

Short Story Contest

November 2021



PROMPT: You've been recruited into a shadowy organization that handles paranormal and extraterrestrial encounters across the world. You're not a Field Agent—you're the new Head Archivist.

The Blackwood Society

by **Brittany Soto**

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Emerson was the founder of an elite organization in the CIA that was responsible for keeping track of paranormal and extraterrestrial phenomena across the world. He was on assignment with the bureau when he first stumbled upon the possibility of life after death and life off planet Earth. After that moment he was enthralled. Every moment of his involvement with the CIA led Emerson to tirelessly research what was previously written off as the “unexplained” until he formed The Blackwood Society, the part of the agency that was formed due to the paranormal and extraterrestrial life forces. Emerson would travel all over the world in the hopes of being able to archive and prove to the rest of the population what was previously the “unknown” was in fact known. He never liked to sit back and have others do all the work, he liked to be out in the field until one day he mysteriously disappeared.

Emerson caught a lead about a sighting of something that should have only been a part of Native American folklore. The tale of the Wendigo is a story that is not widely known, it is a legend that is based on nothing more than a myth. Only those brave enough to venture out into the Algonquian reservation in the Canadian mountains, will realize that sometimes nightmares don't actually go away once you have awakened. A wendigo consists of one of the most powerful emotions...FEAR! Emerson convinced his bosses to allow him to venture out to the Canadian wilderness to try and document the Wendigo. He went out with plans of being gone for only a week, yet as that week came and passed he never returned and neither did the rest of his team.

For years the CIA and what was left of The Blackwood Society searched to no avail. They never found the missing crew's bodies. Emerson Blackwood, Elijah Stone, Maverick Jones, and Grace Thompson were missing as well as presumed dead. Their disappearance was the greatest unsolved mystery since Hedgestone. As time passed, The Blackwood Society was put

out of commission for fear that the new agents that would become involved would suffer the same fate as their predecessors.

In the afterlife, Emerson watched as his namesake and life's work was just shoved aside and forgotten. Emerson screamed and yelled at his bosses to keep the society alive, to use their resources to honor him instead of being fearful that new recruits would suffer the same fate. Emerson wandered around searching for someone to just give him the time of day until he eventually gave up, cursed to wander the afterlife alone. That was until he was talking to himself one day and a little girl that could not have been older than eight years old was staring at him.

"Who are you talking to?" the young girl questioned curiously as she cocked her head slightly to the left. Shocked, Emerson just stood in silence until the child began to giggle. She was such a breath of fresh air that he began laughing too.

"Can you see me?!?" Emerson just about yelled it out in excitement. He looked at the child inquisitively. She nodded her head and offered him some of the snack that she was holding. He took it from her softly and jumped in surprise when he didn't glide right through her. The grown man began to weep in front of her. The small child reached out and wrapped her arms around his waist.

"My name's Caroline. What's yours?" the doe eyed child looked at him expectantly. He smiled at her and spelled his name out in the gravel. She turned her head to the side and read "E-M-E-R-S-O-N" inside of her head, mouthing the letters as she went.

Emerson sat back and watched her and a thought crossed his mind, 'How is this child the only one that is able to see me? I have been gone for years.' It was fascinating to him that Caroline was not scared of him. He decided to stick around her as she grew up to see what other potential she had. He guided her and answered her questions about absolutely anything and

everything. He helped her with everything and even told her of a job opportunity she could apply for when she was of the proper age.

For as long as she can remember, the paranormal has always been a passion of Caroline. From a very impressionable age she always would find some excuse as to why something went bump in the night, “It’s just the wind darling” her mother used to tell her every night when she would tuck young Caroline into bed. Caroline never believed that, she knew better. Her mother used to tell her that she had an overactive imagination and should be outside making real friends instead of talking to the imaginary one she nicknamed Emmy. Contrary to popular belief, Emmy was in fact a real person...well at one point in time he was anyway.

Caroline always knew what she wanted to do as a career when she grew up, it always would revolve around working for the CIA. She always made top marks in school and strived to be the absolute best student she could be. She was class president, valedictorian, and the captain of the softball team. At the age of seventeen she got accepted into Yale University and strived in that environment as well as she did in highschool. Caroline graduated from Yale as Summa Cum Laude and was recruited by all of the three letter agencies due to her research; although none of them mattered to her except the CIA and with no afterthought she accepted their job offer.

After a lengthy summer, Caroline began working in the research department. Everyday was the same old routine until Emerson came to her and stated that she must stop by the main office in the headquarters and speak to Mr. Wimbledon about an “off the books assignment”. Despite being unsure about the situation she trusted that Emerson would not misguide her about something this important. After working up the courage to finally break from her regular routine Caroline stopped by the front desk.

“Is Mr. Wimbledon in his office today, miss?” Caroline just about choked out to the receptionist. The middle aged woman looked up from her computer screen and merely stared at the now extremely flustered Caroline.

“Why do you need to see him?” the receptionist questioned the flustered new hire. Caroline was at a loss for words and didn’t know what to say. She pondered the question for a quick second before finally coming to an answer.

“It’s about Emerson,” she answered. At the mention of the long lost agents name Mr. Wimbledon’s receptionist paled and let the young girl into his office. Caroline walked into the office and immediately caught sight of the head honcho.

“I know where Agent Blackwood’s body is,” Caroline muttered out to the shell shocked Mr. Wimbledon. She told him exactly where the body would be found and sure enough once the agency put one last ditch effort into finding the missing agents the mystery was solved.

After a few short months Caroline was moved from the newbie position to the head archivist of the new and improved Blackwood Society. She strived at that position, she was brilliant and was the number one of the society other than Emerson himself. Caroline took charge of The Blackwood Society and turned it into the very thing that it is today. From her office she lead the agents in and out of the most dangerous situations relating to paranormal and extraterrestrial life. Caroline researched different hotspots and would contact the team on the ground. With the help of the founder himself, The Blackwood Society strived under the new management and became one of the most well known parts of the agency.