Hood and the Heavy Secret

A story about surprises... and the secrets we must tell

For ages 5 to 9



Child Protection Office

Prepared by Dr. Hashem



Hood and Sami made a big card for Mama’s birthday, and said together:

“Shhh! It’s a surprise… we won’t tell Mama until Thursday!”

And they giggled and giggled.



At the park, while Mama was rocking Qamar
on the bench, a big boy came up to Hood

and showed him something on his phone... something that
made Hood feel uncomfortable, so he turned his face away.



Then the big boy gave him some candy, put his finger to his lips, and said:

“This is our secret. Don’t tell your mom… or she’ll be angry with you.”

Hood took the candy… and felt a knot of threads tangling up in his tummy.



Days went by. Hood wasn’t sleeping
well, and he didn’t want to go to the park,

and the knot of threads kept growing… and getting more tangled.



On Thursday, Hood and Sami jumped out: **“Surprise!”** Mama loved the card.

Hood smiled… but he thought: **“That was a happy secret, and now it’s out… but the other secret still hurts.”**



That evening, Mama sat on his bed and said gently:

“I’ve noticed you don’t want to go to the park anymore, and you’re not sleeping well. You can tell me anything, Hood… anything.”

But Hood hesitated.



There were three thorny thoughts in his head:

I must keep the promise! **If I tell, Mama will be angry with me!**

Maybe it’s my fault... because I took the candy!



Mama said: **“I’ll tell you an important rule. A surprise makes us happy, and we share it after a short time. But an uncomfortable secret makes our tummy hurt, and someone asks us to hide it from our family.”**

“Surprises get shared... uncomfortable secrets get told.”



Hood put on his detective hat. Question one: **Must I keep every promise?**

Hood thought, and said: **“A promise that scares me or hurts me… is not a promise I have to keep.”**



Question two: **Will Mama be angry with me?**

Hood looked at the golden vase on the shelf and remembered:

“When I told her the truth about the vase... she hugged me.”



Question three: **Is it my fault?**

Mama held his hands and said: **“When someone bigger asks a child to hide an uncomfortable secret, the bigger person is responsible, not the child. And nobody blames a child for telling.”**



Hood leaned close to Mama's ear and told her everything. She hugged him tight and said:

"Thank you for telling me. You are very brave, and you didn't do anything wrong. And I'm going to act right now to keep you safe."

And the knot of threads came undone... and floated far away.



Then Hood traced his hand on a piece of paper, and on each finger he put a grown-up he trusts: Mama, Grandma, his teacher, his uncle, and the school nurse.

Mama said: **“This is your safety hand. And if one of them doesn’t listen… tell the next finger.”**



Hood went back to playing in the park with Sami,
with Mama close by. And now he knew the rule well:

**“Surprises get shared... uncomfortable
secrets get told... and I am never alone.”**

A Guide for Parents & Educators

The tenth and final story in the series, and the closest to the message of the Child Protection Office: helping children tell the difference between a surprise and an uncomfortable secret, get past the thoughts that stop them from telling, and know who to turn to.

1. Why do children stay silent?

Whoever asks a child to keep a secret usually relies on three thoughts: an absolute demand, “I must keep the promise”; a catastrophic prediction, “They’ll be angry with me”; and self-blame, “It’s my fault.” pp. 3, 7

2. The surprise-and-secret rule

A surprise is short-lived and makes everyone happy. An uncomfortable secret is one the child is asked to hide from their parents, and it causes distress. “Surprises get shared… uncomfortable secrets get told.” p. 8

3. Disputing

- A promise that scares or hurts doesn’t have to be kept. p. 9
- Evidence from past experience: telling the truth was met with love. p. 10
- The responsibility always lies with the older person, never with the child. p. 11

4. Signs worth noticing

Disturbed sleep, avoiding a particular place or person, a sudden change in behavior, repeated tummy aches, and gifts or candy from unknown sources. p. 4

5. How to respond when a child tells

Stay calm, believe your child, thank them, and reassure them that they did nothing wrong. Don’t question them at length; promise to protect them, then act. p. 12

6. The safety hand

Five trusted adults the child knows, and a clear rule: if one of them doesn’t listen, tell the next. p. 13

Questions to talk about after reading

- What’s the difference between a surprise and an uncomfortable secret?
- Why did Hood hesitate to tell?
- Who is on your “safety hand”?
- What would you do if someone asked you to hide an uncomfortable secret?

Important note for parents

Make it a family rule: “No secrets from parents, only surprises.” Teach your child the correct names for the parts of their body, that their body belongs to them, and that they can say “no” to any touch or situation that makes them uncomfortable, even with people they know; don’t force them to hug or kiss anyone. If your child tells you something worrying, don’t confront the person yourself in front of your child; contact the Child Protection Office or the relevant authorities right away.