

The Disappearance of Charlotte Ross by Ashley W.

The disappearance of Charlotte Ross has been the prime story of the year in my small town. She was only 14 years old when she reportedly went missing. Charlotte had allegedly crashed a stolen car into an electric fence, injuring a friend of hers. The police investigated the area shortly after it had happened and found her friend's body in the passenger seat, terribly wounded.

They rushed her to the hospital, but unfortunately, she didn't make it. As for Charlotte, they never located her body. All they saw was blood, shattered glass, and a broken seatbelt in the driver's seat. The car door had still been closed after the crash. The police searched all around the area in hopes of finding her but failed. And just like that, they officially reported her as "missing/possibly killed." It's been like that for a while now. I guess the police just gave up on trying to figure out this case, however, I haven't.

I'm 16 and currently in the 11<sup>th</sup> grade. My best friend, Roseanne, and I were on a mission to conclude what really happened to Charlotte Ross the day of the car crash. We've already spent some time on it, trying to unlock more answers and put together information that would make sense, but it hasn't been that easy, which leads me to now.

We should be paying attention in math class at the moment, but all I can focus on is attempting to unravel this mystery.

"I got it!" Rosanne blurted out.

"Ms. Clark, would you like to come up to the front of the room and show us how to answer the equation on the board?"

Roseanne froze as other students snickered. "Um, no, sir...on second thought I think I added a couple of things wrong in my head."

The teacher moved on, and I had to bite down on my pencil just to accommodate my laughter.

"That was very stupid of you to do. What were you thinking?" I asked.

"I was thinking, what if Charlotte Ross somehow got kidnapped by someone right after the car crash?"

I looked at her astonished. She could be on to something.

My school was over, and we started discussing more ideas on what could have happened, but the only one that truly made sense was the kidnapping theory. Roseanne explained how Charlotte could have passed out after the car crashed. Someone might have found her and took her out before anyone else had a chance to search the area.

We decided to go to the mall to buy some clothes and additional miscellaneous items from stores like Hot Topic, Forever 21, and Journeys. As we finished shopping, we stopped by the food court to get something to eat. As we sat down, I noticed Roseanne had a nervous look in her eye.

"You good?" I questioned with concern.

“Layla, I can trust you, right?” she asked. I nodded my head yes. “You won’t judge me if I tell you anything secret, right?” I nodded yes again. “What if I told you that my name is Charlotte Ross, and I wasn’t killed in that car accident two years ago?”

I looked at her and laughed. “Stop kidding around and tell me what really happened. Are you serious?” I asked.

She nodded, and I knew there was no trace of dishonesty written on her face.

“But that doesn’t make any sense. You don’t look like Charlotte at all. You have red hair and green eyes, unlike Charlotte who has brown hair and brown eyes. Plus your name is Roseanne Clark,” I laughed.

She didn’t even respond to me as she took my hand and led me back to her car. We got in the car, and she looked hesitant. “Layla, my name isn’t Roseanne Clark; my name is Charlotte Ross. I was in a car crash when I was 14. That day I woke up to someone carrying me out of my car and into a building. I identified the person as Sergio, her assistant.

Sergio told me about her plan to kill me, and that the only way to survive safely was to change my identity and make sure no finds out. I failed Sergio by telling you, but I couldn’t keep this act going anymore.”

She inhaled and shut her eyes for a second. “Her name shall not be spoken, for she has caused me nothing but pain. You’re all I have after I had to leave my family and friends who all think I’m dead. Please don’t tell anyone; I could die if She knew I was alive right now.

I didn’t know how to react to this. I tried to let everything sink in for a minute. “Roseanne, or Charlotte, or whatever you want me to call you, this was a lot. I am very sorry that you had to go through all that, and I’m glad that I was able to help you. I swear on my life that I will not tell anyone about this for your safety, and I appreciate your honesty.”

It was difficult for me to accept that fact that all the time I spent trying to crack the code about what happened was pointless. Charlotte was with me the entire time! Until this day I am still the only one that knows her secret (other than Sergio), and it will remain that way for as long as I’m alive.

Or so I thought...