



*The Scarlet  
Fox*

*Holly Carroll*

My legs ached. I could not go on for much longer. I knew that the end was coming closer and closer, stalking me like a cat to a mouse, never hesitating, never stopping, never giving in.

It seemed like a lifetime ago since I had begun this investigation of the missing birds. I was a just a young investigator, intrigued by nature and most of all, mystery. I was ecstatic when my boss, Mr Ecilop, had called me into his office for an urgent meeting.

"Willow Jones," he declared.

"Uh... Yes sir?" I mumbled.

Mr Ecilop connected his hands and confirmed, "Willow. I have watched your progress with great interest. You are a very interesting and truly natural detective. You have completed all your practices without hesitation. You obey all orders willingly, whatever the task may be. You might just be the most talented and most awe-inspiring person that I have ever met. Because of this I have decided to assign you your very first mission."

My legs seemed to turn to jelly. Mr Ecilop had called me, yes me, inspirational and utterly amazing! I was speechless. I tried to speak but words would not come out. All I could do was mumble something about me thanking him. After I had calmed myself down, I straitened myself up and asked him the question that had been repeated in my mind ever since he had finished praising me, "Sir, ummm... What is this task, may I ask?"

Mr Ecilop cleared his throat, then replied, "You, Willow, will uncover the truth hidden at Waterlily Woods. I can not tell you right now what is happening but I can tell you that it is very intriguing yet somehow disturbing. You will find all of the information that you will need for the investigation inside the portfolio at the main building in the site. You will find many clues but it is up to you to decide who is responsible for the disappearances. What has changed? Who did the crime? I don't know, but you, Willow, will have to find out. Good luck."

Two days had passed since Mr Ecilop had given me my mission. I was standing inside a large sandstone classroom. Waterlily Woods had once been home to a school, but it had shut down about forty years ago due to lack of students. A huge blue folder perched on a dusty wooden table. Every now and again a piece of the roof would crumble inwards sprinkling dust into my chestnut hair. I shivered as I read the chilling portfolio. This place gave me the creeps.

I shuddered again, thinking about would happen if the roof caved in and I was buried under a sea of dust and rubble, but I shook the feeling off. I had a job to do. I flipped a page in the folder and found a newspaper clipping. I pulled it out and began to read:

MYSTERY DISAPPEARANCE HAS  
TEENAGE SLEUTHS BAFFLED