

The Night of the Black Rot:

a tale of orchids and Halloween



It was the night
before
Halloween, and
a heavy fog
settled over the
coastal cliffs of
Pismo Beach.

Beneath the
moon's eerie glow, an orchid blooms only
once a year, but beware, for it may not be
the only thing stirring in the night.

Inside Edith Bramble's greenhouse, her orchids sparkled with the dampness from a late evening watering. In the center of the room sat a large jack-o-lantern, its flickering light casting eerie shadows on the plants.



In the deep of the night, the air grew heavy with the scent of the black orchid's bloom. But with its beauty came a sinister presence. Eyes-unseen but felt-pierced through the veil of darkness, and the faint rustle of leaves whispered a warning that no one would ever hear.

Unbeknownst to Edith, her greenhouse had caught the attention of Hazel Nightshade, a wicked witch who thrived in the cold, wet



night. From the edge of the mist, Hazel approached, her long fingers tracing the glass as she whispered a dark curse in the old tongue:



“In damp and cold, let the rot take hold,
From roots to bloom, decay and gloom.
By night’s cold breath, the blooms shall die,
And in their place, black rot will lie.”

As the curse was cast, tendrils of black rot began to snake up the roots of Edith's orchids, creeping through the dark, drawn to the rotting pumpkin in the corner.



The Morning Horror

The next morning, Edith returned to her greenhouse, expecting to find her orchids thriving. Instead, she found them consumed by black rot, their roots and leaves blackened, the air thick with the stench of decay. The jack-o-lantern, now sagging and moldy, seemed to grin wider as the rot spread toward it.

Panicked, Edith tried to save her plants, cutting away the infected parts, but the rot spread faster than she could move. Before she could react, the rot pulsed, sending a dark cloud of spores into the air. The cloud



swirled around her, and before she could scream, she vanished, engulfed by the blackness.

The Orchid Society Arrives



Later that day, the members of the Five Cities Orchid Society—you, Karen, Ed, and Chris and few new

members arrived

for their greenhouse tour. They were met with a scene of devastation. The greenhouse, once filled with vibrant orchids, was now overrun with black rot, the plants withering and collapsing. “Where’s Edith?” Karen asked, her voice concerned.

“This isn’t just black rot,” Ed muttered, inspecting one of the infected plants. “There’s something darker at work here.”



As they searched the greenhouse, Karen found something unusual—a small set of newsletters, bound in a worn, cracked cover. She flipped through the pages and gasped.

“This isn’t just a collection of orchid tips,” she whispered. “This is Hazel Nightshade’s grimoire, disguised to look like society newsletters!” Inside the grimoire, hidden among orchid care tips, was the antidote to the black rot, written in an ancient rhyme:



The Antidote to the Black Rot

“A pinch of spice, from bark of tree,
The powder of bark, from cinnamon tree.
A dash of soda, not too much,
To make the fungi lose its touch.
A drop of soap, to help it stay,
Upon the leaves where rot does lay.
Add water clear, stir well and true,
And let this mix your plants renew.”

The society members quickly made the potion and used the fungicide to treat the plants.

The Power of the Charm

But there was more. In the back of the grimoire, hidden within the folds of its dark pages, Karen found a small charm—the logo of the Five Cities Orchid Society, engraved on a medallion. The orchid, in full bloom, was encircled by ancient protective symbols.



“This charm,” Karen explained, holding it up, “was made by the wisest to encourage

and inspire. It's said to ward off evil and ignorance and protect orchids. We need to hang it here, at the door, to let the witch know this greenhouse is cared for by a member of the society."

They hung the charm on the door of the greenhouse, and as it swung gently in the foggy air, the atmosphere inside began to shift. The heavy, cursed air seemed to lift, and the rot stopped its spread.

The Witch Returns

But Hazel was not finished. From the back of the greenhouse, her shadowy form appeared once more, her eyes glowing faintly in the mist. She hissed as she saw the charm hanging on the door.



“Poor Edith
Bramble” she
mocked. “Did she
not pay her dues?”

And with an evil
flourish of her dark
cloak, she reached
out with her craggy

hand and grasped the still blooming black
orchid, and incanted,

“A charm of gold, to ward me back,
But I'll return, when nights are black.
Though now you stand and think you've
won,
Beware, for rot has just begun.”

Karen stood firm, holding up the grimoire and the fungicide they had mixed from its pages. “You can’t curse what’s cared for by the Five Cities Orchid Society,” she said, her voice steady. “We have the knowledge, the protection, and the together we will stop you.”

As the charm glowed brightly in the fog, Hazel screeched, her form dissolving into the mist. “I’ll be back!” she howled as she vanished into the fog. “Every cold night, I’ll return!”

In the end, the black rot was not only defeated by the right care—early watering, good airflow, and fungicide—but also by the collective strength of the orchid society.

The charm, carrying the logo of the Five Cities Orchid Society, served as a reminder that no grower is ever alone in their journey.

To this day, the charm is passed among society members, a symbol of protection and community. And each year, as Halloween approaches and the cold fog rolls in, the society gathers to share this tale—a reminder that knowledge and community are the true defenses against whatever darkness may creep into their greenhouses.

