

# Hadija's Story Identity





## Identity

My name is Hadija, and I am a successful, happy woman with two grown sons studying at university outside of the city center. My parents live in the village I grew up in. I live in a two-bedroom flat with my husband Ali, who earns a living from livestock produce. I work in a bank. Ali and I met at university, and we have been sweethearts ever since. Everyone says that we are perfect for each other.

We are a Muslim family and we have raised our children to be faithful to Allah and to believe in the power of prayer. My parents have always believed in Allah, and even in their old age, they keep reading the Koran and going to prayers. Their faith and devotion is an inspiration to me. Everyone at the mosque respects me and Ali because we are always there and contribute regularly.

I am also very devoted to my work. My job is demanding, with meetings that often keep me at work until 9pm. I travel a lot for workshops and conferences, and even at home I am constantly conducting phone or email business. Our house help prepares most of our meals and takes care of things around the house. Now that our children are grown, Ali and I do not spend much time together because we are so busy doing other things.

My husband and I have always had a trusting and happy relationship. Even when work is stressful, we know we can count on each other. It was only when I got a promotion in my department that things started to change...

**Go to Violence Strikes and take card 1.**



# Hadija's Story

## Violence Strikes 1



## Violence Strikes 1

Ali starts acting sullen around the dinner table and in the mornings before prayers. He says that he misses you and does not want you to go out of town on any more trips. You explain to him that the trips are part of your new position at work and that the traveling will lessen once the busy season is over, but you cannot seem to lighten his mood.

A few days later, you notice that someone is tampering with your phone, and you can only suspect Ali. When you ask him about it, he says that he has been suspicious that you are having an affair and so he checks your phone for calls and messages. You tell him that you have nothing to hide, and that he does not need to check your phone. That is when he shouts in anger, “Why shouldn’t I check your phone? What is yours is mine and what is mine is yours. We are one. Why don’t you want me to know who has been calling you?”

Things get worse as he starts to control your movements. He gets a driver for you and monitors your whereabouts during work hours. It becomes embarrassing when he drops in at the office during meetings, at lunch time, and even sometimes during your overnight conferences at hotels. You feel shadowed all the time and you don’t know what is causing Ali’s sudden suspicions because you would never be unfaithful.

**If you decide to talk to your friend about it, go to Friends & Neighbors and take card 1.**

**If you decide to forget about it, go to Carry On and take card 1.**



# Hadija's Story

## Friends & Neighbors 1



## Friends & Neighbors 1

Your good friend, Felicity, is always happy to see you and she is also very candid when it comes to giving advice. You have always shared secrets with each other, but you worry about telling her of your marital troubles. She has known you and Ali for many years, and as soon as you walk into her apartment, she knows that something is wrong. You explain to her the change in Ali and how he is so suspicious of your movements and how he checks your phone.

Felicity, who is divorced, says, “To me, it sounds like Ali is intimidated by your success. Many men are like that and it doesn’t mean he doesn’t love you. Try not to rub your success in his face all the time. And when you are home with him, don’t talk about work. Make it special time for just the two of you. You two are one of the best couples I know. You’ll get through this.”

Felicity has always been straightforward about what she thinks. You decide that she may have a point because your success has kept you away from home. To make up for your absences, you plan to take the next day off from work and surprise Ali with his favorite breakfast. You didn’t know it could go so wrong...

**Go to Violence Strikes and take card 2.**



# Hadija's Story

## Carry On 1



## Carry On 1

To take your mind off of Ali's odd behavior, you invest more time in work. You walk in with a smile on your face, greeting the workers on your floor with enthusiasm each morning. You tighten up your presentations for meetings, read more about the market and before long your supervisor is recommending you for another promotion. You are pleased that your effort is yielding results because while home may be stressful, at least at work you can shine.

The promotion requires more trips out of the city. You don't have time to entertain visitors during the week anymore and often work on the weekends. You and Ali see each other only in passing on the way in or out of the house. He hardly speaks to you but continues to monitor your whereabouts and check your phone.

As time goes on, however, it becomes harder and harder to keep the stress from your marriage out of your work. The more distant Ali becomes, the more distracted you feel. Masking your sadness and confusion about Ali is very difficult, and sometimes you must excuse yourself from your desk when you find tears filling your eyes. You don't want anyone to know what you are going through, but you are sure people have noticed.

One night on the way home from work, you decide to have a heart-to-heart conversation with Ali about what is happening between you but he is already asleep. The sadness that you feel is overwhelming as you realize how much you miss your husband and how long it has been since you two have made love.

You decide not to go into work the next day and instead plan a nice day for the two of you to spend together. You can hardly wait to wake him up with breakfast in bed, but things do not go as you hoped...

**Go to Violence Strikes and take card 2.**





# Hadija's Story

## Violence Strikes 2



## Violence Strikes 2

You feel like a young girl again as you prepare tea and eggs in the early morning hours before prayers. You even send the house help to fetch Ali's favorite newspaper from the shop. When everything is ready, you walk quietly to the bedroom. You open the door and sit on the bed, holding the tray of food. You lean down to whisper into Ali's ear when he sits up suddenly and knocks the breakfast out of your hands.

"What on earth are you doing sneaking up on me, woman?" he shouts, throwing the bed sheets off and getting out of bed.

"I was bringing you breakfast. It's your favorite..."

He interrupts you before you can finish, "Where were you last night? Do you think I am so stupid that I do not know when my wife is seeing another man?"

You are outraged. How dare he think that you are cheating! "I was at work," you explain. "You were already sleeping when I came home. I would never cheat on you. Why are you so jealous of me?" You can't help but let that last question escape, but you can tell by the look on Ali's face that it was a mistake.

"Woman, you are a liar!" With that, he slaps you across the cheek. You can taste a little blood on the inside of your cheek.

"Ali, what has gotten into you?"

He slaps you again and this time you fall into the wall. He kicks you in the stomach so hard that you feel the breath knocked out of you.

You are clutching your stomach in pain when he shouts, "I'll show you who's the boss," and slams the bedroom door.

**If you decide to go to your imam and seek counsel, go to Religion and take card 1.**

**If you decide to just go back to work and pretend nothing has happened, go to Work and take card 1.**



# Hadija's Story

## Work 1





## Work 1

It's now a struggle to get through each day without breaking down. You have to check your makeup in the mirror many times a day to make sure your bruises are hidden. The quality of your work is declining, and it takes you much longer to complete a task. You overhear some of your colleagues whispering about you and hope that your boss hasn't noticed anything.

At home, Ali seems to have returned to himself. He has been in a pleasant mood and you've started watching soaps together after dinner like you used to. One night he even surprises you with a new business suit and apologizes for the way he treated you. You feel relieved as Ali returns to the man you have always loved. You thank Allah that you stayed true to your marriage and waited for him to come to his senses.

The honeymoon, however, does not last long. A few weeks later, Ali has not come home and it is getting very late. You are filled with worry and stay awake in the kitchen drinking tea until he stumbles in the door in the early morning hours. "Sweetheart, where have you been? Are you okay?" You rush toward him but stop short as you smell the alcohol on his breath. "What, are you my mother?" he taunts you as he shoves you hard against the wall. "Get away from me. You think you are the only one who can have fun?"

The weeks pass slowly. One day Ali is like your old sweetheart, the next he is nothing more than a jealous stranger. You never know which version of the man you love will walk in the door, and you grow sick with fear and fatigue...

**Go to Violence Strikes and take card 3.**



# Hadija's Story

## Violence Strikes 3



## Violence Strikes 3

As you grow thinner and thinner, your worries about your marriage and your fear for your safety take over your mind. You cannot focus at work, and your supervisor notices your anxiety and distraction. He calls you into his office to confront you about the situation. He tells you that the quality of your work is declining. You tell him that you have been putting in more hours at work than ever and are adamant that nothing is wrong. You remind him of the late hours you spend in the office and how you are always willing to travel. He becomes irritated that you are talking back to him and tells you that if you do not pull it together, you will be forced to take a leave.

You are angry at the confrontation and tell him so, saying there is no way you will take forced leave. He sends you away with a warning that he is watching you.

Your boss's threat really shakes you up, and you are determined to try harder at work. However two weeks pass with no improvement, and he calls you into the office and tells you that unless you want to lose your job permanently, you must go on leave until you can pull yourself together.

**If you decide to use this time to learn about your legal rights, go to Legal Services and take card 1.**

**If you are angry about how you are being treated and decide to explore other opportunities, go to Education and take card 1.**



# Hadija's Story

## Religion 1



## Religion 1

Your imam has been calling and wondering why you have not been to the mosque lately. You have explained that you have been busy at work, but never miss prayers. When you enter his office, he does not hide his elation at your visit.

“How are you Hadija? It has been a while. Sit down and we will pray together. Then we will talk about what has been keeping you away from us and why you’ve come today.”

“I have come for help. It is Ali.”

He stops to listen as you pour out the agony of the past months. You share how Ali’s suspicions grew into physical beatings and how you never know how he will behave these days. You tell him that your anxiety has started to greatly affect your work. Listening to you, he offers his advice, “This is a test from Allah, Hadija. Every marriage goes through a test and this is yours. You must fulfill your duties as a wife and mother and always be submissive to your husband and to Allah. The more you spend time away from Allah’s presence, the more you will miss out on His blessings. Go home and be with your man and please, bring Ali with you next time so we can talk together.”

**If you decide to try and persuade Ali to come back for religious counseling, go to Return Home and take card 1.**

**If you decide that focusing on work is the better option, go to Work and take card 1.**





# Hadija's Story

## Education 1



## Education 1

You know that since you are not working, you will get bored very quickly. Since Ali is rarely at home, you cannot even dedicate yourself to being a better wife. You search online for new opportunities, but you find that a woman of your age cannot compete with the younger generations for jobs these days. You look into opportunities for studying abroad, thinking that being away for a while could be the best option for your marriage. You grow excited as you discover different possibilities for further education and send in application after application, but the process takes a while.

As you wait, you start to give financial advice to a few friends and neighbors who trust you, which makes you think about starting a consulting company. But before you get started, you get a green light from one out the many applications you sent out. You have been accepted to a one-year course of study abroad. You feel excited and relieved about the time away, but there are a few months before the program starts.

You don't know how to tell Ali about your news. It is impossible to anticipate his moods these days, and you don't even know when he might actually come home. Surely he will not be happy to hear that you are leaving for a year.

**If you decide to go to the mosque to get advice from your imam, go to Religion and take card 2.**

**If you decide to take a chance and tell Ali right away, go to Chance and take card 1.**



# Hadija's Story

## Legal Services 1



# Legal Services 1

You feel fire burning inside your chest about the way your supervisor treated you at work and even more anger toward Ali for causing all the stress to begin with. You decide to seek information about your legal rights.

You call your eldest son at university and tell him a short version of the troubles you've been facing at work and at home. Though he defends his father at first, he agrees to come home on the weekend, and when he sees your scars and bruises, he cannot deny the truth. He insists on coming with you to the lawyer's office.

You are not intimidated by the large gate and fancy cars as you pull your SUV into the parking garage. You smooth your suit as you take a seat in the reception, and your son waits there when you are called in to see the lawyer. The lawyer is a bit older than you and clearly knows her field of work. After you tell her your story she surprises you by saying that the process for filing for divorce is not complicated and that she will begin the paperwork immediately. You are taken aback by the speed of everything and wonder how she can make it seem so simple. She also mentions filing a harassment suit against your boss, but you decide that you'd rather take one step at a time and first figure out your marriage.

You leave with the paperwork in hand, feeling sadness and relief about the possibility of divorce. Your son just shakes his head in disbelief. He never thought his parents' love story would turn out this way.

**If you decide you are not yet ready for divorce, but still feel like you need a change, go to Education and take card 1.**

**If you decide you want to strongly consider moving forward with the divorce process, go to Legal Services and take card 2.**



# Hadija's Story

## Return Home 1





## Return Home 1

You feel positive that with counseling from your imam, your marriage to Ali will improve. But first, you have to convince him to come with you. You decide to talk to him about it after dinner one night.

He is watching television in his usual rotten mood, but during an advert, you tell him about counseling and how, as Muslims, you should seek help from Allah and your imam. You remind him of the many things Allah has done for you both and that counseling may help save your relationship.

“Shut up!” he shouts as he turns the TV on louder. You then hand him a brochure about the benefits of counseling, but he grabs your wrist in midair and twists until you fall out of your chair. As you struggle to get up, he kicks your head into the edge of the table before he walks out of the house. You sit in stunned silence, holding your hand to the wound on your head.

You feel hopeless and depressed. Even your work, where you used to thrive, is becoming difficult, but you decide to devote yourself to your job.

**Go to Work and take card 1.**



# Hadija's Story

## Chance 1



# Chance 1

You prepare yourself for the worst as you interrupt Ali. It is clear that he has no time for you, so you get right to the point.

“Ali, I think it might help us to be apart for a little while. I’ve been offered an opportunity to get another degree. It is a one-year program that starts in two months.” You step back and even brace yourself for a physical blow. But when you open your eyes, he is staring back at the television.

“Ali?” you say, “Did you hear me?” After another moment of silence, he finally turns toward you and looks at you in disgust, “I don’t care what you do. But if you leave this house, do not bother coming back. Do you think I will just sit here and wait while my wife goes off studying like some young school girl?” You are confused and hurt by his reaction, but also grateful that he didn’t attack you.

As you prepare yourself to leave, you begin to hear rumors that Ali is seeing other women. Your friend Felicity comes over one night to tell you. Assuming the worst, she is prepared for your breakdown, but you are not surprised. It explains where he has been all these nights. You are even more confident that you have made the right decision to leave for your studies.

When you leave the house for the last time, you tell Ali that he should look to Allah and ask for forgiveness. He doesn’t even glance your way as you haul your things to the car. Even though you know this is for the best, you mourn the end of your twenty-year relationship and hope that Allah and your children can, if not forgive you, at least understand your decision.

## **THE END**

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





# Hadija's Story

## Legal Services 2



## Legal Services 2

You keep thinking about the lawyer you met who spoke to you about divorce and independence. You also spend a lot of time with Felicity as she tells you about her own divorce. You start considering opening your own savings account, and even though it is difficult, you reluctantly begin to move forward with the divorce. You fill out the required paperwork and return to meet with the lawyer a number of times in the following weeks.

Although your lawyer is helpful, you sometimes feel like she is pushing you to move more quickly than you would like. You are still confused and sad when you think about ending your marriage, and you wonder what your family will think of you if you get a divorce. As you feel your life running away from you, you decide to seek the advice of your parents.

**Go to Family and take card 1.**



# Hadija's Story

## Family 1





## Family 1

Your parents, as always, are delighted to see you. They tell you that it has been too long since they saw their grandchildren and accuse you of being too busy to bring them. Reminding them that the children are studying at university, they laugh it off. It is your mother who notices the bruises on your face. She sends your father away and reaches up to inspect you more closely. When she asks you what happened, you tell her how Ali has started beating you and that despite your efforts to fix your marriage, things are very bad with Ali and that he has refused counseling.

Your mother is shocked to hear about Ali and expresses her sympathy, confiding to you that your father has beaten her from time to time as well. She smooths your hair and tells you that you spend too much time away from home. She reminds you that she raised you to be a good woman and that you must always put your family first.

You explain to her that you are considering divorce. She looks disappointed and reminds you that you made your wedding vows before Allah, for better or worse. She tells you that a divorce would be a huge mistake and bring shame to your family.

You know she is right. So you go home to your husband and promise to do your best to remain true to your vows. Some days are good days and some days are harder. It is all you can do to keep on praying to Allah for change.

### **THE END**

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



# Hadija's Story

## Religion 2



## Religion 2

At the mosque, the imam is in the doorway talking to a few people. When he sees you, he calls you to greet them and tells you of the upcoming fund raising drive and how he wants your involvement. As the other people leave, he puts his arm on your shoulder and walks to a corner to speak with you privately.

“I have been praying for you,” he begins and you let him talk without interrupting.

Referring to the Koran, he reads about a wife who needs to be submissive to her husband and to respect him. He says that the current problems in your marriage are because you are not being submissive and therefore Allah’s blessings are evading you.

“I advise you to leave your job. Do not run around looking for earthly things to satisfy you, Hadija. Stay at home and be a good wife.”

Even though you are furious, you are in the presence of Allah, so you allow him to pray for you before you leave the mosque full of rage.

**If you decide to reconsider leaving for studies, and want to talk to your parents, go to Family and take card 1.**

**If you decide to ignore the imam’s advice, go to Chance and take card 1.**