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Forest

detective in 33 audio recordings

CHARACTERS:

Sally

Investigator

Maria

Alex

Klaus

Lina

Philipp

Sign language interpreter

Dovecote owner

Recording №1

INVESTIGATOR. They were showing an old TV series yesterday, where the investigator was always carrying a tape recorder, so I decided to record my thoughts too. I always forget to write things down, and I keep losing all those notebooks — so much for investigative secrecy. So, I decided to do it by voice.

It's six thirty-five, Friday, September 11. The morning started off with a bang: a pensioner cut off his neighbor's finger because he didn't pay back a debt. I was questioning the victim while they were sewing his finger back on. Then it was paperwork — spent half the day writing indictments. An hour ago, a woman, Maria Virtanen, born in '64, came in with a report about her missing daughter. We opened a search. Her daughter, Sally Virtanen, 21 years old, a student at Kokkola University, is missing. According to the records, she's clean, no priors. She hasn't been home for three days, her mom says. She's not a marginal type, studies well. It's unclear why the report wasn't filed immediately.

She'll probably turn up in a couple of days, once she runs out of money. According to statistics, at this age, 97% return on their own within a week. It's a common case. Forensic expert Otto thinks it's all because of the planetary alignment that happened last week. He says all crazies depend on the movement of celestial bodies. I told him, "Otto, you deal with serious things, and you believe in that nonsense?"

Almost forgot, right after the woman, a man called the department. He was walking his dog in the forest near the University. He was cleaning up after the dog and found a phone. He said he just wanted to post an announcement, thinking someone lost it. But he decided to call us. People watch too many TV shows and start calling about every little thing. He'll bring the phone in tomorrow. We've still got, pardon me, a shawm from last year. Someone brought it in from the forest just like that. It's still here. Sometimes I play it when no one wants to work. Not a department, but a lost and found office.

Recording №2

INVESTIGATOR. One o'clock in the afternoon, Saturday, September 12. We just got back from the forest. We examined the clearing where the man found the phone. We handed it over to the technical department; they extracted all the info and unlocked it. It turned out that the phone belonged to that girl, Sally Virtanen. There were some photos: selfies, some strange landscapes, nothing special, just typical girly stuff. And a few audio recordings.

Recording №3

FEMALE VOICE. I left for work, Sally was still asleep. I work at Kokkola plant, my shift starts exactly at half-past eight, so I'm always the first to wake up. I woke her up so she wouldn't oversleep. She grumbled at me, saying that they had their first class at 11 AM today and asked to let her sleep. And that was it. She didn't come back in the evening. Alex and I had dinner together. Well, Sally usually doesn't sit at the table with him anyway, she takes her food to her room, but still. She didn't take her phone. At eight, I called Lina, her bestie; they study together. Lina said they had four classes on their schedule, and Sally supposedly went home. But then she realized and said that Sally might have met with Professor Ivaska to work on a paper. It's kind of strange — who writes a paper at eight in the evening? I called Klaus, her boyfriend. We have a strained relationship, I never call him unless something happens. He didn't pick up. I couldn't get through to the institute either. Alex, my common-law husband, suggested I call the phone carrier, but they said they don't provide call records for adults.

I didn't sleep all night, hoping she would come back by morning. In the morning, I wanted to go file a report, but Alex said they only accept them after three days. (*Pauses.*) What, is that not right? Are the rules different now? Alex told me he was sure. She has asthma, you understand. She can't be without her inhaler. She took only one with her, it lasts for three days, you understand? And it's already the fourth day.

Recording №4

INVESTIGATOR. 11 AM, Sunday, September 13. I had a nightmare. The mother of that girl, whose things we found, was turning into a bird. Her skin was peeling off, and feathers were growing. Total nonsense. Yesterday, when she was giving her statement, I noticed a bruise on her chin covered with powder. But for some reason, I didn't ask about it. We put up posters around the city. Today, we'll be questioning the friend.

Recording №5

FEMALE VOICE. Sally and I have been together since childhood. First in the same kindergarten, then in school. We even hung out together at her grandmother's place during the summer. Then we decided to go to the same University just for fun.

The last time I saw her was at Uni. On Tuesday. Actually, on Monday. I wasn't at the classes on Tuesday. I had things to do. I had to go... take care of some family matters. Yes, I told our dean that we were together at the classes on Tuesday. Well, it's not a lie, it's different. How could I know why she was calling and what's going on with her and her mother? They have... a complicated relationship. I said that to cover for Sally, just in case. I heard from our classmates that she really was at Uni that day. By the way, Sally didn't even message me, didn't ask if I was sick or dying. Well, I didn't message her either, we were supposed to meet on Wednesday anyway. But she wasn't there on Wednesday.

She'd been acting very strange for the past couple of weeks. Closed off, making jokes that were kind of sarcastic. We started talking less. It wasn't on purpose, like we had a fight or I was mad at her or something. It was mutual. I love Sally and always have. I guess it happens sometimes, you know, when people's interests diverge for a while. Other than that, I have no idea what it's about.

Recording №6

INVESTIGATOR. 11 AM, Sunday, September 13. I listened to the audio recordings from the phone. It scares me how similar I am to this girl. She also kept an audio diary. She probably never thought some stranger would be listening to all this.

Recording №7

SALLY. Great! I decided to call Klaus in the army through an officer. Turns out he's on leave. Great, right? My boyfriend is on leave, and I'm waiting for him from the army. Suffering, damn it, listening to romantic songs all alone. So I decided to surprise him. Went to see him on the right bank. Bought flowers just for fun. Always wanted to give a guy flowers, breaking stereotypes. I arrived, and there he was, kissing Lina under his window. They looked so sweet together. Looked great together. I didn't say anything, climbed up a little tower on the playground, and watched them from there. They didn't even notice. Decided not to tell them I know. Just curious how they'll get out of this. Best of luck to them, as my grandma used to say.

Recording №8

MALE VOICE. I'm from Kotka. I don't understand your.. northern atmosphere. If my son had left home like this... Yes, I have a son from my first marriage. We rarely see each other; he lives in the south. But I raised him to never leave home.

Sally and I got along fine; I did a lot for her. I won't list everything now, but I always responded normally when she asked for something. You understand, growing up without a father leaves its mark on a person. Maria has some complicated history with Sally's father; well, if she needs to, she will tell.

We had our own relationship problems too. I didn't approve of her boyfriend. I'm an old-fashioned man, served as a bosun for ten years, you see. I have my own principles. And this Klaus, he has no principles. Very shady character. Excuse me, a total mess. Didn't even shake my hand when he came over. Smelled like weed, eyes red. I told Sally right then that he wasn't right for her. She flared up, saying, "You're not my real father to tell me what to do." Sally always brings this up when something doesn't go her way. Well, that's also Maria's upbringing. She's too soft, allows too much as she's an only daughter.

Sally and Maria had a serious fight last week. Sally wanted to find out something about her father, but Maria didn't want to tell. Well, why does a child need to know? A father is the one who raised you, not the one who sired you. That man is a scoundrel, and meeting him wouldn't change anything. And Maria doesn't keep track of him; her personal life is fine, as you can see, no need to dwell on the past.

I was at home on Tuesday. I don't work officially. I handle all the housework. Went to the garage in the evening to look for tools; our pipe was leaking. No, we don't have a car, the garage is from Maria's father. Well, I don't meddle in their affairs. I think Sally is staying at a friend's place; we need to ask Klaus.

Recording №9

INVESTIGATOR. Tuesday, September 15. Talked to Alex, Sally's stepfather, today. Lying bastard. Never worked as a bosun, we checked his documents. Seems he never worked anywhere. Maria supports him. Power went out at the station today, out of nowhere. We sat in the dark. I noticed I think better in the dark.

Recording №10

MOTHER. I didn't tell you right away why we had a fight the day before. She asked about her father again. I raised Sally alone until she was a teenager, only then did Alex come into my life. I told her not to bring up that topic again because it's very painful for me. I erased that person from my life because he

treated me very badly. He convinced me to have the baby, said he would help, and then disappeared three months into the pregnancy after borrowing money from me. I was left alone with a newborn. And I believe it's my right not to tell her anything. What would I even tell her?

Recording №11

SALLY. I found an old photo in the attic; I'm very small, in the arms of some man. He has my nose. Or vice versa. The back reads: 2003, Tikhon and Maria. So, mom is lying. Looks like everyone in this town has betrayed me. I went to the forest. Started screaming. Thought I was alone there. I think I made a friend. I told him about the photo and about Alex. He definitely won't tell anyone. Sometimes I wish they would all disappear. But they won't. It's easier to disappear myself.

Recording №12

INVESTIGATOR. Wednesday, September 16. We just got back from the forest. We took Fortuna, our German Shepherd, to search the entire area. At first, she was just running in circles, then she stopped by a tree and uncovered an inhaler. The mother identified it. I don't like where this is going.

We called her boyfriend from the unit; I'll be talking to him the day after tomorrow. I can't figure out who this friend Sally mentioned in the recording is.

We don't understand our kids at all, what do they live for? What do we live for? Everyone's in their own world. What am I to my daughter? A weekend dad. Dad this, dad that, dad the phone is broken. She lives with her mother and consults her on girl stuff. But to me, she sends a heart emoji on WhatsApp and a thank you. God forbid, of course.

Recording №13

KLAUS. I was on duty; Sally hadn't been in touch for three days. She'd been acting strange all week, hysterical over nothing, like "you don't love me," out of the blue. I thought, okay, she's not calling, fine. Yesterday, Lina called me at the unit. Said we needed to meet. I said: how? She said she was standing near the unit, to come out. I went to the sergeant, promised him a crate of beer to let me out, said it was important. He agreed. When I came out, I saw Lina standing there. It was like... When they took my cat for surgery, and the vet came out, I immediately knew the cat had died. She told me they found Sally's things. Most importantly, the inhaler. And she never went anywhere without it.

Sally was normal, sensible, but sometimes did very strange things. Once, she called me in the middle of the night, drunk as hell, saying to come to a café called "Breeze." Then the call dropped. What "Breeze"? I googled it; it's 5 kilometers out of town. Took a taxi there, and she was partying with the gypsies, singing karaoke to "The Winner Takes It All" I barely got her out of there. She still wanted to finish the song. She couldn't explain how she ended up there, even in the morning. I told her: you listen to indie, you have sophisticated tastes, what's this? She said something weird, like "there are several personalities in each of us." I replied: I'd prefer never to meet that personality again.

Her relationship with Alex was... What can you have with someone living off your mother? And he could easily slap her around, being the "man of the house." Sally said he once made her mom rewash all the dishes because she missed a spot on one plate. Just to show who's boss. And she did it. Sally said her mom yelled at her for following Alex's orders like a trained dog. He never hit Sally. She'd tell him straight: "I'll go to court if you do." Just words, but they worked. There was another nasty story. Alex is registered at her mom's place. When her mom was away on business, he tried to convince her to give him power of attorney over all the property — grandma's summer house, the apartment. Saying he might need to rent out a room if something happened. She almost signed it. Sally saw the papers and threw a fit. Said she'd leave home if her mom signed it. Her mom cooled off on the idea, but Alex has hated Sally since. He glares at her, takes revenge in small ways, and tells on her to her mother whenever he can.

What else can I say? She loved the forest. Whenever something was wrong, she went to the woods.

Recording №14

INVESTIGATOR. Talked to the missing girl's boyfriend. I don't understand, aren't there enough young men in the world? Sally is pretty, you can see that from the pics. Her eyes are lively. Why him? Maybe it's youth, but more likely it's his life stance. Goes wherever invited, doesn't refuse anything. Drifts along. I don't think he started the affair with the friend. Just didn't resist. Doubt he's hiding anything... He didn't even notice his girlfriend knew about his cheating. I can't understand why she didn't break up with him? No long-term habits, not ten years of marriage, no joint obligations. Competition with Lina? I didn't see jealousy, more like pain. Seems like unhealthy curiosity—how long will it last? How long will their conscience hold out? But what does this have to do with her disappearance? It annoys me how obsessed I am with this story. Just relationships, nothing unusual, when you strip it down. Called in the philosopher, Philipp Ivaska. Her mother mentioned him from the start. Oh, right, almost forgot. Today is Friday, September 18.

Recording №15

PHILIPP. Third year, rather weak group. No, I haven't been teaching here long, not even a year. I used to be at UH, but it didn't work out... (*pauses*) the schedule was inconvenient... I don't even know how I can help you. Yes, I teach this group. Two classes a week, a lecture and a seminar. Sally. I remember her. Of course, I do. Sally stands out among the others. Quiet, responsible. But she has been slipping a bit in the past couple of months. I mean her interest in the subject, some sort of... concentration. Or maybe it's her friend affecting her. Lina. Koskinen, I think. Always tagging along. Quite an ordinary girl. But you can tell she's into parties and hangouts. Maybe it's some kind of influence.

The last time I saw her... Saturday, at the seminar. Sally was writing a paper on Berkeley. Do you know who Berkeley is? Well, of course, everyone only knows

Nietzsche and Kant. But he was a great man. I was happy she chose him because students usually pick something easy to download from the internet.

Berkeley was the founder of subjective idealism, with a very interesting life. He was a bishop from Kilkenny, a place in Ireland. They killed Kenny, you know the joke? Seriously? And a beer brand? It's a very famous beer! *(pauses)* I'm not a drinker, but everyone knows that beer. Well, a lot of people. So, Berkeley claimed that to exist is to be perceived. He had a favorite example with a fly. Say, here's a fly, I see and hear it. But what happens when I leave the room? How can I be sure it's still there if I don't perceive it? The fly exists only as long as someone perceives it. So, when I'm not in the room, there's no fly, no room. Or they exist because someone else is perceiving them. By "someone else," Berkeley meant God. That's what Sally was writing about. And now I'm telling you about the last time I perceived her. It's funny, you see? *(pauses)*

There was a strange story with Berkeley too. He once decided to establish a university in the Bermuda Islands to educate wild Indians. Some aristocrat funded his trip, and even the parliament supported the idea. But something went wrong, and the ship got lost in the Bermuda Triangle. Everyone thought it was wrecked, but he returned a month later as if nothing had happened. How did they drift for a month, how did they survive? When he got home, he couldn't get more funding; they told him they spent it on other projects while mourning him. What happened in the Sargasso Sea? Nobody knows.

No, I didn't meet her outside the university. I keep my professional and personal life separate. Students will take advantage if you offer friendship. It's out of the question. Though Sally did add me on social media once. I don't like it when people do that. Who knows what I write there? It's not public. I added her back, out of politeness. *(pauses)* I think maybe Sally will just return in a month? Like Berkeley?

Recording №16

INVESTIGATOR. Bring me a decent coffee, from the coffee shop near that... the one near Lidl. I can't drink this crap anymore. Thanks. Close the door. Damn, is the recording on? Sorry, continue.

LINA. So, about the side job. I was saving up for a snowboard, and she wanted to go to St. Petersburg, she'd never been anywhere beyond Helsinki. So, we found a job listing on some site. The ad was pretty vague, some sort of event, either a seminar or something else. It was written in a funny way, and we laughed because they needed "auxiliary staff." Girls, presentable appearance, under 25. But don't get the wrong idea — they said strictly no intimacy or anything like that. They took us to some building that looked industrial from the outside. Inside, it was more like a loft. There were symbols on the walls — triangles, eyes. They took our phones so we couldn't take any pictures. There were no women there at all, which was unsettling at first. Nothing really happened, but it was weird why all these people were gathered there. Our job was to help with the banquet, carry things, make small talk. We weren't allowed to talk about sports or politics, or mention any personal details, just standard etiquette rules. At some point, a guy took Sally away, and she was gone for at least half an hour. I started looking for her and then Phil came out of a room — our philosophy teacher. I was so shocked I couldn't even say hi, and he pretended not to recognize me. Later, Sally came out of the same room. I asked her if she was in there with him, but she said I must've imagined it and that there was no Philipp Ivaska. But I'm sure it was him. I tried to get her to tell me what happened, but she wouldn't say anything and was quiet the rest of the evening.

Recording №17

INVESTIGATOR. Saturday, September 19th. Their self-preservation instinct is completely absent. What were they thinking, going off to earn money like that? Some sort of secret supper, for crying out loud... Who are these people? Can't track them through the database, and the teacher denies everything. When I needed money at their age, I distributed flyers. That guy, too, acting all philosophical... I can see in his eyes what he wanted from her, and it definitely wasn't an essay. But I don't see a murderer here, no evidence, nothing, just a gut feeling. They all seem so dumb and indifferent, but you can't jail someone for that.

Recording №18

LINA. I want to tell you something else. Maybe it's important. Please don't tell Sally's mum — she wouldn't understand. On Tuesday, when Sally disappeared... I wasn't at class. I was with Klaus. Well... you know (*crying*). Sally didn't know. At least I didn't tell her. Klaus didn't either. I don't know how it happened. It just... happened. I liked him from the start. I didn't want to hurt her. We just talked and decided not to tell her. We thought it would only be once. But we're drawn to each other, you understand? It's something you can't control, like when you get into someone's energy field. What if this is because of us? Did I do something bad? Do you judge me? But people aren't property! I love her and I love him. Did I kill her, then? (*crying, sniffing*). Yeah, thanks. (*Drinks water*). Klaus will kill me for telling you.

Recording №19

SALLY. Turns out pigeons have better memories than we do. That's why they were always used as messenger birds. Better to be a pigeon than a person.

Recording №20

INVESTIGATOR. Friday, September 19th. Started doing door-to-door rounds. Nothing. No one wants to talk, everyone just peeks through the peephole or has the chain on the door. Half of them don't even remember Sally at all. People live on the same landing for twenty years and don't notice each other. In some sense, we're all already lost. One lead—a guy from apartment 43 said we should check out the weirdo with the pigeon loft. It's in the woods next to a residential building. I thought it was abandoned, but there's a guy there, a caretaker. He inherited the loft from his father; it's been in their family for generations—his great-grandfather built it. He had a whole flock of pigeons. Had. He says they all died. He lists their names. We found a black backpack in the loft. The mother identified it. The backpack was empty and, how to put

this... covered in pigeon crap. The guy won't say anything—he's mute. We took his prints, photographed him. Brought in a translator. He's spouting some nonsense. We searched the place. Found a photo of the missing girl with a pigeon. On the back, in her handwriting, it says, "Sparrows are the children of pigeons." There were some weird books, "A Guide to the Healing Properties of Herbs and Trees," "Magical Rituals of Northern Peoples." He's saying something about a transition. At first, I thought he meant a crosswalk, but the translator explained he meant something else. We'll take him for a psychological evaluation tomorrow.

Recording №21

SALLY. Today, I looked at myself in the mirror and realized I've grown up. My eyes have aged. I don't know how to explain — it's not about age. I can't write everything down; some things you shouldn't even say out loud to yourself. Because, as we know, there's always someone watching you (*laughs*).

Recording №22

FEMALE VOICE. Luna, Hector, Hammer, Violet, Lynx, February, Reed, Shakespeare, Snow, Oatmeal, Tercia.

INVESTIGATOR. Wait, wait. Is that exactly what he's saying?

FEMALE VOICE. Yes.

INVESTIGATOR. Did he really manage to sign all of this?

FEMALE VOICE. I'm translating it as it is.

INVESTIGATOR. Alright, go on. Just without any interpretations.

FEMALE VOICE. The pigeons always recognized Sally when she came. You know, they have such good memories! She came when something happened to her. She had a friendship with Hector. He was a tumbler pigeon, doing all these backflips! He danced for her! Pigeons don't dance for just anyone. When she

came, Hector would land immediately. We had a joke: "Sparrows are the children of pigeons." She was a friend. A human friend. I've always only been with the pigeons; people don't like me. The night she disappeared, they all died. Every one of them. I came to them Wednesday morning to feed them. The cage was open. They were all lying there like little figures. Some inside, some nearby. Cold. Foam at their beaks. I thought it was the janitor from the neighboring yard — he didn't like me or the pigeons. Said they made a mess, and he had to clean it up. Then I noticed a white dove flying around. Almost like Violet, but with a crest. It pooped on me and flew away. Very strange. I once told Sally the family legend. Passed down from my father, who got it from his father, and so on. My great-grandfather saw it himself. In this forest, every 60-70 years, when the planets align, there's a transition. A human turns into a pigeon. I thought it was a fairy tale. Supposedly, only a girl can turn into a dove, not a guy. At midnight, during the planetary alignment, she has to come to the forest and recite the transition ritual. My father told me because the transition was supposed to happen in my time. The words go like this: "I, a servant of God, crossed myself and went from one forest to another, from one door to another, from one gate to another, from a girl to a dove. Came from sorrow, from grief, from a dear life. No rustling, no crumpling, no dog barking, no pigeon flock. As my life is dear and sweet to me, so to you, dove, will be dear my life. The dove does not build a nest, the girl does not braid her hair. The words I did not finish, go ahead of me, the words I did not finish, you will finish. Protect the human race, peck my memory bit by bit. The girl is on her way, the Lord is ahead. Amen, amen, amen." The transition is so strong that it bursts the eardrums of the other pigeons, and they die. My father said the transition is necessary for pigeons to keep the memory of the human race. That pigeons watch over people like guardian angels. That no other bird lives on every continent alongside us. And the new dove must start a new flock elsewhere, but then they'll return here, to the forest. And it will all happen again. The ritual was written on a scrap of paper and kept in the pigeon loft, under the straw. I told Sally about it as a joke. She asked for the spell. I gave it to her, as a joke—she likes unusual things. Then, when the birds died, I saw the missing person flyer with Sally's photo. And I understood. If I had known it wasn't just a fairy tale, I wouldn't have told her. She was my only human friend.

Recording №23

IINVESTIGATOR. Wednesday, September 23rd. Got a clipping from "Keskipohjanmaa" newspaper dated 1949, mentioning the mysterious death of all birds in the dovecote on October 14th. Feels like someone's messing with me. I went to the archive and requested the criminal case from '49. Turns out a girl went missing in the woods in October, they put out a search for her. The more I think about this case, the more I feel like I'm losing it. We let the kid go, we've got nothing on him. Today, we went out to another crime scene: a brother beat up his sister over an inheritance. Finally, a normal case.

Recording №24

MARIA. Sometimes I go into her room and turn on her nightlight. She got it for her birthday, it has stars and planets, and it rotates, projecting them on the walls. I just sit there and watch the stars. I can sit there for an hour.

Recording №25

ALEX. I watched a report on killer plants yesterday. Yeah, hogweed is a known menace, but turns out there are so many more. Azaleas, daffodils, even some kind of maple that destroys everything in its path. I think they brought it from America, the parasite. They also talked about mistletoe. In America, they make Christmas wreaths out of it. This woman gave one to her sister, and her dog chewed on it and died. Can you believe it? I told Maria, "Look, Mari, see how it happens." She wasn't interested. Not interested at all. So I asked, "What are you interested in, Mari?" She just kept silent.

Recording №26

KLAUS. Sally loved asking random, weird questions. Like, how would you want to die? How do birds see the world? What do real aliens look like? Would you rather have invisibility or mind-reading as a superpower? No one asks me weird

questions like that anymore. It's like I start asking myself these questions, like I'm interviewing myself as Sally. It's the weirdest feeling.

Recording №27

LINA. I picked up a cat off the street yesterday, a white one. Klaus gets annoyed that I'm always talking about the cat. I don't know, it feels nice to have someone to care for. She's so cute, has a black spot on her tail. I named her Xena. Like "Xena — Warrior Princess." Alex said, "But she's white. And Xena was a brunette." I said, "Who cares, things in life never fully match up."

Recording №28

MARIA. When I first judge someone, I always look at their shoes. Are they clean or dirty, new, colorful, sneakers or boots, whatever. It's probably because I'm afraid to look people in the eye. It's easier to talk to shoes than to a person.

Recording №29

KLAUS. I ran into an old classmate at the bus stop the other day. We were both waiting for the bus, and of course, it took forever to come. Out of the blue, she told me she had a crush on me throughout school. From first grade. I had no idea. Now she has a boyfriend in Helsinki and everything's great. I had no clue. Didn't notice at all. It kind of hurt, knowing this only after she stopped liking me.

Recording №30

ALEX. Mom always put a bay leaf in the soup. It was believed if you got it, you'd have a happy meeting.

Recording №31

INVESTIGATOR. Thursday, October 8th. Thought I should start writing down my thoughts here, not just work stuff. Like I have no life outside of cases. I was cutting meat yesterday, cut my finger. Made me think of my grandma. On my mom's side. Her name was Abigail. Villagers would come to her when a kid got sick or a cow or something. She knew all kinds of sayings and spells. It helped some people, "placebo effect" I guess. Anyway, I cut my finger and remembered this one incantation: "As the sky is white, as the wound is white, let the blood of God's servant Matti not flow." I said it, and it seemed like the blood clotted faster.

Recording №32

SALLY. I used to think the scariest thing was betrayal. Scarier than any chupacabra, alien, or even a disease. When you can't tell your mom anything because you don't know what she'll do, when you don't trust your boyfriend or your friend. Then you realize it's something inside, like a loss of voice. I noticed I started speaking quieter. I can only speak loudly in the forest. (*Laughs*). At first, I thought it was just asthma worsened by nerves, but then I realized it only happens around people. Like my existence depends on other people's mistakes. I can't be loud when everything around me is wrong. And I decided this myself! No one forced me. I realized this while picking up the newspaper from the mailbox, and it had another story about some maniac in Kokkola. There are always crimes or weird things happening in the forest. Since the times of Robin Hood and Little Red Riding Hood. But the trees keep standing. They don't get worse because of it, their species doesn't change, their bark doesn't degrade. They're free from other people's crimes. And that's a really great feeling. I had that feeling. Like when you walk past a construction site, but you're listening to "Agent Cooper" on your headphones, and you feel good, you can't hear the construction noise and you wish everyone could hear your music. Like when I met this cool guy on the tram, he had a temporary tiger tattoo his little sister put on and pink nails, also his sister's doing. I liked that he didn't remove it, didn't care if people thought he was gay or whatever. I didn't know his name, and he didn't know mine, but we sat at the back and played a

game, guessing where other passengers were headed. Or with Klaus, when we first met, he was renting this super cheap apartment in the middle of nowhere on the right bank. His neighbors flooded him, and there was this huge ugly yellow stain. No money to buy paint or fix it. Every evening, we tried to see something in that stain, like you do with clouds. A dinosaur, Red Riding Hood making out with the wolf, a bird with an iPhone in its beak, just some guy's face... It was great.

Recording №33

INVESTIGATOR. Maybe she really did turn into a dove? (*Laughs*) Or is it my professional helplessness? My first cold case that I don't want to touch. Screw the checkbox. I'm just afraid the body will show up. It's easier for the relatives, of course. People need closure, they hate uncertainty. No, let her fly, damn it... I'll have to delete these notes, someone might find them and think I've completely lost my mind.