Nuri and the Cracked Lantern

A picture book about honesty, courage and making things right

Ferngleam

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A Picture Book About Honesty, Courage and Making Things Right

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This is a work of fiction. All characters, places and events are imaginary.

About how this book was made: the story text, the illustrations and the audio narration were made with AI tools, then edited and checked for this edition. The Islamic lesson quotes English translations of the Qur'an and hadith; the sources are named in that section.

Narration: read by a computer voice, Piper text-to-speech with the "Cori" voice (en_GB-cori-high) by Bryce Beattie, released into the public domain.

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Willowmere Hollow Stories

Introduction

Every child makes mistakes. A spilled cup of juice, a broken toy, a forgotten promise. Mistakes are a normal part of growing up. What matters most is what we do next.

Nuri and the Cracked Lantern is a gentle story about a little hedgehog who makes a mistake, hides it, and lets a friend take the blame. Over a few long days, Nuri discovers that a hidden lie grows heavier and heavier, and that telling the truth, even when it feels scary, sets the heart free.

This book is written for children aged about 4 to 8, to be read aloud together. After the story you will find the moral of the story, a few simple life lessons, an Islamic educational lesson about truthfulness, questions to talk about, and a closing note. An audio narration is included so children can listen along.

How to Read This Book Together

- Read slowly and let your child look at each picture before you turn to the words.
- Pause at the questions inside the story and ask, "What do you think Nuri should do?"
- Notice the feelings: Nuri's prickly spines, Kiko's worried face, Nana Hala's gentle eyes.
- After reading, choose two or three of the reflection questions at the back. There are no wrong answers.
- Share a time when you told the truth even though it was hard. Children learn the most from our own stories.

Listen along: a free MP3 narration of the whole book, story and lessons, is available wherever you downloaded this book.

Meet the Friends of Willowmere Hollow

Nuri: A curious young hedgehog with warm brown spines and a teal scarf. Nuri loves shiny things and big adventures.

Kiko: A cheerful red squirrel in a mustard-yellow vest. He is never far from his favourite acorn ball.

Nana Hala: The wise old owl of Willowmere Hollow. She wears round golden spectacles and a lavender shawl, and she keeps the Moon Lantern safe.

Rumi: A quick-eyed grey rabbit with a red polka-dot bow, who notices everything.

The Moon Lantern: A very old golden lantern that leads the parade on Lantern Night.

In the little valley of Willowmere Hollow, where the river sang and the oak trees whispered, lived a young hedgehog named Nuri.

Every year, on Lantern Night, the whole valley walked together under the stars, led by the glowing Moon Lantern. Its golden glass shone so softly that even the fireflies stopped to look.

The Moon Lantern belonged to Nana Hala, the wise old owl, and it lived on the highest shelf in her oak-tree home.

“Three more days until Lantern Night,” said Nana Hala, smiling over her spectacles. “You may look at it as long as you like, little one. But please, never take it down by yourself. It is very old, and very delicate.”

Nuri nodded. But his eyes stayed on the lantern for a very long time.

The next evening, Nana Hala flew off to gather blackberries. The oak-tree door was open, and the house was quiet.

Nuri tiptoed inside. “I’ll only hold it for one tiny moment,” he whispered. “Just to see it sparkle up close.”

He pushed a stool under the shelf and climbed up, up, up onto his tiptoes. He reached for the lantern and gave it a little tug. It was heavier than he thought.

The stool wobbled. Nuri wobbled. And the lantern tipped over on the shelf.

CLINK!

A thin crack zig-zagged across one golden glass panel, like lightning frozen in place.

Nuri's heart thumped like a drum.

With shaking paws, he stood the lantern back up and turned it around, so the crack faced the wall. Nobody would see it. Not yet.

Then he ran. He ran out of the door, past the mushroom patch, all the way home.

"Maybe nobody will notice," he told himself. "Maybe it will all just go away."

But a secret is a funny thing. The more you try to hide it, the heavier it grows.

The next morning, Nana Hala called everyone together beneath the old oak tree. She was holding the Moon Lantern, and everyone could see the crack.

“Does anyone know what happened?” she asked gently.

Rumi the rabbit twitched her nose. “I saw Kiko playing with his acorn ball right here yesterday,” she said. “It bounced very close to the window.”

Every eye turned to Kiko the squirrel. His face fell. “It wasn’t me,” he said softly. “I promise.”

Nuri stood at the side. His spines prickled. His mouth opened… and then it closed again. He said nothing at all.

That day, nobody wanted to play with Kiko.

Nuri found him sitting alone on a flat rock by the stream, his big bushy tail curled sadly around his feet. Kiko dropped tiny pebbles into the water, one by one. Plip. Plip. Plip.

Nuri crept up beside a tall fern, just behind him. He wanted to say something kind to his friend. But how could he, when he knew the truth?

At dinner, Nuri's mother made his favourite honey cakes. He could not eat a single bite.

"Are you feeling well, Nuri?" she asked.

"I'm just not hungry," Nuri mumbled. And that was not the whole truth either.

That night, a storm rolled over Willowmere Hollow. Rain drummed on the roof, and thunder grumbled across the sky.

Nuri lay wide awake under his leaf blanket. His little bedside lamp glowed softly, but it could not chase away the heavy feeling inside him.

He thought about Kiko, sitting all alone. He thought about Nana Hala's sad eyes. He thought about how one small secret had grown into a big, heavy lie, and how tomorrow it might grow even bigger.

Then he remembered something his mother often said: "The truth can be hard to say for a moment. But a lie is hard to carry for a very long time."

Nuri pulled the blanket up to his nose. "Tomorrow," he whispered, "I will put it down."

In the morning, the storm had passed and the grass sparkled with raindrops.

Nuri walked to the old oak tree. His knees wobbled, and his heart thumped even louder than before. Nana Hala was there, and so was Kiko.

Nuri took a deep breath and stepped forward.

“Nana Hala,” he said, and his voice shook. “It wasn’t Kiko. It was me. I tried to take the lantern down while you were gone, and it fell over and cracked. Then I hid the crack… and I let everyone think Kiko did it.”

A big tear rolled down his nose. “I’m sorry. I’m so, so sorry.”

For a moment, everything was very quiet.

Then Nana Hala wrapped a soft wing around Nuri. “Thank you for telling me the truth,” she said. “That was much braver than climbing any shelf.”

Nuri turned to Kiko. This was the hardest part of all. “Kiko, I’m sorry I let you be blamed. That wasn’t fair, and it wasn’t kind.”

Kiko looked at the ground. He had been hurt, and hurt does not vanish all at once. But then he looked up and rested a gentle paw on Nuri’s shoulder.

“I forgive you,” he said. “Just… next time, tell the truth right away, okay?”

“Right away,” Nuri promised. And he meant it.

Telling the truth was the first step. Making things right was the next.

“Can the lantern be mended?” Nuri asked.

“With patience and careful paws, yes,” said Nana Hala.

So the three friends got to work. Kiko scampered down to the riverbank and found a smooth piece of sea-green glass, worn soft by the water. Nuri polished it until it gleamed. Nana Hala gently fitted it into the frame, where the cracked panel used to be.

It took all afternoon, and Nuri did not complain once.

When they lit the candle inside, the new panel glowed a soft green-gold, a little different from the others, and somehow even more beautiful.

On Lantern Night, all of Willowmere Hollow gathered under the stars.

Nana Hala spread her wings wide. “This year,” she announced, “our Moon Lantern will be carried by two friends: Nuri and Kiko.”

The two friends took turns carrying the long pole. Right now it was Kiko’s turn, and Nuri walked proudly beside him as they led the parade, while everyone behind them carried round paper lanterns of their own. The mended green-gold panel shone brightest of all.

“Do you know why that piece glows so warmly?” Nana Hala whispered. “Because now this lantern carries a story of truth inside it.”

Nuri smiled. For the first time in days, his heart felt as light as a feather.

And from that night on, whenever Nuri made a mistake, he remembered: the truth is a lantern that lights the way home.

The Moral of the Story

Telling the truth takes courage, but it sets your heart free. A lie may seem to make a problem disappear, but it only hides it, and it often hurts someone else.

Lessons to Remember

1. Mistakes can be fixed. Hidden mistakes grow. Nuri's accident was small. Hiding it is what made it big and heavy.

2. Never let someone else be blamed for what you did. Staying quiet while Kiko was blamed hurt Kiko more than the crack hurt the lantern.

3. A real apology names what you did. Nuri didn't just say "sorry." He said exactly what he had done, to Nana Hala and to Kiko.

4. Make things right. After the truth came the work: finding, polishing and fitting the new glass.

5. Forgiveness is a gift, and feelings can take time. Kiko was hurt, and that was okay. He still chose to forgive.

6. Courage means doing the right thing even when your knees wobble. Being brave doesn't mean you aren't scared.

Islamic Educational Lesson: Truthfulness (Sidq)

About the quotations: the Qur'an and hadith quotations below are English translations of their meaning, not the original Arabic words. Qur'an verses are quoted from Dr. Mustafa Khattab's translation, The Clear Quran (Quran.com). The hadith follows the English translation on Sunnah.com, shortened and simplified for children. Sources were checked on 11 October 2026.

In Islam, truthfulness, called sidq, is one of the most beloved qualities. Muslims are taught to be truthful in what they say and in what they do, even when it is hard.

1. Be with the truthful

Allah says in the Qur'an: "O believers! Be mindful of Allah and be with the truthful."

(Surah At-Tawbah 9:119)

2. Truth leads to goodness

The Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon him) said:
"Truthfulness leads to righteousness, and righteousness leads to Paradise...
Falsehood leads to wickedness, and wickedness leads to the Fire."

(Sahih al-Bukhari 6094; also Sahih Muslim 2607)

3. Say what is right

Allah says: “O believers! Be mindful of Allah, and say what is right. He will bless your deeds for you, and forgive your sins.”

(Surah Al-Ahzab 33:70–71)

4. Pardon and forgive

When Kiko forgave Nuri, he did something Allah loves. Allah says: “Let them pardon and forgive. Do you not love to be forgiven by Allah? And Allah is All-Forgiving, Most Merciful.”

(Surah An-Nur 24:22 (part of the verse))

Making things right

Nuri’s steps are a simple picture of making things right: he stopped hiding, admitted what he did, said sorry to the one he hurt, and helped repair the damage. When we make a mistake, we can also ask Allah to forgive us.

Try this week: each evening, ask your child, “Did you tell the truth today, even when it was hard?” Praise the honesty, not only the good news.

Let’s Talk About It

Reflection questions for readers and families

1. Why do you think Nuri tried to take the lantern down, even though Nana Hala asked him not to?

2. How did Nuri feel after he hid the crack? How could you tell from the pictures?

3. How do you think Kiko felt when everyone thought he broke the lantern?

4. Why did Nuri’s secret feel heavier every day?

5. What helped Nuri find the courage to tell the truth?

6. Kiko forgave Nuri. Is forgiving always easy? Why is it kind?

7. The mended glass looked different, but it glowed even more beautifully. What do you think that means?

8. Can you remember a time you told the truth even when it was hard? How did you feel afterwards?

Conclusion

Nuri learned that a mistake can crack a lantern, but a lie can crack a friendship. The lantern was mended with patience and careful paws. The friendship was mended with the truth, a real apology and a forgiving heart.

Next time you make a mistake, remember Nuri. Take a deep breath, be brave, and tell the truth right away. It might feel hard for a moment, but afterwards your heart will feel as light as a feather.

The truth is a lantern that lights the way home.

The End