



# Blackwood

*Gwenda Bond*

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## **Blackwood** Gwenda Bond

On Roanoke Island, the legend of the 114 people who mysteriously vanished from the Lost Colony hundreds of years ago is just an outdoor drama for the tourists, a story people tell. But when the island faces the sudden disappearance of 114 people now, an unlikely pair of 17-year-olds may be the only hope of bringing them back.

Miranda, a misfit girl from the island's most infamous family, and Phillips, an exiled teen criminal who hears the voices of the dead, must dodge everyone from federal agents to long-dead alchemists as they work to uncover the secrets of the new Lost Colony. The one thing they can't dodge is each other.

*Blackwood* is a dark, witty coming of age story that combines America's oldest mystery with a thoroughly contemporary romance.

## **Blackwood Details**

Date : Published September 4th 2012 by Strange Chemistry (first published September 2012)

ISBN :

Author : Gwenda Bond

Format : Kindle Edition 416 pages

Genre : Young Adult, Fantasy, Paranormal, Mystery, Romance

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# From Reader Review *Blackwood* for online ebook

## Colleen Houck says

I really loved the idea of a traveling tattoo. Super creepy. I've always been fascinated with the disappearing colony of Roanoke. This was a cool explanation of how it might have all happened. Also love the dog! There are not enough dogs in books, I've decided. My favorite scene was the end which I won't spoil for you. =)

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## Mogsy (MMOGC) says

I do so love paranormal stories with plots that incorporate strange and/or mysterious circumstances surrounding real historical events, and this book certainly fits that description. Considered one of America's oldest and biggest unsolved mysteries, the Lost Colony of Roanoke was an attempt by Queen Elizabeth I to establish a permanent English settlement in what is present-day Dare County, North Carolina. 114 colonists ended up disappearing without a trace, with one of the very few clues being the word "Croatoan" carved into a post of a fence.

Hundreds of years later, Miranda Blackwood, our protagonist who is somewhat of an outsider due to her infamous family name, wakes up one morning in her home on Roanoke Island to find that her father has vanished along with more than a hundred others in town -- 114, to be exact. Together with her once-classmate and juvenile delinquent Phillips Rawling, a boy who can hear the voices of dead people, Miranda knows it's up to them to uncover the secrets of the Lost Colony in order to solve the mystery, and to save the missing.

There was a lot of potential here, and I could have easily pictured this book reaching new heights in supernatural creepiness when it comes to storytelling and atmosphere, but it didn't quite happen.

Don't get me wrong; this was one fine book and I liked it, but I very well could have LOVED it if the execution had been a little stronger and more ambitious. Granted, this book nails it when it comes to having all the trappings of a good paranormal YA novel, but it never quite takes off to become exceptional. On a related note, I've noticed that this seems to be the case for several early Strange Chemistry books I've read so far. Now that I've had a couple more of their recent titles under my belt, though, I definitely feel later books have been showing more flair. It's like it just took the imprint their first year to settle into their groove and start publishing stories that more and more fit their unique flavor and style.

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## Sheila {Foals, Fiction & Filigree} says

This full review can be viewed on my blog along with others at: [shesgoingbookcrazy.com](http://shesgoingbookcrazy.com)

*I received this copy from the publisher via NetGalley, in exchange for an honest review.*

**Release date 08/01/2017!**

Miranda has never cherished her family's name. *Blackwood* held something sinister within its ancestry, but

no one really knew *what*. Because of her last name, Miranda is accustomed to being ostracized---no thanks to the help of Grant Rawling's accusations towards her openly at school.

When 114 islanders go missing---the same amount of settlers who had originally vanished from Roanoke Island back in the 1500's---her path will be intertwined with Grant's in ways that she, or he, doesn't expect.

Caught up in the mysterious disappearances, the two quickly realize that they are part of a plot much bigger than themselves.

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**This is a re-imagining of the author's first book, *Blackwood*.**

The first half of this book was absolutely arresting. I was so intrigued with the way the story was headed, and I **needed** to know what was going to happen!

Based upon the historical mystery of Roanoke Island's (and North America for that matter) first settlers, who all but vanished into thin air. It is speculated that they simulated into various Native American tribes, but no one knows for sure. It was also one of America's first colonial mysteries throughout the influx of European immigrants!

The cover is just as ominous and threatening as the tale being told. (I think it perfectly reflects it's contents.) From afar, the treeline looks like silhouettes of colonial-style homes along the shoreline. I don't know if this was the intended visual effect, **but it works**.

I think this book made me realize how much I enjoyed the mystery portion of it, because when the "fantasy" began appearing more and more, my interest level diminished---which is *odd* for me, because I **love** fantasy. I felt that the further the plot went into revealing the truth behind the mystery, the less detail and clarity accompanied it. This does not go to say that the backstory was **bad**, because it wasn't. I felt that it needed a lot more detail.

With that being said, I appreciate the author's interpretation on this colonial mystery. I could tell that she did her research, and combined it well with the story that she manifested. It was an interesting read.

Vulgarity: Minimal.

Sexual Content: Besides some flirting and kissing, not much.

Violence: Some, including "soul sucking."

3.5 stars.

*A big thanks to the publisher for providing me with a copy of this book!*

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## **? Kimberly says**

I have always be intrigued by the mystery that surrounds the Lost Colony on Roanoke Island and when I saw the cover of *Blackwood* and read the synopsis I knew I had to read this tale. Author Gwenda Bond offers her unique twist on this mystery. I found this tale to be dark, gritty and creepy! It grabbed me at page one and the

mystery kept me turning the pages.

The tale begins when we meet Miranda Blackwood; she is working at the local theater where they replay the tale of the missing colonist for tourist. Miranda hears and sees a giant ship moving its way towards the stage. Terrified it will crush an actress, she leaps on to the stage knocking the actress down. Expecting a crash she is shocked that the ship disappeared into thin air. Mortified by the stares, she heads home. Her drunken dad is on his way out and she curls up in bed with her dog, Sidekick. In the morning she wakes to discover her dad never returned home. She quickly assumes he has landed himself in jail again. She jumps in her car dubbed, “the pineapple” and heads into town to bail him out. What she discovers is that 114 residents of Roanoke Island have disappeared, the exact same amount that went missing and were never found in 1584. Her dad is among the missing. Sounds creepy right? The tale that unfolds kept me captivated as Miranda discovers secrets about the island and her family.

The characters in Bond’s novel were quirky, witty, scary and unique. I liked Miranda. She is known as the town “freak” and readily embraces this label. She marches to her own drum and has enough problems at home to even think about dealing with people’s opinions. While often timid she can be witty, sarcastic and brave. Phillip is the son of the town sheriff, who was so plagued by hearing the ghosts of spirits his parents sent him away to school. When everyone goes missing, his Dad decides he needs his freaky-kind-of-help. I liked Phillips’s need to protect Miranda, and his edgy bad boy personality. The back history and connection between, Miranda and Phillip was interesting, but lacked some of the depth I need from a sparking romance. It was not insta-love and there were some cute romantic moments. Other characters propelled the story, some felt right and others did not. I would have liked to have seen both present and past characters a little more fleshed out.

The world-building while not without flaws was refreshing and the storyline kept me turning the pages. Some events felt anti-climatic and others needed more back-story. Despite these flaws, I really enjoyed the tale and consumed this in a single afternoon. Bond’s writing style was enjoyable and the book was well paced. The mystery, the curse and the chain of events were both creepy and suspenseful. I love the mystery behind the Lost Colony and enjoyed this refreshing take on it.

I recommend Blackwood to fans of historical mysteries, fantasy and suspenseful tales. This is my first novel by Angry Robot and I look forward to more of their novels. I have added Bond to my author’s to watch list and look forward to reading more of her work.

I want to thank Angry Robot and netGalley for providing this ARC in exchange for my unbiased review.

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## **Katy says**

**Book Info:** Genre: Paranormal Romance/Historical-based Fantasy

Reading Level: Young Adult

Recommended for: Fans of YA romantic fantasy, with historical basis, and hints of paranormal/horror

**My Thoughts:** So, when I accepted this book, I saw “lost colony of Roanoke” but not “romance”... So I was a bit hesitant about reading it once I had realized it was defined as such. However...

*“Miranda had a firm policy of never being the silly girl – the kind who went to see what noise that was, or who would believe she’d seen something no one else had.”* I really liked Miranda. She has her moments, but overall she’s pretty sensible. Phillips is also pretty cool – he’s a bit of a bad boy, but a bad boy with a reason for being so.

*“Her hand vibrated with invisible ick... She officially had devil cooties”* There was a great deal of humor in the book – Miranda and Phillips both view life with a sardonic outlook and that comes through in the way they talk and interact. The mystery of Roanoke Island is part and parcel of their history, and they are both descended from members of that doomed (or was it?) expedition.

So, I was so surprised at how much I enjoyed this book. The romance was in the background and it was a fast-paced story with thrills and chills galore. I enjoyed the characters and the research the author put into the book. Recommended.

**Disclosure:** I received a free ARC from NetGalley in exchange for an honest review. All opinions are my own.

**Synopsis:** On Roanoke Island, the legend of the 114 people who mysteriously vanished from the Lost Colony hundreds of years ago is just an outdoor drama for the tourists, a story people tell. But when the island faces the sudden disappearance of 114 people now, an unlikely pair of 17-year-olds may be the only hope of bringing them back.

Miranda, a misfit girl from the island’s most infamous family, and Phillips, an exiled teen criminal who hears the voices of the dead, must dodge everyone from federal agents to long-dead alchemists as they work to uncover the secrets of the new Lost Colony. The one thing they can’t dodge is each other.

*Blackwood* is a dark, witty coming of age story that combines America’s oldest mystery with a thoroughly contemporary romance.

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## Erin says

I tried to get into this book. I made it by God's grace to page 160 and could not go any further. I thought with it talking about the Lost Colony it would be a fantastic and interesting book. It was far from it. The characters were so bland and boring. It just didn't peak my interest what so ever.

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## Wing-yee (bibliomeds) says

Read my full review here: <https://bibliophilicmedstudent.wordpr...>

I’ve been wanting to read this for a while ever since I was approved of the ARC. So out of the blue, I decided to start it last night, aaaand I finished it at 4am [#proud]. **I simply could not put it down!** The writing was super easy to follow, the characters I adore, and I love all the pop culture references and quirky dialogues. I’ve been wanting to read more YA paranormal and mystery and **THIS BOOK WAS IT!** It has got a nice blend of historical touch and even though Yours Truly’s forte isn’t American history, I still really enjoyed this element.

From the **detailed writing** and the **building-up of eerie atmospheres**, Bond has done a phenomenal job at having me hooked! I love how the book has dual POVs, and for the first time ever, I didn't have a preference on which POV I'm reading from! They are both really good! I was gravitated towards the story more and more as I dived deeper into the ~~plot~~ **whirlpool of mysteries**. I simply could not stop reading [ok I'll stop, I said that twice now]. It's been a while since I read a book in one sitting, so this book made me feel good too, *double plus*. [And guess who's gonna only read paranormal/mystery novels for her next readathon?]

Now for the **characters**: Miranda Blackwood is used to being called all kinds of names by those who reside on the island. Thanks to her family's curse. Ever since her mum's death, she has learnt to keep her head down, been taking care of her father and follows the rules as best as she could. With literally every thing around her going haywire, she found an unlikely alliance with the sheriff's son, Grant Rawling (aka our boy with a secret), whom humiliated Miranda in front of the school three and a half years ago. Without spilling anything, I'll let you know that Grant is a darling, he deserves everything good in this world because he's so so sweet, and kind, and caring, like, can I have him? he needs to be protected at all cost from this violent world. There are also quite a few secondary characters to keep track on but it was easy to follow through, so don't worry if you can't remember everyone's name.

**ALSO, MIRANDA HAS A DOG. I REPEAT SHE HAS A DOG! AND THIS FACT ALONE MAKES THIS BOOK EVEN BETTER.** His name is Sidekick by the way, in case you were wondering. [I had to put this in a single sentence because this fact is too important and cannot be overlooked].

Moving on, I don't know if it's just me, but I have a thing for guys who are genuinely sweet and protective. Miranda, given her state as a 'bringer of bad luck', never really had a friend (or anyone who will truly stand up for her), so it was heart-warming to see her getting along with Grant as they attempt to solve the mystery together.

The next thing is a positive note, in my opinion, but it may not be for some of you: a slow burn romance (which may or may not be considered insta-love for some people) - **BUT BUT BUT**, it's the good, well-executed Kasie-West-kind! **AND I LOVE IT!** Look, as long as the pair have known each other's existence for a couple of years, I, myself, really wouldn't call it insta-love. But hey, we all have our unique definitions, and that's okay!

All in all, I really enjoyed this thrilling novel! The building up of tensions, the small town vibes and modern-historical parallel really made this book a win-win for me. If you are in search of a YA blend of paranormal mystery with a dash of historical epic-ness (oh yes the fans of The Raven Cycle I'm looking at you), I highly recommend *Strange Alchemy* to you!

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### **Austine (NovelKnight) says**

I have mixed feelings about Bond's work. My previous experiences with it had me loving one book ( *Girl on a Wire* ) and disliking the next ( *Girl in the Shadows* ) so I wasn't sure what to expect from *Strange Alchemy*, especially as it's listed as a revised version of her first book.

I'll say this for it: this book is certainly different from the usual YAs I've read. I liked that it included paranormal elements without falling into the cliches I see in a lot of urban fantasies. The lost colony of

Roanoke is a part of history that I never learned a lot about beyond mentions in history class but I found myself looking more into it after starting this book. This brings the legend into the modern day with another population disappearing, curses, and all sorts of mystery abounding.

The writing wasn't as clean as the other books I've read by her but the story was fairly interesting. Though I'm not big on thrillers and I wouldn't necessarily classify this book as such, there was a feel to it that gave me horror movie vibes at times as the tension continued to build. And then... I'm not sure what happened. The pace slowed as details were flung out left and right, breaking down a lot of that previous tension and causing me to lose interest.

There were also a few questions I had throughout the story that were never really addressed and that took away from the experience. I *really* am not a fan of stories that leave me with too many questions and not enough answers (side-eyes the *ReMade* serial...).

Miranda and Grant were alright protagonists. Miranda's tough (and cursed) while Grant as some interesting abilities, but neither jumped off the page for me. I felt like they served more for the plot's purpose, that it was the primary driver, than the characters. Which is fine. I tend to find I enjoy character-driven stories more, personally, and didn't really feel much for either of these two, but it wasn't badly done. Though the little romance subplot wasn't working for me.

*Strange Alchemy* had a little bit of everything in it and I both liked and disliked that. There's a decent amount going on and, at times, I had to backtrack because I thought I missed something (and sometimes there was nothing *to* miss and the plot just lacked the details to support a particular point).

If you don't mind having a few questions at the end of a novel, and enjoy an interesting take on a historical mystery brought into a new light, then I'd recommend *Strange Alchemy* to you. It was missing a few things for me but was, overall, an interesting read.

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## Chelsea Humphrey says

### 3.5 STARS

This had a very interesting premise. As someone who resides in the state of Virginia, my interest was piqued when I read the blurb and I knew I had to pick this up. The first 50% of the book was absolutely captivating; I couldn't put this down and I just had to know what was going to happen. While I didn't hate the ending, I did feel it was a bit jumbled and not quite what I was hoping for. I know for the right reader this will be a fantastic book, but it fell just a bit flat for me. If you're looking for a creepy story that's not TOO creepy, this may be the book for you. Full review to come.

**\*This was previously published under the title Blackwood.**

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## Ceillie Simkiss says

This was much more heartwrenching than I was expecting, in the best way. Read my full review [HERE!](#)



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## Meigan says

There aren't that many YA stories written around the legend of the Roanoke disappearances, or at least not many that I know of, so I'm always excited when I stumble upon one. Such was the case with *Strange Alchemy* by Gwenda Bond. I hadn't heard of this book prior to it being reworked and rereleased. Formerly titled *Blackwood*, two teens are at the center of this book, Miranda Blackwood and Grant Rawlings, and they're somehow tied and fated to be together when the centuries-old mystery of the disappearances comes knocking a second time around in present day.

*Strange Alchemy* was fairly enjoyable and I liked the characters for the most part, but throughout the duration, I had a hard time differentiating this particular novel from a series of novels written about the same legend. I wanted something new and something different, other than ancient alchemists, to set this one apart from the few others of its ilk, and I unfortunately didn't get that. That's not to say it was a bad book, because it truly wasn't - it was well-written, the world and the characters were well drawn and thought out, but the plot and the mystery weren't nearly as good as the rest of the story elements, and without a great plot and mystery, everything surrounding those two crucial elements feel just as flat.

Bottom line - *Strange Alchemy* turned out as just ok for me in the end, and while it didn't appeal to me as much as I anticipated, it's still a book that will appeal to many readers of varying tastes. Give it a try, especially if you enjoy the legend of the lost colony of Roanoke.

\*eARC received via NetGalley in exchange for my honest opinion.

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## Kaylin (The Re-Read Queen) says

**DNF @ 20%**

No rating since I didn't get very far, not a big fan of the writing style. **RTC**

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## Kevin says

**3.5 Stars**

This was a bizarre book with a side of creepy, let me tell ya.

To begin I was pleasantly surprised that this book kept my interest at all, after just reading the synopsis that came with it. I just felt reading it, that it had a done to death formula, a misfit girl with some daddy issues and a rebellious boy, who used to make fun of said girl, but now finds her to be the best thing like ever. It didn't help that my favorite character was probably the dog, that I kept wishing would start talking and beat all the bad people itself, that would of been a five star book.

*Blackwood* tells the story of a town's history dating back to original pilgrimage when 114 people, exactly, went missing off the island of Roanoke. Well history repeats itself, gotta hate when that happens, and

Miranda Blackwood finds herself directly involved because of her great ancestors involvement in the original mystery.

I had no idea that the book would also involve public drones and the return of someone very much dead, from very long time ago. The whole reason I kept reading and maybe read the book to begin with, was to find out where these 114 people went too, according to the author, and how they would get back. I was disappointed by the eventual answer to this, I thought it would be like some big reveal or something i didn't even think of..but then it just wasn't. And by **just** I mean, the reveal was just thrown in there and didn't really impact me at all, in fact, I was thinking to myself, "well that was lame." By the time I got to this less than fun reveal, I was near the end so I pretty much had to finish.

**Author 1 Kevin 0**

I hate when people act like useless drones because they are being guided by another source, it just doesn't make sense to me unless I have some concluding evidence to what's going on..and I didn't get that here, or didn't care to take it seriously, if it was there. There was this one particular part near the end where everything slows down to nearly a halt. The book was gaining momentum, but then for a few chapters straight I feel like the characters sat around, and almost accepted their fate, I like those strong eccentric characters that go out and DO something to help the cause, their involvement in ending..literally just kind of happened.

With all that said, there were some bright parts. Even though this relationship seems to happen in every other book, this one felt semi real, and wasn't like all "I love you, so much" right from the start. They were even some humor parts in there, which is great because I'm so tired of those straight forward serious YA books. I mean these are for young adults..and we enjoy our humor. Plus like I said, the dog was pretty cool. The problem with this book is that when the relationship and the dog are my favorite parts, that's not saying much for the rest of the book.

Also one of the bigger reveals that the main character kept repeating, which I won't say here cause it's a spoiler, I totally called, I hate when I do that.

**Author 1 Kevin 1**

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## **AH says**

Everyone likes a good mystery and one of the most mystifying events in American history has to be the disappearance of a colony of settlers from Roanoke Island, VA in the late 16th century. The entire settlement of 114 people just vanished. All that was left was the word CROATAN carved into a tree.

The disappearance of a colony of settlers makes a fascinating premise behind Gwenda Bond's new book Blackwood. Basically, this story was a modern day retelling of the Roanoke Island disappearances. At a town play, the main character witnesses a dark presence. The next day, 114 people are missing. And so begins the story.

I was very excited to get a copy of this book. The cover was lovely. I was prepared to be wowed. Instead, I

was left a little confused. I'm not a big fan of changes in fonts accompanied by shifts in time and points of view. Done right, the narrative flows. In this book, it was a little confusing. Not only do we have changes of view between the main characters, the island itself has its own point of view.

I actually liked the two main characters Miranda and Phillips. Miranda Blackwood is a down on her luck kind of girl. She is a bit of a recluse and an oddball. People do not treat Miranda well. Miranda's family is cursed – she cannot even leave the island. Doing so causes her physical pain.

I found Phillips to be charming for a 17 year old boy. Phillips had the ability to hear spirits. This ability only manifests itself when he is on the island. The farther away from the island he gets, the less he hears the spirits. When Phillips sensed that Miranda was in danger, he felt the need to protect her. Phillips and Miranda work together to stop a malevolent presence from taking over the island.

Would I recommend this book? For me, it was just an OK read. I was just expecting more action, more mystery. I think that young adult readers may enjoy this book.

*Thank you to NetGalley and the publisher for a review copy of this book.*

**Review posted on Badass Book Reviews.**

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**Anthony ⇨⇨ KeepReadingForward ⇨⇨ says**

**3/5**

**Date Reviewed:** 10 June 2017

**This Review was first posted on Keep Reading Forward. If you want to see more, check out our other locations as well as [here](#).**

*Thank You Capstone & NetGalley for giving a copy in exchange for an honest review.*

In Strange Alchemy, history is repeated when 114 citizens in a town suddenly disappears in the same location where it first happens many years ago on the same island of Roanoke. I stumbled across this book randomly on NetGalley while I was binge watching American Horror Story. Any AHS fan knows that the latest season involved with the Roanoke story. I think was in a moment of being slightly obsessed with the show that I wanted to read more.

I remember when I first got into this book, I started thinking that this was different and interesting. There were talks of a curse surrounding a certain family while theres another family dealing with a gift that can see spirits affected by the curse on the island. It was an interest play on a legend that almost everyone knows. The more I got into, the less interested I became.

I felt that certain scenes and parts were being dragged out where it could be summed up or written quicker. It was mainly playing around with history and finding important pieces that could help with what was going on

in the present day when citizens went missing, During the middle of the books, I felt that some of the same information kept being repeated over and over again. It was not too repetitive, but to an amount when you start thinking that you already knew that and want something new.

In the ending of the book, everything started going in a faster pace as everything fell into place and information started coming from everything. I was able to understand it, but I felt that too many things were happening at once. I knew that this was sudden part of the story and every character did not expect it. I tried following the characters' action, but there were bits that happened and I had to think "When did that happen?" I was not sure if it was recent, or a couple of chapters back because I ended up taking a break from this book unintentionally. Due to that reason, I decided to let this part go a little. It may have been my fault for forgetting some pieces after all.

Overall, this is an easy book, but requires certain focus to follow up on everything. I loved the fact that this was based on Roanoke and for that I enjoyed part of this book. However, I just could not get into the story as much as I thought I would.

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