

Ruslana Korshunova

Ruslana Sergeyevna Korshunova (Russian: Руслана Серге́евна Коршунова; 2 July 1987 – 28 June 2008)^{[2][3]} was a Russian model. Upon being discovered in 2003, Korshunova quickly gained international notoriety; receiving praise from *The Sunday Times* and *British Vogue*, who called her "a face to be excited about," in 2005.^[4]

In 2008, four days before her 21st birthday, Korshunova committed suicide by jumping from her ninth-story apartment balcony in Manhattan's Financial District.^[5]

Early life

Ruslana Korshunova was born in Uelkal, Chukotka, Russia and later moved with her family to Almaty, Kazakhstan.^{[4][6][7]} Her father Sergey Korshunov was a Red army officer who died in 1992 when she was five years old. According to her mother, Valentina Kutenkova, before Korshunova began modeling she was enrolled in a school for gifted children,^[8] and was fluent in Russian, English, Kazakh and German.^{[2][9]}

Career

Korshunova was discovered in November 2003, by senior model booker of Models 1, Debbie Jones, who saw Korshunova in a *All Asia* magazine print story on Almaty's local German language club, which Korshunova was then attending. Her photograph, which was featured in the article, caught the attention of Debbie Jones of Models 1; Jones tracked down and signed the 15-year-old, whose knee-length hair led to her being nicknamed 'The Russian Rapunzel'.^[10]

Korshunova was represented by IMG, Beatrice Models, Traffic Models, Marilyn Model Agency and iCasting Moscow. *British Vogue* hailed her as "a face to be excited about" in 2005.^[4] She appeared on the covers of *Elle* France and *Vogue Russia*, in numerous runway shows, and in print ads for Nina Ricci, Blugirl by Blumarine, Clarins, Ghost, Girbaud, Kenzo, Marithé + François Girbaud, Max Studio, Moschino, Pantene, Paul Smith, Vera Wang, Marc Jacobs, Mario Sorrenti, Paolo Roversi, Donna Karan and Christian Dior.^{[2][11]} In 2006 Korshunova appeared in the *Vogue Italia* feature "Broken Dolls", photographed by Patrick Demarcheir.^{[12][13][14]} It was reported that, at this point, she was earning \$7000 per shoot.^[15]

Ruslana Korshunova



Korshunova backstage at a Yigal Azrouël fashion show in September 2007

Born	Ruslana Sergeyevna Korshunova 2 July 1987 Uelkal , Chukotka Autonomous Okrug , Russia , Soviet Union ^[1]
-------------	---

Died	28 June 2008 (aged 20) New York City, U.S.
-------------	---

Occupation	Model
-------------------	--------------------

Modeling information

Height	174 cm (5 ft 9 in)
---------------	---

Hair color	Blonde
-------------------	--------

Eye color	Blue
------------------	------

Agencies	Beatrice Models (Milan) Models 1 Marilyn Agency IMG Models (Paris, London, & Milan)
-----------------	---

Death

On 28 June 2008, at approximately 2:30 p.m., Korshunova fell 8.5 meters to her death, from the ninth-floor balcony of her apartment at 130 Water Street in New York's Financial District.^[16] Police stated that there were no signs of a struggle or violence and concluded that her death was a suicide.^[17] She left no note. A conciierge working for her apartment block said that her hair "was much shorter than when I last saw her that night [...]" It seemed like it was cut in a hurry since the ends were uneven".^[17]

Her former boyfriend stated that he dropped her off at her apartment several hours earlier, after they watched the film *Ghost*. She was not known to use drugs. A friend stated that she had just returned from a modeling job in Paris, noting that she seemed to be "on top of the world",^[18] and was making plans for her up-coming 21st birthday. However, Korshunova's blog posts countered that; her comments included "I'm so lost. Will I ever find myself?"; "I'm a bitch. I'm a witch. I don't care what you say."; and "It hurts, as if someone took a part of me, tore it out, mercilessly stomped all over and threw it out. My dream is to fly. Oh, my rainbow, it is too high."^[19]

Her body was returned to Russia and buried at Khovanskoye Cemetery in Moscow.^[20] Her mother does not believe that her daughter committed suicide, saying "She told me about her work problems about a year ago. She said that she wanted to quit the modeling career. Everything was fine with her recently though. If she had problems at work, she would have told me".^{[21][22][23]}

Connection to Jeffrey Epstein

January 2024 documents revealed that in 2006, Korshunova had visited Little Saint James, the island belonging to sexual predator Jeffrey Epstein.^{[24][25]} Korshunova is mentioned posthumously in a July 2010 email, where Epstein mentioned the death of a Russian model two years earlier, blaming her boyfriend for refusing to get her the help she needed.^[26]

Additional records released in January 2026 include an August 2011 email from a third party to Epstein asking whether a modeling agency had failed to pay Korshunova.^[27] The same released materials include a saved image containing a quote attributed to Korshunova, though no context is provided.^[28] According to an email in the files, Korshunova was physically abused by her last boyfriend.^[29]

Rose of the World theory

British TV producer and filmmaker Peter Pomerantsev has theorised that Korshunova's demise was related to her involvement with Rose of the World, a controversial Moscow-based organization which describes itself as "training for personality development". While researching for a documentary into Korshunova's death, Pomerantsev learned that the model spent three months attending training sessions at Rose of the World. These sessions—which encourage participants to share their worst experiences and recall repressed memories—are modelled after Lifespring, whose controversial methods were the subject of multiple lawsuits for mental damages in the US during the 1980s. Korshunova attended training sessions with a friend, Ukrainian model Anastasia Drozdova, who committed suicide under similar circumstances in 2009.^[30] Friends of the two women reported changes in behaviour after several months at the Rose. Korshunova became aggressive, while Drozdova experienced violent mood swings and grew reclusive; both lost weight. After three months of training, Korshunova returned to New York to look for work, where she wrote of feeling lost and doubting herself. Rick Alan Ross, head of the Cult Education Forum, argues that organisations such as Rose of the World "work like

drugs: giving you peak experiences, their adherents always coming back for more. The serious problems start when people leave. The trainings have become their lives—they come back to emptiness. The sensitive ones break." Only months after leaving the Rose, Korshunova was found dead.^[31]

References

1. "Загадочная история «русской Рапунцель»: как Руслана Коршунова стала супермоделью и погибла в 20 лет" (<https://web.archive.org/web/20260311110038/https://63.ru/text/entertainment/2024/06/28/73762793/>) [The Mysterious Story of the "Russian Rapunzel": How Ruslana Korshunova Became a Supermodel and Died at 20]. 63.py (in Russian). 2024-06-28. Archived from the original (<https://63.ru/text/entertainment/2024/06/28/73762793/>) on 2026-03-11. Retrieved 2026-04-04.
2. "Profile of fashion model Ruslana Korshunova" (https://web.archive.org/web/20260311110040/https://www.fashionmodeldirectory.com/models/ruslana_korshunova/). Fashion Model Directory. 2005-02-10. Archived from the original (http://www.fashionmodeldirectory.com/models/ruslana_korshunova) on 2026-03-11. Retrieved 2007-12-11.
3. "Ruslana Korshunova, the Russian model who took her life in 2008, traveled to Epstein's island two years before death" (<https://web.archive.org/web/20260311110037/https://www.marca.com/en/lifestyle/celebrities/2024/01/05/6597da0aca4741216d8b45df.html>). MARCA. 2024-01-05. Archived from the original (<https://www.marca.com/en/lifestyle/celebrities/2024/01/05/6597da0aca4741216d8b45df.html>) on 2026-03-11. Retrieved 2024-02-17.
4. "A FACE TO BE EXCITED ABOUT" (<https://web.archive.org/web/20090303153304/http://www.vogue.co.uk/news/daily/2005-02/050210-a-face-to-be-excited-about.aspx>). vogue.co.uk. 2005-02-10. Archived from the original (https://www.vogue.co.uk/vogue_daily/story/story.asp?stid=23447) on 2009-03-03. Retrieved 2007-12-11.
5. "Reports: Model dies in fall from NYC building" (<https://www.nbcnews.com/id/wbna25434058>). NBC News. June 28, 2008. Retrieved May 1, 2026.
6. "Загадочная история «русской Рапунцель»: как Руслана Коршунова стала супермоделью и погибла в 20 лет" (<https://web.archive.org/web/20260311110038/https://63.ru/text/entertainment/2024/06/28/73762793/>) [The Mysterious Story of the "Russian Rapunzel": How Ruslana Korshunova Became a Supermodel and Died at 20]. 63.py (in Russian). 2024-06-28. Archived from the original (<https://63.ru/text/entertainment/2024/06/28/73762793/>) on 2026-03-11. Retrieved 2025-03-30.
7. "Yandex" (https://web.archive.org/web/20260311110340/https://sso.passport.yandex.ru/push?uuid=e4ab253b-af13-472b-a67b-b7c8d53aa55b&retpath=https%3A%2F%2Fdzen.ru%2Fa%2FZp1G4hORpBFVnBUd%3Fis_autologin_ya%3Dtrue). sso.passport.yandex.ru. Archived from the original (<https://dzen.ru/a/Zp1G4hORpBFVnBUd>) on 2026-03-11. Retrieved 2025-03-30.
8. Buckley, Cara (2008-07-05). "Amid Swirl of Speculation, Disbelief From a Mother" (<https://www.nytimes.com/2008/07/05/nyregion/05ruslana.html>). The New York Times. ISSN 0362-4331 (<https://search.worldcat.org/issn/0362-4331>). Retrieved 2024-08-28.
9. Osoro, Yul Vincent (2020-05-07). "Ruslana Korshunova bio, career, family, cause of death" (<https://web.archive.org/web/20260311110037/https://kami.com.ph/111685-ruslana-korshunova-bio-career-family-death.html>). Kami.com.ph - Philippines news. Archived from the original (<https://kami.com.ph/111685-ruslana-korshunova-bio-career-family-death.html>) on 2026-03-11. Retrieved 2024-07-20.
10. McNamara, Paul; Xana O'Neill; Carrie Melago (2008-06-29). "Russian supermodel with 'fairytale' beauty, age 20, plummets to her death" (https://web.archive.org/web/20080702003845/https://www.nydailynews.com/news/2008/06/28/2008-06-28_russian_supermodel_with_fairytale_beauty.html). Daily News. New York. Archived from the original (http://www.nydailynews.com/news/2008/06/28/2008-06-28_russian_supermodel_with_fairytale_beauty.html) on 2008-07-02. Retrieved 2008-06-29. "The nearly 5-foot-9 model's interest in German led to her discovery in 2003. A journalist from All Asia magazine visited her German language club and featured her photo in a story, according to an article in Continent, a Kazakh magazine."
11. Knezevic, Elena. "Weekend Perfume Movies: Nina by Nina Ricci" (<https://www.fragrantica.com/news/Weekend-Perfume-Movies-Nina-by-Nina-Ricci-18780.html>). fragrantica.com. Fragrantica. Retrieved 16 February 2026.
12. [1]

13. Barnett, Leisa (2008-06-30). "Ruslana Korshunova Remembered" (<https://web.archive.org/web/20260311110038/https://www.vogue.co.uk/article/ruslana-korshunova-remembered>). *British Vogue*. Archived from the original (<https://www.vogue.co.uk/article/ruslana-korshunova-remembered>) on 2026-03-11. Retrieved 2024-05-18.
14. [2]
15. Buckley, Cara (2008-07-05). "Talk of Isolation and Expectations Follows a Young Model's Death in New York" (<https://web.archive.org/web/20180106062758/https://www.nytimes.com/2008/07/05/nyregion/05models.html>). *The New York Times*. ISSN 0362-4331 (<https://search.worldcat.org/issn/0362-4331>). Archived from the original (<https://www.nytimes.com/2008/07/05/nyregion/05models.html>) on 2018-01-06. Retrieved 2024-06-20.
16. "Disconcerting New Answers In Model's Suicide - Newsweek" (<https://web.archive.org/web/20110522070111/http://www.newsweek.com/2011/05/01/the-lost-girl.html>). *Newsweek*. Archived from the original (<http://www.newsweek.com/2011/05/01/the-lost-girl.html>) on May 22, 2011. Retrieved May 2, 2026.
17. "Rumor: Russian Model Was Killed for Her Hair" (<https://www.nbcnewyork.com/local/was-russian-model-killed-for-her-hair/2125600/>). *NBC New York*. 23 September 2009. Retrieved 20 July 2026.
18. "Kazah Model Ruslana Korshunova Dies In Apparent Suicide" (https://web.archive.org/web/20090624131546/http://www.efluxmedia.com/news_Kazah_Model_Ruslana_Korshunova_Dies_In_Apparent_Suicide_19654.html). 2008-06-29. Archived from the original (http://www.efluxmedia.com/news_Kazah_Model_Ruslana_Korshunova_Dies_In_Apparent_Suicide_19654.html) on 2009-06-24. Retrieved 2008-06-29.
19. Osborne, David. "Death of a supermodel" (<https://web.archive.org/web/20250906013338/https://www.the-independent.com/life-style/fashion/features/death-of-a-supermodel-856895.html>). *independent.co.uk*. The Independent. Archived from the original (<https://www.independent.co.uk/life-style/fashion/features/death-of-a-supermodel-856895.html>) on 2025-09-06. Retrieved 16 February 2026.
20. Sheremetova, Elena (2008-07-07). "Ruslana Korshunova buried at Khovanskoye Cemetery in Moscow" (<https://web.archive.org/web/20251003235114/https://www.msk.kp.ru/daily/24125.5/347037/>) (in Russian). Moscow: Komsomolskaya Pravda. Archived from the original (<http://www.kp.ru/daily/24125.5/347037/>) on 2025-10-03. Retrieved 2008-07-21. "Как мы уже рассказывали, поначалу предполагалось, что модель похоронят на Митинском кладбище – этот вопрос обсуждался еще в Америке во время прощания с Русланой. Однако уже в Москве все "перерешили" – место для могилы «Русской русалки» выбрали на Хованском кладбище."
21. "Russian model Ruslana Korshunova died because of 500,000-dollar lawsuit" (https://web.archive.org/web/20260218025727/https://english.pravda.ru/society/105743-ruslana_korshunova/). Pravda.ru. 2009-01-20. Archived from the original (<http://english.pravda.ru/society/stories/105743-0/>) on 2026-02-18. Retrieved 2008-07-09.
22. Belenkaya, Veronika; Oren Yaniv (2008-07-06). "Model Ruslana Korshunova will be buried in Moscow Monday" (https://web.archive.org/web/20080716071323/https://www.nydailynews.com/news/us_world/2008/07/06/2008-07-06_model_ruslana_korshunova_will_be_buried_.html). *Daily News*. New York. Archived from the original (http://www.nydailynews.com/news/us_world/2008/07/06/2008-07-06_model_ruslana_korshunova_will_be_buried_.html) on 2008-07-16. Retrieved 2008-07-07.
23. "Heartbreak drove Kazakh supermodel to suicide" (<http://entertainment.oneindia.in/hollywood/top-stories/scoop/2008/ruslana-heartbreak-caused-suicide-040708.html>). India: Oneindia. 2008-07-05. Retrieved 2008-07-04.
24. "Top model, 20, died by suicide two years after visiting Jeffrey Epstein's island" (<https://web.archive.org/web/20260311110037/https://www.indiatoday.in/world/story/ruslana-korshunova-model-jeffrey-epstein-island-sex-offence-suicide-court-documents-2485115-2024-01-06>). India Today. 6 January 2024. Archived from the original (<https://www.indiatoday.in/world/story/ruslana-korshunova-model-jeffrey-epstein-island-sex-offence-suicide-court-documents-2485115-2024-01-06>) on 2026-03-11.
25. Helmore, Edward (5 January 2024). "A-list names in Epstein documents cache but what prospect of charges?" (<https://web.archive.org/web/20260311110041/https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2024/jan/05/jeffrey-epstein-list-documents-will-there-be-new-charges>). *the guardian*. Archived from the original (<https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2024/jan/05/jeffrey-epstein-list-documents-will-there-be-new-charges>) on 2026-03-11.

26. "July 2010 email from Jeffrey Epstein mentioning Ruslana Korshunova" (<https://web.archive.org/web/20260403011056/https://www.justice.gov/epstein/files/DataSet%2011/EFTA02531295.pdf>) (PDF). *justice.gov*. U.S. Department of Justice. Archived from the original (<https://www.justice.gov/epstein/files/DataSet%2011/EFTA02531295.pdf>) (PDF) on 2026-04-03. Retrieved 2 February 2026.
27. "August 2011 email to Epstein regarding Korshunova agency payment. No recorded response from Epstein appears in the released materials" (<https://web.archive.org/web/20260403011840/https://www.justice.gov/epstein/files/DataSet%209/EFTA00916443.pdf>) (PDF). *justice.gov*. U.S. Department of Justice. Archived from the original (<https://www.justice.gov/epstein/files/DataSet%209/EFTA00916443.pdf>) (PDF) on 2026-04-03. Retrieved 2 February 2026.
28. "Image containing quote attributed to Ruslana Korshunova" (<https://web.archive.org/web/20260403010137/https://www.justice.gov/epstein/files/DataSet%2010/EFTA01609783.pdf>) (PDF). *justice.gov*. U.S. Department of Justice. Archived from the original (<https://www.justice.gov/epstein/files/DataSet%2010/EFTA01609783.pdf>) (PDF) on 2026-04-03. Retrieved 2 February 2026.
29. "Email between Jeffery Epstein and unknown recipient" (<https://web.archive.org/web/20260403014622/https://www.justice.gov/epstein/files/DataSet%209/EFTA00901581.pdf>) (PDF). *justice.gov*. U.S. Department of Justice. Archived from the original (<https://www.justice.gov/epstein/files/DataSet%209/EFTA00901581.pdf>) (PDF) on 2026-04-03. Retrieved 2 February 2026.
30. Edwards, Tim. "Models' suicides blamed on return of 1970s US cult" (<https://web.archive.org/web/20260201212004/https://theweek.com/people-news/5773/models-suicides-blamed-return-1970s-us-cult>). *theweek.com*. The Week. Archived from the original (<https://theweek.com/people-news/5773/models-suicides-blamed-return-1970s-us-cult>) on 2026-02-01. Retrieved 16 February 2026.
31. Pomerantsev, Peter (2011-05-01). "The Lost Girl" (<https://web.archive.org/web/20260328043913/https://www.newsweek.com/disconcerting-new-answers-models-suicide-67659>). *Newsweek*. Archived from the original (<http://www.newsweek.com/2011/05/01/the-lost-girl.html>) on 2026-03-28. Retrieved 2011-05-21.

External links

- Ruslana Korshunova (https://www.fashionmodeldirectory.com/models/ruslana_korshunova/) at *Fashion Model Directory*
 - Ruslana Korshunova's death Killed under unexplained circumstances (<http://www.chicagotribune.com/entertainment/chi-ruslana-korshunova-080630-ht,0,5643244.story>)
 - Ruslana Korshunova (<https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/31842902>) at *Find a Grave*
 - USA Top Model 2008 (<https://www.usatopmodel.com/2008-USA-Top-Model-Ruslana-Korshunova.htm>)
-

Retrieved from "https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Ruslana_Korshunova&oldid=1365118149"