons cost a bit of money. You do not think you can afford it, so you're not quite sure what to do.

If you decide to enroll in the adult literacy class, go to Education and take card 1.

If you decide that you are too old for class and would rather go back to stay with your parents, go to Chance and take card 2.



Carol's Story Education 1



Education 1

You attend classes at night and find them more enjoyable than you thought they would be. All of the other students have interesting and difficult stories and you feel less alone. There are so many things you learn beyond what is taught in the books, and you look forward to being able to help your sons study when they are old enough.

You excel in the exams, earning numerous certificates. You begin to look for jobs that pay more than your work with Furaha. You don't want to leave her, but now that you have more education, you think you can find better work.

You manage to find a job as the receptionist at a small office. You sit behind a desk answering phones and greeting clients. You enjoy your work for the most part, although occasionally people make rude comments about your legs or talk about you when they think you can't hear.

You want to share your accomplishments with your parents so that they can feel proud of you for once. You use the phone at work to call your mother one evening, but she does not believe you are really working at a job. You wish your sister was there to confirm what you are saying, but after protesting for a few moments, you give up and resign yourself to the fact that your mother will always think you are useless.

Your money slowly begins to accumulate, and as the years pass by you realize that although you will never accomplish your dreams, you will give your sons a better life than your own and may even save enough to buy your own home.

THE END

This is the end of this version of Carol's story. Take a few minutes to sit quietly and reflect on Carol's experience. When you are ready, ask the facilitator for another woman's story.



Carol's Story

Chance 2



Chance 2

Packing your belongings, you know that with the money you have earned, you can take your children back to your parents' house and contribute a small amount to the cost of living. You are worried, but you know they cannot turn you away.

Your sister says that the move is a bad idea, but you know that she will be relieved not to have you and your sons to take care of. After the attack, you feel it is your only option since you are living in constant fear. Your older son is also upset about leaving his friends and school. You feel guilty, but you cannot live in the city any longer.

Your parents let you in reluctantly but they continue to remind you of how useless you are. Even when you pay your son's school fees with your savings and contribute to buying food, they do not acknowledge any of your achievements and complain about doing everything for you.

Despite this, your son excels at school and many of your neighbors enjoy spending time with Baby Ibbby. You feel much safer than when you stayed with your sister in the city.

One day, when you are on your way to buy vegetables, you fall into a hole which has been freshly dug along the road. You manage to crawl out, but are lying there badly hurt when a car comes and nearly runs you over. You call for help and wait in vain. You realize that this life is not really much better than life in the city. You miss Furaha and the pride you felt from your craft work. You long to feel safe but there seems to be nowhere in the world for you.

THE END

This is the end of this version of Carol's story. Take a few minutes to sit quietly and reflect on Carol's experience. When you are ready, ask the facilitator for another woman's story.