A LITTLE FERNWOOD STORY

Hattie Hops and the Lopsided Pumpkin

Hattie Hops Studio · October 16, 2026 · 4 minute read

Percy's pumpkin leans to one side, and he's sure it isn't good enough for the Fernwood lantern walk. Hattie and Oliver help him see what it can do.

On the afternoon before the lantern walk, the pumpkin patch behind Oliver's den was full of round orange pumpkins, and one that was not.

It sat a little apart from the others. One side was tall. The other side was short. It leaned, very slightly, as if it were listening for something down the path.

Percy the frog stood in front of it in his cocoa-brown coat. "This one," he said quietly. "This one is mine."

Hattie Hops tilted her head until her golden bow tilted too. "It's leaning."

"I know," said Percy. "I picked it anyway. I don't know why."

Oliver the fox came over with a basket and a small wooden scoop. His forest-green hat was dusted with pumpkin seeds. "Every lantern needs a pumpkin," he said. "Let's get carving."

They set up on Oliver's porch. Oliver carved a pumpkin with two neat triangle eyes and a wide, even grin. Hattie carved a pumpkin with stars all over it, because she could not decide on just one.

Percy scooped and scooped. Then he picked up his carving stick and stopped.

"What's wrong?" asked Hattie.

"Every time I start a smile, it slides downhill." Percy turned the pumpkin. The tall side rose up. The short side dipped down. "Yours sit up straight. Mine looks like it's about to tip over."

Oliver set down his scoop. "Maybe it isn't tipping," he said. "Maybe it's pointing."

Percy blinked. "Pointing at what?"

"Let's find out," said Hattie.

So Percy carved what he could. Two round eyes. One small smile that went a little sideways. Then, because the short side was so close to the ground, he carved three tiny windows along the bottom, like stepping stones.

When evening came, the friends lit their candles.

Oliver's lantern glowed straight ahead. Hattie's lantern scattered stars across the porch ceiling. And Percy's lantern did something none of the others did.

Because it leaned, its light didn't shine up. It shone down, and out, and along the ground. The three tiny windows made three little circles of light on the path, one after another.

"Oh," said Percy.

Down the path, someone small was walking slowly with a lantern that had gone out. It was Pip, bundled up against the evening chill.

"I couldn't see the roots," Pip said. "I didn't want to trip."

Percy lifted his lopsided pumpkin and set it at the edge of the path. The three circles of light landed right where Pip needed to step. One. Two. Three. Pip hopped from circle to circle all the way to the porch.

"Your pumpkin found me," Pip said.

Percy looked at his lantern for a long moment. Its smile was still sideways. Its tall side was still tall.

"I think," he said slowly, "it was pointing at the path the whole time."

That night on the lantern walk, the friends let Percy go first. His lopsided pumpkin lit the ground in front of every foot, and nobody tripped on a single root.

And when they reached the end, Oliver said, "Next year, I'm picking a leaning one too."

After the story

Percy thought his pumpkin was wrong, but it turned out to be just right for helping a friend. Draw a pumpkin lantern of your own: does it stand up tall, lean to one side, or have something no one has ever tried? Then tell someone how your lantern could help a friend find their way.