
THE
PUMPKIN PATCH
MYSTERY
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Something Has Moved

Every morning before school, Lily visited the pumpkin patch behind her house.

She knew every pumpkin. She knew which one was the roundest, which one had the curliest stem, and which one was finally beginning to turn orange.

But one October morning, Lily stopped in the middle of the path. Her favorite pumpkin was no longer beside its little wooden marker.

It had rolled several inches away.

“That’s strange,” Lily said.

She looked around the garden, but no one else was there.

Then she noticed several little scratches in the soil.

Something had been moving through the pumpkin patch during the night.



More Clues

Lily searched the patch carefully.

One small pumpkin had been turned completely around. A few leaves had tiny bites missing from their edges.

Then Lily discovered a trail of muddy footprints.

They were much too small to belong to a person.

She hurried inside and returned with her magnifying glass and a notebook.

At the top of a clean page, she wrote:
THE PUMPKIN PATCH MYSTERY

Underneath it, she listed the clues:

- A moved pumpkin.
- Scratches in the soil.
- Nibbled leaves.
- Tiny footprints.

“A mystery needs a detective,” Lily said, “and I am going to be one.”



The Suspects

Lily began thinking about the animals that visited the yard.

Could the squirrel that raced along the fence have moved the pumpkin?

Perhaps the rabbit beneath the garden shed had nibbled the leaves.

Or maybe the raccoon she sometimes saw near the trash cans had left the muddy footprints.

Lily drew a picture of each suspect in her notebook. “Squirrel, rabbit or raccoon,” she whispered. “One of you knows something.”

Just then, a vine rustled behind her. Lily spun around. Nothing was there.

A good detective could not solve a mystery by guessing.

She would have to follow the clues.



A Hidden Doorway

The tiny footprints zigzagged between the pumpkins.

They passed a nibbled leaf, circled the crooked pumpkin and disappeared beneath a thick tangle of vines.

Lily gently lifted one of the large leaves.

Underneath was a small opening in the soil.
It looked almost like a doorway.

Something had made a home beneath the pumpkin patch!

Before Lily could look more closely, Mom called from the porch. “Lily, come inside! A heavy storm is coming tonight.”

Lily looked at the dark clouds gathering above the trees.

Then she looked at the tiny doorway.

What would happen to the animal living underneath the vines when the rain arrived?



Scritch, Scritch, Scritch

That evening, Lily sat quietly on the porch with her flashlight.

The wind rustled the pumpkin leaves. A twig snapped near the fence.

Then Lily heard a faint sound. Scritch, scritch, scritch.

It came from the pumpkin patch.

Lily tiptoed down the steps.

Scritch, scritch, scritch. There it was again!

She followed the sound to the crooked pumpkin. Its vine trembled even though the wind had stopped.

Lily knelt beside it and carefully lifted the leaves. Four tiny faces looked up at her.



The Mystery Visitors

A mother field mouse and her three babies were living beneath the vines.

The little mice had scratched the loose soil while digging their doorway. They had nibbled the leaves for food.

As they dug beneath the crooked pumpkin, the soil around it had loosened. That was why the pumpkin had shifted.

Lily smiled. “So you are my mysterious visitors.”

The mother mouse twitched her whiskers.

One baby mouse hid behind her. Another held a small piece of pumpkin leaf between its paws.

Lily had solved the mystery—but now she had another problem.

The storm was almost there.



A Safe Place

“Mom!” Lily called. “I found who has been visiting the pumpkin patch!”

Mom came outside and knelt beside her.

Together, they cleared the loose leaves that were blocking the mice’s doorway. Mom placed a small board above the burrow, so rain would run away without trapping the mice inside.

Then Lily carefully moved the smallest pumpkins to higher ground.

“We can share the garden with them,” she said.

The first raindrops fell as Lily and Mom hurried toward the house.

From beneath the vines, four little mice watched their new friends go.



One More Mystery

By morning, the storm had passed.

Lily hurried outside to check on the mice. Their doorway was dry, and fresh little footprints showed that they were safe.

Then Lily noticed something very strange.

Beside the burrow sat the smallest pumpkin in the patch.
A tiny face had appeared on it during the night!

It had two little eyes, a crooked smile and three square teeth.

Lily stared at it. “I know I didn’t carve you.”

Suddenly, she heard the familiar sound coming from behind the pumpkin.

Scritch, scritch, scritch.

Perhaps the pumpkin-patch mystery was not finished after all.



The Pumpkin Carvers

A baby mouse peeked from behind the pumpkin.

It placed its front paws on the orange skin and nibbled one final square beneath the pumpkin's smile.

The other mice watched from the doorway.

They had not meant to carve a jack-o'-lantern. They had simply been gathering bits of pumpkin for breakfast.

But the tiny eyes, crooked mouth and little square teeth made Lily laugh.

"So you were the pumpkin carvers!"

The baby mouse froze with a piece of pumpkin in its mouth.

Then it scampered back to its family.

This time, the mystery really was solved.



A Pumpkin-Patch Halloween

On Halloween night, Lily placed the tiny nibbled pumpkin beside the family's jack-o'-lanterns.

It did not have a candle or a perfectly carved face, but Lily thought it was the most special pumpkin of all.

Beneath the vines, the mother mouse and her three babies peeked from their dry little doorway.

Lily waved to them.

She had learned that sometimes creatures that make a mess are simply searching for food and a safe place to live.

From then on, Lily always left a quiet corner of the pumpkin patch for her tiny neighbors.

And sometimes, beneath the golden moon, she still heard: Scritch, scritch, scritch.

The End

