

A Migrant's Journey



Credits

Writer/Producer: Michelle Betz, Betz Media Consulting
www.michellebetz.com

Game designer: Dr. Paul Beighley, Betz Media Consulting

Illustrations: Thaís Mesquita
www.readymag.com/thaism/illustrator

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Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the
Netherlands

Choices

Welcome to a Migrant's Journey

This game aims to give players greater insight into the decision-making processes around irregular migration. The story is based on true accounts from migrants in West Africa and designed to generate thought and discussions on this issue. At the end of the game there are options to play again and experience different outcomes, as well as links to some helpful resource. The game was developed by Migrants as Messengers, the International Organization's (IOM) peer-to-peer communication project in West Africa.

To play, you will read about your situation as a migrant seeking a better life in Europe and be offered two choices. Make a choice, go to the page you are directed to, and find out what happens!

OK, I'm ready, let's start the story! Go to page 4

The start of the journey



Not so long ago there were two young people in West Africa: Faith, a 17-year old Sierra Leonean and Eric, a 20-year old Ivorian. In this adventure you will take on the role of one of these two young people on their journey as they are faced with difficult decisions along the way.

Whose migrant journey would you like to join?

I will take on the role of Faith. Go to page 5

I will take on the role of Eric. Go to page 30

Faith



You attended primary school for a few years but once you turned 11 your father said there was no value in it. He said you should focus on tending the house and preparing for

marriage. And yet, you always believed your father was wrong. You longed to get educated, believing that if you could not read or write, your place in life would be less. In your community you saw that women and girls who attended school were much better off than those who didn't.

The thought of leaving Sierra Leone had never seriously crossed your mind. But then some friends said if you left you could have a better life. They said you would make a lot of money styling hair in Europe.

You are convinced and decide to go to Europe. But where will you ever get the money necessary to travel? You have your precious national identification card, but very little money.

One day you meet a nice young man named Eric from Côte d'Ivoire. Eric says he came to Sierra Leone because he heard it was a good place to begin his journey to Europe via Guinea, Mali and Algeria where he would catch a boat to Europe.

Eric tells you he has found some coxers who will help him get passports and find transporters to take you both to Mali and then to Algeria. You talk to Eric for a while and decide to tell him that you had been planning to go to Europe too.

"That's excellent", says Eric. "You can come with me! We can travel together and take care of each other."

You explain that you don't have any money, but Eric insists that if you can gather up a few hundred dollars and travel together, that would be enough for the trip.

You think about this. You know if you go alone, you would need more money and also think you might be safer if you were with someone, even someone like Eric who you don't know very well.

What do you do?

You decide to try and find the money somehow even if it takes a while. Go to page 7

You know your father has some money hidden and will take that and go now. Go to page 8

You wait and look to save or earn money

You have decided to let Eric go on his own while you try to save up enough money and make your own journey later. You wonder how you will ever be able to get the money you need to get to Spain. After several weeks of dreaming of what your new life will be like you finally find the courage to ask your grandmother if she has any money. She says she only has \$100 and gives that to you in hopes that you can find a better life.

You continue to ask friends and family and finally after two months have passed you have been given or borrowed enough money to set out on your journey to Spain. In the meantime, you have made contact with a smuggler who said he would get you a passport and get you to Algeria. When you finally collect all the money, you meet him to make the final arrangements. The smuggler tells you that you must pay \$350 upfront. You give him the money and he gives you a passport. He tells you that the transport leaves in three days, on Sunday at 5am, and where you should go.



You are surprised to hear from Eric who has not yet left. He asks if he can travel with you. You think about this. Why hasn't he left yet on his own? Is there something suspicious about him?

What do you do?

You decide it will be safer to travel together and choose to travel with Eric. Go to page 10

You decide you would prefer to travel without Eric. Go to page 11

You steal some money

You tell Eric you can probably get money and be ready to leave on Saturday as he had planned. You once saw a plastic bag filled with cash that your father had hidden.

Normally, you would never touch this money, but you know this is probably your best chance to leave Sierra Leone and make your dreams a reality. You tell yourself once you get to Europe you will make a lot of money and be able to send some back to your family. So, on Friday evening, the night before you are to leave, and after your father has gone to meet some friends, you find the bag and take all the bills.

You carefully pack a small bag with some of your things: your bible, a beaded bracelet your mother gave you before she died, a few pieces of cloth, some clothing and your phone (you don't have your own charger). You don't sleep at all and hear your father come home. You worry he will look for his money bag, but he doesn't. Finally, at daybreak you leave the house and don't look back. You go to meet Eric.

When you meet Eric he asks you if you have money and you say you were only able to get \$400 not telling him you have some extra. He sounds frustrated but he says it is ok. You head to the edge of town and wait at the supposed pickup location. Finally, an old truck pulls up. Eric talks to the man in the front and explains who you are. You hand over \$300 and in return are handed a passport. You get in the vehicle. There are at least a dozen others.

The truck heads out. It's hot but you only stop at a couple of other locations and pick up five more people. You continue traveling for three days and nights with few breaks. You are exhausted and hungry, but you don't dare complain.

Finally, you reach Mopti in Mali. You are told to get out and wait for the next transporters who are supposed to show up the following day. So, you wait. And wait. Finally, after four days of no one showing up, you decide you just want to go home even though you know you would be shamed on returning. Eric tries

desperately to talk you out of this as he has grown used to your company and doesn't want to travel alone.

What do you do?

You decide you will wait with Eric in Mopti and try to figure out something. Go to page 12

You decide you have had enough and will try and get back home with the money you have left. Go to page 14

You leave with Eric



When you meet Eric he asks you if you paid for the transport already. You say you have. He says the coxers are demanding another \$100. You're not sure you want to pay this as that would leave you less for the long journey ahead and you have already spent

so much! Eric convinces you and you give him the money and you head across town to the pickup location.

After waiting for five hours an old truck pulls up. Eric talks to the man in the front, explaining who you are. He hands over the money in exchange for passports and you both get in the back of the truck. It's quite crowded as there are at least a dozen others in the bed of the truck.

As you are about to leave, another man approaches and tells you that you must hand over your passport. But they just gave it to me, you say. You hesitate, you have already hidden your passport in your dress and don't want to surrender it. Eric helps you and argues with the man that you won't give him the passport. The man backs off. But you see all the other passengers handing over their passports. You are not sure what to do.

What do you do?

You decide it is better to just keep your passport for now even though others are giving over theirs. Go to page 15

You decide it is best to go along with everybody else and give your passport over too. Go to page 16

You head out on your own

The next three days you spend collecting what you think you will need. You pack a small bag with some of your things: your bible, a beaded bracelet from your dead mother, a few



pieces of cloth, some clothing and your phone (you don't have your own charger). Saturday night you can't sleep. You only told your best friend what you're about to do and have sworn her to secrecy. Your father would not be happy if he knew!

Sneaking out of the house at 3am Sunday morning you head to the meeting point the smuggler told you of. You see a truck waiting. A man approaches and asks if you're going to Algeria. You say yes. He roughly demands that you must hand over your passport and gets in the back of the truck with over 20 other migrants. You hesitate as you had carefully hidden your passport in your dress and don't want to surrender it. But you look around and see the others seem to be handing over all of their documents.

What do you do?

You will refuse to give it over. You don't trust this man. Go to page 17

You decide you really have no choice if you want to take the next part of the journey. Go to page 18

You stay in Mopti



After a week in Mopti trying to figure out what to do next, the transporters contact Eric and tell him they'll pick you up that night but it will cost

another \$100.

You don't feel you have a choice – either you pay the money or you'll never make it out of Mopti. So, you pay. You're very worried your money is being spent so fast. But that night you get into the back of another truck packed with people and head to Tamanrasset in Algeria.

You travel through what's known as the death quarter or “no man's land”. This area covers 9 million square kilometers making up the Sahara Desert, nearly one-third of the entire continent! The strong desert breeze and dust covers your face. The wind is so strong that you can hardly hear Eric when you try and speak. The truck travels at unsafe speeds to avoid from being stopped.

In the desert, there is no exact road. Some transporters have done this business for several years; they understand the terrain. However, in the event a desert storm rages and all the beaten paths disappear, traveling vehicles with migrants on board get lost. As they run out of food and water and – God forbid — death seizes them, the whereabouts of their corpses become unknown.

As you travel through this unforgiving terrain, you watch about 12 other pickups go by, some carrying 15 to 20 migrants onboard. In the middle of the desert while transporters refuel their vehicles, hijackers and gunmen may surface from nowhere to torture and rob the migrants of their belongings. You are lucky -- you make it without any problem.

Once you arrive in Tamanrasset, you meet another transporter who says it will cost \$1500 to get a boat to Europe! You realize you'll have to find some way to make money or you'll never live your dream.

For some time, life becomes so unbearable for you that you think about committing suicide. With little money and no prospect of a better life in Algeria, you think about returning to Sierra Leone. Eric is in the same situation but he is less discouraged than you and tells you that somehow you will find the money even if it takes some time.

Luckily, you both find menial jobs, but they barely support you and you save very little. One day, months later, Eric tells you he has heard that another transport is available to take you to Algiers, but he is concerned if it will be reliable. While it will take most all your remaining money at least it might be better than this.

What do you do?

Even though it will leave you hardly any money you make the trip with Eric to Algiers. Go to page 25

You are worried that the transportation may not be safe. You decide to stay in Tamanrasset and look for other opportunities. Go to page 26

You decide to go back home

You decide to try and get home. At least you can tell your family that you tried. Sure, maybe you failed but you tried. You, a woman! You will find a way to convince your family to allow you to get some education. Then maybe you can try to get to Europe again.

You heard about a place where there are some other West Africans wanting to head home. It turns out to be run by the IOM. You speak with one of the voluntary return officers and explain you want to return to Sierra Leone. You say you have no money, even though you still have some hidden in your dress.

The officer says there will be a transport in the next week. They tell you where you should go to stay until then and where you can also get some small food.

Finally, the day comes and it's time for the transport to head to Sierra Leone. You are filled with worry, wondering if you made the right decision.

If you saved up money without stealing at the start of the story. Go to page 57

If you started the journey by stealing money from your family. Go to page 58

You keep your passport

You tell Eric you do not think it is a good idea to give up your passports. He agrees and keeps his too.

You finally head out. It's hot and you stop at a couple of other locations to pick up five more people. You continue traveling for three days and nights with few breaks. You are exhausted and hungry but you don't dare complain.

Finally, you reach Mopti. You are told to get out and wait for the next transporters who are supposed to show up the following day. But after waiting for several days they never come. Unlike the other people at least you still have your passport!

You feel discouraged and decide maybe you should just try and find a way home. Eric tries desperately to talk you out of this as he has grown used to your company and doesn't want to travel alone.

What do you do?

You decide this journey is too dangerous and maybe it is best to just try and get back home. Go to page 14

You decide to try and find some way to keep going. Go to page 12

You give over your passport

Eric says he thinks this is the only way to move forward with the trip and that everybody else seems to be giving their passports without a complaint. You decide that the men who are arranging this trip must know what they are doing and so you decide to give your passport over too.

You finally head out. It's hot and you only stop to pick up five more people. You travel for three days and nights with few breaks. You are exhausted and hungry but you don't dare complain.

Finally, you reach Mopti. You are told to get out and wait for the next transporters who are supposed to show up the following day. The man who took your passport at the start of the journey now demands you and Eric pay \$100 to get it back. Stuck in a place you do not know and with no other choices you are forced to give the money. It feels like you are being robbed. The truck then drives back the way it came, leaving you stranded.

After four days of no one showing up, you think maybe you just want to go home even though you know you would be shamed if you return. Eric tries desperately to talk you out of this as he has grown used to your company and doesn't want to travel alone.

What you do?

You decide to just try and go home. Go to page 14

You decide you will stay with Eric. Go to page 12

You keep your passport

You are unsure. You decide to bribe the man with \$100 if he lets you keep it. He agrees.

After some hours waiting you finally head out. It's hot but you only stop at a couple of other locations to pick up five more people. You continue traveling for three days and nights with few breaks. You are exhausted and hungry, but you don't dare complain.

Finally, you reach Mopti, in Mali. You are told to get out and wait for the next transporters who are supposed to show up the following day. You wait. And wait. And wait. Nobody shows up.

After four days of no one showing up, you are frightened and on the verge of returning home when you run into Eric. You can't believe it was him.

You tell Eric you are thinking about going home and he tries to talk you out of this. He doesn't want to travel alone.

What do you do?

You decide you have had enough and it is time to try and go home. Go to page 14

You have grown fond of Eric and will try and travel farther with him. Go to page 12

You give over the passport



You decide to hand over your passport after the man promises to return it. He explains it is needed to cross the various borders on the way to Algeria. You try to relax and settle into your spot on the

truck – surely, he knows what he is doing. After about an hour you depart.

The truck bounces for hours, then days and stops only to get petrol. You have to try and stay hidden most all the time. There is little food. There is little time to even go to the bathroom. You try to stay positive. You are, after all, on your way to your new life.

You lose count of the days or even where you are but finally one day the truck stops. The man that had taken your passport tells everyone to get off the truck. You are in the middle of a desert, in the middle of nowhere. The man says if you want your passport back you have to pay \$150.

What do you do?

You decide you must pay him. Go to page 19

You decide to refuse and argue with him. Go to page 20

You give over the money

You have no choice and pay the man the money. He takes the money and laughs at you! He demands you give him every dollar you have left! You are alone in the middle of the desert in what you think is Algeria. How will you ever get to Spain?

This was your first time traveling outside Sierra Leone, but it was the worst experience ever in your life. Stranded without hope, you became a victim of physical abuse by the smugglers in Algeria who sold you to work as a prostitute. No one ever heard from you again.

Go to page 55

You refuse to pay

You decide to stand up for yourself. You argue with the man, but he just laughs at you and refuses to budge. Finally, he says you are too much trouble anyway and leaves. With your passport! And suddenly, before you can even blink, the truck leaves you behind. Stranded and alone. You can't believe it!



You try and tell yourself that at least you still have some money left. Waiting alone you see trucks driving by also with migrants making the same journey and manage to flag one down to stop. You are told you can go with them, but it will cost you everything you have left.

What do you do?

You decide you really have no choice and give over all the money you have left. Go to page 21

You decide perhaps you can find another way and will try and figure out a better option. Go to page 23

You pay the money

Really, you don't have a choice – either you pay the money, or you'll likely die in the desert. So, you pay. You get on the crowded truck and continue on the journey.

You transit through “no man's land”. Speeding and crossing the nearly 10 million square kilometers that make up the Sahara Desert, which alone makes up nearly one-third of the continent. The strong desert breeze and dust covers your face and makes you choke. The wind is so strong that you can hardly hear other migrants when they speak. You don't know it but the drivers are going as fast as they can, even up to 130 miles per hour! All you know is that it feels much too fast!

Finally, after so many days that you have lost count, you arrive in Algiers. You are eventually able to find some work and within a couple of months save some money, probably enough for a boat to Europe. But you have become disillusioned and miss your friends back home. You seriously think about going home.



You heard about a boat you can take to Spain and you have just enough money saved. It is now or never! But when you see the inflatable boat and more than 20 other migrants waiting you are taken aback. There is no way this boat can be seaworthy let alone able to transport you hundreds of kilometers to Europe. Is it?

What do you do?

You decide this is your best chance to finally get to Europe and will take the boat. Go to page 24

You decide you want to go home. This didn't work out at all as you had planned. Go to page 14

You refuse to pay

You refuse to pay. That would leave you with practically nothing, you decide. Instead you will try and walk to the next village down the road. Surely it cannot be that far. And if that doesn't work out you can flag down another truck.

But it doesn't work out that way. You are miles and miles away from any settlement. The heat is unbearable, and no other trucks will stop. You quickly become dehydrated, overheated, and then die. Your family never learns of your fate and often wonders what happened to you.

Go to page 55

You take the boat

And so you decide to take a boat and make the final step of the journey to Europe.

The overcrowded boat sets off in the night in waters that are calm and warm. This seems like it was the right decision. Just a few hours to go!

But then, as the night gets darker and darker the winds pick up and the sea becomes rougher than you ever thought possible. Your last thoughts are of wondering what your family is doing back home and wondering if there might have been a better set of choices you could have made.

Later that night the boat sinks. There are no survivors.

Go to page 55

You pay the money



Despite your misgivings you hand over your money but for once things work out as planned. You make it to Algiers! You are exhausted but also very excited!

You are so close! For the first time in your life you see the water of the Mediterranean Sea and realize it is the only thing between you and your dreams. Heading to the port you start asking around about boats to Europe. Finally, you hear about a possibility.

You are told to come back in three days with \$1000. You aren't sure where you are going to get the money and feel very depressed but Eric reveals he has had some gold hidden on his person and that he will sell enough so that he can pay for both his and your passage.

After three days have passed, you head to the port and look for the boat you were told would be waiting. When you see the little inflatable boat and more than 20 other migrants waiting, you are taken aback. There is no way this old boat is seaworthy let alone able to transport you safely hundreds of kilometers to Europe.

What do you do?

You decide it isn't worth your life even though Eric has already paid for the transportation. You will find another way. Go to page 27

You are so close, and Eric has paid the money. It is worth the chance. Go to page 24

You stay in Tamanrasset



You do not to go with Eric. As he departs you weep because you had grown close. He promises to try and call you from Europe, but he never does.

You will stay in Tamanrasset and try to get better work. You decide to reach out to your aunt, who is estranged from your family, who lives in Spain. You have heard she is a bad person, but nobody will ever tell you why. Things are now bad enough you will take any help you can get and perhaps she can help you get to Spain.

Calling your aunt, she is warm and friendly, saying she misses her family in Africa. She says that people back home are jealous of her success and never talk to her anymore. She will gladly send you money through Western Union and knows a contact person to help get you to Spain safely. She is certain she can help set you up with some work so you can pay her back, perhaps with a little interest, after a few months of work. You consider the offer. Your aunt sounds confident you can finish the journey. But you feel uneasy, why didn't your mother talk about her very much?

What do you do?

You have decided this is too good to be true and maybe it is time to try and get home.

Go to page 14

She sounds sincere and this is a great opportunity to finish the journey. Go to page 28

You decide not to take the boat

Eric doesn't want to wait any longer and so he decides to go on the boat. He has already paid for you both and he is eager to get to Europe. He tells you this is his best chance and he will take the risk. The water looks calm and surely the boat has made this trip many times before.

But you are frightened. You don't know anything about boats but this one doesn't seem seaworthy. How could it possibly transport you across the sea to Europe?

Eric pleads with you to go with him one last time. He had paid for you both! And really, what other choice do you have? You have come so far. You don't want to stay in Algiers. You don't speak the language and you know no one. Maybe you need to go home. But you don't have the money to do that either.

Then you remember a conversation you had with someone while you were in Mopti. There are migrant centers run by the UN migration agency, IOM. Maybe there is one here in Algiers? Could they help you get home, perhaps?

What do you do?

You are torn but decide the risk is too great. You will not join Eric and try and find the transit center and beg for help. Go to page 29

After thinking about it you decide that maybe Eric is right. You will take the boat. Go to page 24

You go to Spain

Your aunt has a contact to help smuggle you into Spain. She will allow you to stay with her until you can earn some money to get your own apartment and your dream seems to be coming true.

You make it to Madrid where your aunt and her husband live. They warmly greet you at the train station welcoming you as if you are a long-lost daughter.

But then you discover you had been duped. It turns out your aunt and her husband run a sex trafficking ring and trick vulnerable young girls from Africa into sex work. You can't believe it. Now you understand why your mother had always spoken negatively about your aunt. Oh mother, you think. If only you had never died.

You do your best to reject customers but over time and after many beatings, you finally give in. You turn to drugs and alcohol. Your life in Europe is no dream, only a nightmare.

Go to page 55

You go to the Transit Center

You are exhausted.

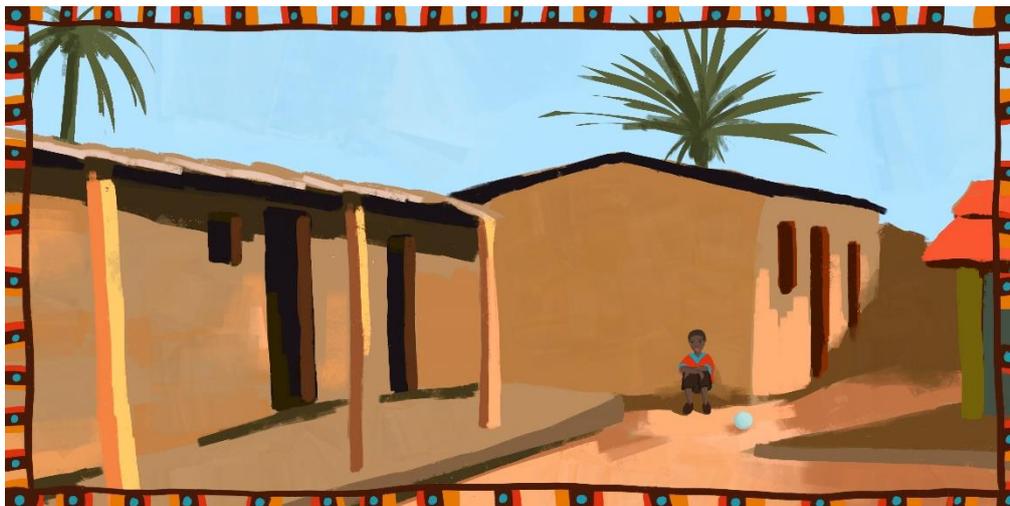
You have been through far too much. You are not even sure you want to try and get to Europe anymore. Maybe I should just go home, you think to yourself.

As Eric departs and the boat slides off into the darkness the tears are streaming down your cheeks. A few hours later a tremendous storm blows through the city and you wonder what might have happened to Eric. He had promised to try and call you from Europe, but you never hear from him again.

You talk to some other migrants and finds out that there is indeed a migrant center in Algiers. You go there and are offered help to get back home through the IOM. While your dreams were not realized you also believe that had you gotten on that boat your life may well have been lost and thank God for the decision you made.

Go to page 55

Eric



Through most of your life you dreamed of getting to Italy and playing football, making big

money to help your poor and aging mother back home. You are the best player in the village and feel if only you have the chance you can play professionally.

From Côte d'Ivoire, you left for Liberia's South Eastern County (Grand Gedeh) where you planned to hew for gold at a local gold mine. You worked for 3 months to raise money for transportation to embark on your journey to Europe. Once you saved the money you headed to Sierra Leone where you were told you would find an agent to help make the arrangements.

When you arrived in Freetown you met a young Sierra Leonean named Faith. It seems she also has dreams of heading to Europe. She would be a pleasant companion and it would be nice to have company on the trip. She says she doesn't have the money necessary for the trip but will try and get it.

What do you do?

You decide it is worth waiting for her to come with you. Go to page 31

You have everything you need and decide to push on ahead without her. Go to page 32

You wait for Faith

You decide to wait for Faith. You explain to her that you think she will need at least \$500. She says she thinks she can get that much somewhere.

You are pleasantly surprised when Faith shows up and says she is ready to go! You ask if she has the money and she says she was able to get enough but seems nervous and does not want to talk about how she was able to get it. You feel a little bit frustrated because she seems to be hiding something and won't tell you exactly how much money she has with her. You wonder if maybe it would be better to make the trip without her after all. But she has a nice smile and makes you laugh. And you have your own secrets to keep.

What will you do?

You decide something about Faith isn't right and decide to leave her behind. Go to page 32

You are happy to have company on the trip and will travel together. Go to page 34

You head out

You take your leave from Faith and without telling her head off on the journey alone. You make contact with a local "coxer", an intermediary between travelers and the carriers who help migrants to cross the border (either by negotiating with the customs officers or clandestinely), evade controls and/or obtain currency.

Often the coxers themselves are West African migrants residing a long time in their host country.

You don't know it at the time, but in addition to this category of "coxers", viewed favorably by migrants, there is another category which organizes networks recruiting candidates for emigration: these "coxers" are responsible for bringing the customers to the carriers in return for a hefty commission. They also provide accommodation and help the migrant to obtain false documents, visas and passports and prepare for the trip. In this case, migrants are not protected from abuse, sometimes risk their lives and the "coxer" has a much less positive face. The line between "smuggling" and "trafficking" then becomes very blurred.

Unfortunately, you have made contact with a coxer from the second category, an unscrupulous compatriot from Côte d'Ivoire. He demands \$500 to get you to Morocco via Mali. You feel trapped and want to move on so because you are desperate to get moving you pay the \$500.



Departing late the next night in an overcrowded truck, you spend days in hot and uncomfortable conditions with other migrants over rough roads with little food and poor conditions. Ultimately you

travel through what is described as "the no man's land". Speeding and crossing nearly 10 million square kilometers through the Sahara Desert, which makes up nearly one-third of the continent. The strong desert breeze and dust covers your

face. The wind is so strong that you can hardly hear each other when you speak. You are jammed in the back of different pickups and trucks as transporters drive no less than 130 miles per hour.

In the desert, there is no exact road. Some transporters have done this business for several years; they understand the terrain. However, in the event a desert storm rages and all the beaten paths disappear, traveling vehicles with all the migrants or travelers on board get lost along the way. As they run out of food and water and – God forbid — death seizes them, the whereabouts of their corpses become unknown.

As you and hundreds of others make it through this rough terrain, you see about 12 other pickups, some carrying 15 to 20 migrants onboard each day, pass by. You learn that in the middle of the desert while transporters refuel their vehicles, hijackers and gunmen can surface from nowhere to torture and rob the migrants of their belongings. You are feeling very alone and wonder if perhaps you should have brought Faith with you.

Somewhere in Mali you were abandoned with other migrants and have little cash money left. You have some gold hidden on your person for emergencies but were planning on using this to help you start your new life in Europe.

What do you do?

You hear there is the possibility of doing some work building roads for a local company and decide to see if you can get a job with them. Go to page 35

You decide to try and find a way to sell some of the gold now to help pay for the next part of the journey. Go to page 37

You head off

Let's go, you tell Faith. They are waiting for us.

You head to the edge of town and wait at the supposed pickup location. Finally, an old truck pulls up. You step forward and tell the man in the front who you are. After handing over the money demanded, you and Faith get into the back of the truck. It is very crowded with at least a dozen others in the vehicle.



The engine of the truck is started, and another man comes over and tells everyone in the vehicle to hand over their passports. You don't have one,

but Faith does and doesn't want to hand it over. Why does this woman have to complicate things, you asks yourself? You aren't sure what to do. Should you help her hide her passport or do you tell her to hand it over?

You decide to help her keep the passport. Go to page 38

You tell Faith to hand over the passport. Go to page 39

You work for a construction company



You are able to find work much more quickly than you thought possible. The job is backbreaking and dangerous with a local construction company building roads in Mali. You

save up money in preparation for the next stage of the journey. Nobody discovers that you have some gold hidden.

You work for two long years to save the money to pay for the overland journey to Algeria and then onwards by boat. It isn't always bad. You make some friends during your time in Mali and are in good spirits when the day arrives to continue. You even manage to call Faith and learn about her story.

Making it to Morocco, the smugglers arrange a boat but soon you realize there really is not anybody in charge. Still, this seems to be the best way forward and after two years working in Mali you are ready to get to Europe! It isn't long before the sea becomes very rough and many get sick on the overcrowded boat. Finally, after what feels like days, you are intercepted by the Moroccan Coast Guard the next morning. You are not treated kindly; they say you are a criminal and send you to a detention center where the living conditions are difficult and you see four people die before your eyes.

Several weeks later, you are released from the detention center with the help of IOM. They organize a way for you to return back home.

IOM staff welcome you at the airport and you are overwhelmed with their kindness after your difficult journey. IOM even helps arrange for you to get some job training back home.

In the end, you are able to have a successful barber shop and if asked will say, “thank God, things are okay.” But sometimes you wonder what ever happened to that girl Faith.

Go to page 55

You sell some of your gold



You are stuck in Mali when an insurrection occurs! You decide you have little choice but to sell some of your gold so you can continue to Algeria. You even find a transporter that would accept

payment on arrival.

The desert drive takes nearly two days as the condition of the roads and the sandstorms make driving difficult. Finally, you cross over the border and reach Algeria

Your first task is to find a money changer and explain you want to sell some gold. But the money changer says he doesn't deal in gold, only cash. He directs you to another man who he says might be interested in buying some of the gold. It takes some time but finally he agrees to pay you for the gold, but you know that you aren't even getting half of the true value. You have little choice though.

On preparing for the next step another migrant tells you that he heard going through Morocco is a better way. He says there are people there that will help for not too much money. You must decide to which option to take next.

You will take a truck to Ghardaia hoping then to go on to Algiers. Go to page 45

You will try going through Morocco. Go to page 53

You help Faith keep her passport



You step up and argue with the man She is going to keep her passport! He finally relents but only if she pays him a bribe. She has no choice but to agree.

You finally head out. It's hot and you stop at a couple of other locations picking up 5 more people. You are feeling exhausted and hungry, but you don't complain.

Finally, you reach Tamanrasset in Algeria. You are told to get out and wait for the next transporters who are supposed to show up the following day. So, you wait. And wait. Finally, after four days of no one showing up, Faith says she just wants to go home. Despite the hardships you have grown used to her company and would miss having her companionship. But you also are feeling responsible for her and think she may be holding you back.

What do you do?

You reassure her and ask her to keep travelling with you. Go to page 40

You are tired of having to look out for her and tell her to go home. Go to page 41

You tell her to give over the passport

Faith listens to your advice and hands over her passport after the man promises to return them. He explains they need them to cross the various borders on the way to Algeria. She seems reassured and relaxes as best she is able. Soon you are well on the way.

The truck bounces along and travels for days stopping only to get petrol. You must stay hidden. There is no food. No time to go to the bathroom. You try to stay positive. You are, after all, on your way to a new life.

Finally, the truck stops, and you are all told to get out.



You are in the middle of a desert, in the middle of nowhere. The man tells Faith if she wants her passport back, she will

have to pay \$500. If you she can't pay, they would leave you there.

If you pay, then Tamanrasset is the next stop.

You tell her to pay the money but are tired of travel with her. Go to page 41

You argue with the man and try to get him accept less money. Go to page 42

You talk her out of abandoning the journey

You take Faith aside and sit down with her. You talk to her calmly and reassure her things will be ok. She doesn't know you have some gold hidden on your person but she hears your confidence and is convinced. She suggests that probably you can find some work in Tamanrasset which would allow you to save a bit of money as you both have very little cash on hand. You don't mention the gold because you know if you tell anyone then you'll be a target for thieves or worse.

You talk with some other migrants. Some are trying to get to Morocco while others want to stay in Algeria and head to Algiers to try to cross the Mediterranean.

You think you'd be safer staying in Algeria and not crossing any more borders. One of the migrants tells you there's a transport leaving for Ghardaia and then Algiers in a few days. It will cost you the last of your cash and you may have to sell some of the gold.

So now the question is do you stay in Tamanrasset and try to find work and save some money or do you head to Ghardaia?

You decide to try and get the money and take the transportation to Ghardaia. Go to page 43

You decide to stay in Tamanrasset to try and work to get more money. Go to page 44

You decide to proceed on your own

You decide it is best she tries to find a way to get back home.

You decide the next step is to try to get on to Ghardaia in northern Algeria where you'll be one step closer to Algiers where you'll get a boat to Europe.

But if you stay in Tamanrasset for a few months you could earn some more money and that would make you less vulnerable to being exploited.

What do you do?

You decide to push on to Ghardaia now. Go to page 45

You decide to see if you can find some work. Go to page 46

You get the passport back



After a great deal of yelling the man agrees to take \$200 in return for the passport. The constant worries about Faith is taking a toll and

you decide it is time that you part ways. You just want to complete your journey.

Faith starts to cry and begs to be allowed to come along with you. But you are firm. You will continue on your way as soon as possible.

Once in Tamanrasset you rethink your decision. Perhaps you should try and travel with Faith but then again, she has made things more difficult. You learn about a transport you could take by yourself to Ghardaia, at this point Faith doesn't have enough money to pay for the trip herself.

What do you do?

You bid Faith goodbye and head by yourself to Ghardaia. Go to page 45

You reconsider and will travel with Faith a bit longer after trying to get some work in Tamanrasset. Go to page 44

You head to Ghardaia

You decide the next step is to go to Ghardaia and Faith begs you to take her with you.

You head out to Ghardaia hoping to get one step closer to your dreams of playing football in Europe. You must sell some of your gold to pay for the transport for the two of you and are left with a small amount. Unless you find work somewhere, you probably won't have enough to get to Europe. But, you think to yourself, let's cross that bridge when we have to.

During the journey you realize that you and your fellow migrants are spending all of your money and risking your lives traveling these dangerous routes only to find out you were secretly sold as slaves back in Tamanrasset. By the time you reach Ghardaia you are told you must work to pay for your freedom before continuing the journey across the continent to Europe.

“Our own African brothers are selling their fellow Africans,” you think.

Faith is forced into prostitution.

You spend six months in Algeria until you are finally able to buy your freedom.

But Faith is still being forced to work as a prostitute and now you are ready to leave. You are forced to decide whether to stay until Faith can be freed or go now by yourself.

What do you do?

You try to find work and figure out how to get Faith free. Go to page 47

You decide Faith will have to take care of herself and will go to Algiers without her. Go to page 48

You stay in Tamanrasset

You and Faith agree the best decision is to try and earn a bit more money before continuing to cross the desert. You want to hold off on selling the gold for any possible emergency. But you are also starting to realize that this entire journey is one big emergency. You are tired. You just want to rest for a while and stop bouncing around in the back of speeding trucks.

But the other part of you wants to keep going. To continue to pursue your dream of playing football and of making lots of money so that you can support your mother.

Faith is able to find some work quickly but you have a hard time finding anything. One day she does not come back from work. Nobody knows where she went or what happened to her. You try to call her on the telephone but there is no answer. You wait for word of her but there is nothing. You hope she is safe.

You hear there may be some work in Ghardaia and somebody you met said you can get a ride on the back of a truck there for free if you go now. There is nothing left for you in Tamanrasset, it is a dead end.

What do you do?

You decide you might have better luck in Ghardaia and make the trip. Go to page 45

You decide you must sell some gold to pay to get to Algiers. Go to page 48

You head to Ghardaia

You arrive in Ghardaia, Algeria. You realize that you and your fellow migrants must spend all you have, risk your lives through the dangerous routes, go through hard labor, only to find out that the helpful people in Algeria are secretly working to sell you as slaves!

In Ghardaia you are forced to work for your freedom before being able to continue your journey across the continent to Europe. "Our own African brothers are selling their fellow Africans," you lament.

You spend six months working in Algeria until you are able to buy your freedom. During evening hours you go out and practice football with local teams. You even became admired by your teammates and spectators, but your mind is fixed on Europe. You think that if you can get there your life and that of your family will be much better. But you are making some friends in Ghardaia and getting to play the game you love so much.

You can stay in Ghardaia and play football or head to Algiers to continue your journey to Europe.

What do you do?

You decide to stay longer in Ghardaia to see if there might be some opportunities. Go to page 49

You decide this is not what you wanted, it's time to push on to Algiers. Go to page 48

You look for work



You decide to try and find work. You wonder what might have happened to Faith and begin to miss her company.

You realize you are having to compete with jobs with many other migrants. There is no work. You become demoralized and must sell some gold just to eat. You don't get paid what it is worth and feel robbed. You need to decide.

You decide to try and push on to Algiers. Go to page 48

You continue to look for better work. Go to page 49

You look for work

You decide you will try and find some work until Faith's situation can be resolved. But as the days go by your hope slowly fades away. Your money situation never gets much better.

Then you learn one day that Faith has killed herself and now you are alone. You have made a few friends and one tells you there may be another way ... travel through Morocco. He promises you that he thinks it is safer than going to Algiers, many people die on the boat crossing. But you also know people who tell you they can get you to Algiers safely.

What do you do?

You decide to try and get to Algiers. Go to page 48

You will take the opportunity to go to Morocco. Go to page 53

You head off to Algiers

On the trip to Algiers you are not alone. There are about 15-20 men riding in the back of the Hilux pickup with you. You learn there are Malians, Guineans, Nigerians and other nationalities. As you squeeze yourself in the back of the pickup, your 'transporter' warns you to sit mindfully as he will not take responsibility for any misfortune.

You are sure not to fall asleep because you could even fall from the back of the truck and be left to die in the desert.

Suddenly, there is a loud bang! The tire is blown. The truck stops. You hear some commotion and see men coming towards you with guns. You want to run, but one of the other migrants grabs you and says, "don't run or they'll kill you, sit down".

What do you do?

You follow the advice and sit down. Go to page 56

The men are still far off and there is a nearby hill you could hide behind so you run. Go to page 51

You will stay in Ghardaia



Even with some odd jobs and sometimes selling your gold, you find your reserves are slowly dwindling. You aren't able to get any income playing football.

You find yourself falling into the dark depths of depression. Maybe I should just go home, you think. You think you could maybe call your uncle and ask him to send enough money to go home.

A few days later, another migrant tells you about a transit camp for migrants operated by the IOM. He says you can even stay there, and the IOM may help you to get home. You wonder if Faith might have ended up at one of the camps.

Yet even with the depression you still have dreams. Sometimes you are playing football and can imagine crowds cheering you on and how wonderful it would be to be successful.

By now you know of people you can talk to in order to get transported on to Algiers.

What do you do?

You have had enough. It is time to try and get back home. Go to page 50

You decide it is time to head on to Algiers. Go to page 48

You decide to go back home

You decide that rather than go through the shame of asking your uncle to send money, you will go to the transit camp. You heard about a place where there are some other West Africans wanting to head home. It turns out to be run by the IOM. You speak with one of the relocation officers and explain you want to return. You say you have no money.

The officer says there will be a transport in the next week. They tell you where you should go to stay until then and where you can also get some small food.

You are able to get back home with their help. It is a journey you would never want to experience again and one you tell your children and grandchildren about in the years to come.

Go to page 55

You make a run for it

You make a run for it and find a massive rock to hide behind. The sun is setting, and the light is feeble so you are pretty sure the gunmen won't find you. You watch as the gunmen shoot the driver and force all the migrants out of the truck making them walk into the desert at gunpoint. You never see or hear from any of them again.



As dusk turns to night you decide to curl up and get some sleep even though you are chilled to the bone with no water and

no food and nothing to keep your warm except the clothes you are wearing.

It is not a restful night. You hear quite a few vehicles pass and some wild animals and you stay hidden until daylight. Finally, at dusk you leave your hiding place and head back to the side of the road in hopes that some transporters will pass by.

You see a couple of trucks that look like they're filled with migrants so you flag one down. They are heading to Algiers and for \$75 they'll take you. You gives them the money and off you go.

You stay on desert tracks most of the way and there's little in the way of food or water. Finally, you make it to Algiers.

You need to find a place to stay and maybe make some more money to pay for your passage.

In Algiers, cheap daily labor jobs are the only means of survival for migrants. You have no option but to settle for this.

While the males there go on the “Chart” (a place in Algiers where migrants gathered in search of daily contracts/hire jobs), the female migrants are seen as precious commodities for the smugglers. They are used as commercial sex workers. For some females, this is a strange way of life they will have to adjust to. Refusing to abide by what their masters or mistresses require leaves them unable to pay for the lodging, feeding and other essential needs.

You work at a construction site helping to hand the bricks to the builders to earn your daily meal and little cash for your pocket. Your mind is still set on your football career. During your less busy days, you spend time practicing with local football teams. You even dream of one day playing for one of Algeria’s biggest clubs – G.S Scott, but you never forgot your European dream – wanting to play soccer in Italy.

Your skills on the pitch are exceptional – winning the admiration of the Algerians – but your illegal status in the country does not permit you to move freely. No team will sign an illegal migrant. And, after all, life in Algeria is not as you and others perceived before embarking on your journey.

Months pass until it is time to try and make your dream a reality. You have decided not to try to cross the fence at Melilla because you’ve heard it is so heavily guarded. That leaves you with two choices: Try to get to Morocco and get to Europe from there or try to cross from Algiers.

What do you do?

You try to travel to Morocco and then on to Spain. Go to page 53

You try and take a boat from Algiers across to Europe. Go to page 54

You head out to Morocco

You head to Morocco. It is another hazardous trip. Just at the verge of crossing into Morocco, you and the others in the truck are surrounded by a team of Moroccan border patrol officers and huge shepherd dogs. Your dreams of entering Europe are over. Destination Europe was now probably destination IOM Transit Camp for repatriation.

You are taken to a detention center where they take your name and photo. You are boarded into one of three long trucks; along with many others. You are dropped in the desert in southern Morocco, — a no man's land — and given one piece of bread, a bottle of water and a can of sardines. After walking for days, you meet some UN officials who are able to arrange to take you to Rabat, Morocco's capital.

When you get to Rabat, there are dozens of other stranded migrants from Libya, Algeria, Tunisia and surrounding countries housed at this International Organization for Migration office. The IOM relocation staff take your information and arrange for assisted voluntary return and reintegration to Côte d'Ivoire.

Go to page 55

You try to find a boat

You are able to find a small boat heading to Spain. You aren't too thrilled about having to work your way to Italy from Spain but think at least you'll be safely in Europe and closer to your dreams. You set out one night on calm sea on a boat jammed with other passengers.

A day later you are still at sea and the captain of the boat seems anxious and unsure. Smoke comes out from the engine and there is a fire. The boat quickly catches fire and your last thoughts are how wonderful it would have been to hear the fans cheering as you scored a goal.

Go to page 55

The end of the journey

So this journey ends, but what might have happened with different choices? Why not start again and see what might happen with different decisions?



If you'd like to learn more please see the resources on page 59.

You decide to stay on the truck



You stay on the truck with the others, hoping that the worst will be that you will be robbed but then you will be allowed to continue on

your way. Once they fixed the tire, that is.

You hunker down in the truck bed. There is some yelling between the driver and the gunmen. And then gunfire. You have never been so terrified in all your life. You think for sure you will be next to die.

Instead, the gunmen came and force you and all the migrants out of the truck at gunpoint. You are forced to march into the desert at gunpoint. The gunmen say you may be released for ransom money from your family. But calling back home for ransom is impossible. Your mother is old and survives from subsistence farming just to feed herself each day. Your father, being principle-minded and a disciplinarian would settle for no such arrangement. You offer the gold you had hidden and hope it will be enough.

But you and the others are never heard from again.

Go to page 55

Your story ends

Arriving home, you are grateful that you weren't harmed on the journey. But when you call your brother his reaction terrifies you.

"You should not even have come home. You should just die where you went, because you didn't bring anything back home."

One day, several weeks after returning, you hear about a place that helps returnees like you reintegrate. You go to the place which is run by the IOM. You leave your contacts with them hoping they will be able to help you. You submit a request for education as part of reintegration assistance with the hope of continuing your junior education.

Finally, after meeting with many different people who help you, you get the opportunity to go to school.

Go to page 55

Your story ends

On your return home you learn the money you took didn't even belong to your father. It had been lent to him by neighbors as part of a microcredit scheme. You learn that after you left, the furious creditors besieged your father's house, threatening to kill him if he didn't return the money. He was forced to flee Sierra Leone for Bo, three hours away in the south of the country, leaving the other children behind. You are devastated and wonder why you ever returned home.

One day, several weeks after returning, you hear about a place that helps returnees like you reintegrate. You go to the place which is run by the IOM. You leave your contacts with them hoping they will be able to help you. You submit a request for education as part of reintegration assistance with the hope of continuing your junior education.

Unfortunately, IOM was never able to track you down because you accidentally gave them the wrong mobile number.

Go to page 55

Resources

With thanks to the Migrants as Messengers Volunteers who contributed to the development of this game.

Six individuals from different countries in West Africa describe their challenging experiences of irregular migration and how they are rebuilding their lives now that they have returned to their communities of origin. The videos are in French.

Here are the links:

Mariama: <https://youtu.be/bnAvMsDEnM0>

Khoudia: <https://youtu.be/vKxcOHJN5nw>

Jean Paul: <https://youtu.be/Pxi40hV4U4k>

Fatou : <https://youtu.be/LO54HgEscTk>

Brown: <https://youtu.be/Ghml7Zgonh0>

Adama: <https://youtu.be/Zy9ZrdBKywU>