

The Answering Machine

A theatre text by Finn Iunker

And. A few examples. Or suggestions. For you. You have entered. And I. And they? Connections. Possibilities. Fare well. You see? You offer. I was mostly looking at the person beside you. That way. In the corner of my eye. I could see you. And you not me. But you could sense me. My eyes. Like animals sense. As an offer. Strange. Parted. Clean up your mess and do something else. Beware. You might hurt. And you may leave. Anywhere? You connect your negations as possibilities if you must. Really? Sure. Sheffer stroke and then he ran. Unoffered. And then. What. They. They offer. They must have been foreigners. Strangers. They talked about peace. That's right. About peace. They wanted peace. Because they were tired of war. That's. What they said. And then. They just repeated it. Yes. That's right. We want peace. Because we are tired of war. They spoke. Of nothing else. Foreigners. Strangers. But all this is of course. Only examples. And we know where they come from. Where we got them. We have known that for a long time. Time. Small movements with your eyes. In time. Your wrinkles under them. Of time. Movements. Blinks. When you're talking. Computable. Personal experience. Material. Wrinkles. Lines. Tracks. The lines in your hand. Here is the rumour. Here. The tentacles. Here. The palmist. Change. Your hand. Moist. Your palm. The sweat. Your need to

define. The sweat. In your palm. After you've performed. A dishonest handshake. Always a need to define. Modifying anything. You are not here to report. Nor to look into the cards. Of the palmist. In time. You are not here. To report. The sweat. Carries you back. Carrying records and registers moving forward and end. Computable. Adds up. And then. Not. And again. Not. And then. Personal stories. That you've been given. Summing up. Drawing lines. Your hand. And then. Rest. It's your hand. Your move. You may move. Leave. Insolvent. There is a way in which this makes sense. To me. Here. Now. This is the closest. You may move. Anywhere. Leave. It's your move. You may move. Leave. Anywhere. At last I reach Tallin. It could have been a lot worse. I'm glad it wasn't. The first day I stay on board because I feel unwell. Perhaps the food. I don't know. The next day I somehow manage to escape from the group. I'm glad they don't count us all the time. Or perhaps that's not so good. It's hard to say, really. But I don't think they care. I wander around in the city, a little girl with dirty hands wants me to buy a dragon made of paper. Well, I didn't like it. I see that now. I try to get her to tell me the way up to the tower, but she speaks only Russian or whatever it is. The façades up by the tower have some resemblance to the buildings on the old square in Prague, I've been told. I don't know, I've never been to Prague. I sneak into a group of about ten, and I understand that they are Germans. I tell a young woman that I am in fact a

scientist. Angewandte Mathematik, I say, in German, to make her listen. She smiles. She tells me that her name is Schwenke and that she comes from Lübeck. Then she laughs. She believes that I believe what she tells me. I can understand that. I join them for a little ride in their mini-bus, she has her arm around my shoulder, she tells me that I have a friendly face, that I look kind. I position my head by her breasts. That way I can hear her heart beating. It sounds as if it's operating just fine, a quite calm and normal beat. And I suddenly start thinking about the future, about my financial transactions, about all the troubles in the world, that I will never understand anything fully perhaps, that everything is just a big joke. Huge things are happening in the world. Every day. And I'm too lazy to find out what it all is. Though sometimes all data seem to point in only one direction, like they were the same possibilities. Suddenly everything seems to connect, and when I rush, it's all gone. That's perhaps why I've chosen to be lazy. And then. The bus stops. We are down by the harbour. Isn't it here that you want to get off, Schwenke says. I can see the ship with all its neon lights. So calm. On my way out the driver touches me on my elbow, as if no-one should notice it, as if he was trying to tell me something. All the talks I've had with women who will never learn to love me. And then. Relate. You are not here. To. Enter diagram. Enter dots. You move. Enter lines. You move from Kassel to Hannover to Lüneberg to Schwerin.

You should have started in Schwerin. To Neubrandenburg to Schwedt down to Cottbus. Not here. Relate. To. Look. Your hand. Moves. Moist. To Dresden. To Karlovy Vary. You could have gone to Prague. You are close now. Straight down to Augsburg. You should move in straight lines. To Friedrichshafen. To Konstanz. You may rest now. You are tired. No. The decision is yours. Curves entered. Rearrange the dots and then draw the lines. The heart. Pumping. Stops when you sneeze. As if your death was your longest sneeze ever. The ultimate hay fever. The longest. Burning. Your eyes. And you sneeze and you sneeze and you keep wanting rain. Mist. Keeping the air wet and the streets dry. Unhosed. Or drizzling. And your eyes no longer burning. Now you are happy. Remember never to put a flower to your nose. Remember never to play football on grass. And if you do, you will remember not to. Your longest sneeze will come as a benefiting change in your curves. Not as an offer. Close to become one. You know you are a stranger in these curves. And yet you should have started in Schwerin. That is where you come from. Or they. Enter disjunction. Enter possibility. Doubt. I. Personal stories. Given to you. Look at your lines. Your hand. The map. And you want to rest. To sleep. You may rest now. Rest? Why? I. Again I. I'm standing in the center of someone else's perimeter. Someone that I don't know. But he knows me. Or is it a she. It is not always easy. No. Enter decision. To Strasbourg or to Karlsruhe. The decision is yours. Negation already entered

no? And then. Conjunction already entered. And then. Again I. I realize I forgot my passport. And now we are on the border. I can hear that the people from the customs, the police, or whatever, are close. I notice the mechanical search of my fellow passengers for the papers. I have to do something. Something is going to happen to me. The decision is yours. Time is moving. As you are moving. In any direction. And then. Streets wet. From rain. From hoses. What ever. Doesn't matter. But streets wet. And. For the occasion I'm wearing a beggar out-fit. To get a glimpse of the suspected suspect. On the third floor. In the building across the street. Perhaps he will give me something. Some real money for once. I could need it. I would like to know his face. But they don't tell me anything. I think there are photographers. At hidden places. Taking photographs of him. Perhaps of me too. I wonder what my function is in this operation. You are not here to verify. No. To rest. No. No? You are not here to verify. No? No. Is a better answer. No. Negation better. No. Easier. Easier to handle. Although you would like to know. Anything. So. Where to begin. Perhaps it would be best if we started with what is obvious. To collect material. So that, in the end, when we have put all the obvious things on the table, we will perhaps know something. And I think it will be easy to move on from there. Yes I think it will be very easy. A diagram. Easily positioned. Just before our eyes. Maps. Data. Enquiries.

Scars. The marks. On your body. Each of them having its own place in time. Here. The wrist. A jump. Over a fence. When you were twelve. A rusty nail. On a piece of wood. Straight through your wrist. Straight lines. Here. Your belly. The appendix. Something removed from your body. Here. Your ankles. The wheel. Here. Your head. Each point having its own place in time. Maps. Positions. Rearrange the dots and then draw the line. Each mark its own dot. Each toe pointing in a different direction. You are free to move. Destination unheard of. Doesn't matter. Move. Slide. Tracks. Change. The shifting of tracks. Motion. I see myself in the middle of all those intersecting tracks. Near a railway station. Preferably in Paris. Or Vienna. I've never been to Vienna. You could move anywhere. You are not alone in this jungle. But you are not here to relate. So basically this means that you are alone. Because you are here to infer. You are here to burp the conclusions. Any conclusion. All of them. Really? And then? This is the fool talking. You should listen to him. Data. Premises. Themselves being conclusions burped by someone else. Now it's your turn. Listen to him. I am the fool in an out-of-date play. Performed each night at The National Theatre. Amusing the bourgeois women and men before they go to dinner. Or have a late drink. I don't know their routines. Listen to him. Before you draw any further lines. And then. To get to know. And then. To understand. So. To get to know. What is an answer. And this is a question? I need to

know the relation. I need to know who we are. Not where we are. I know where we are. On a beach. In a long line. We want to buy ice-cream. Hot summer. The feeling of being. On the same spot. At the same time. You. Standing in front of me. You. Ordering everything. And then. The next. To understand. You are looking for. I don't know. Something. Which implies you haven't found it. Yet. Quite obvious. This is a good start. I hope. But we need more. Because it is a very big table that we have put in front of us. We cannot infer all from just one obvious thing. Or. Or what. You change your mind and you want a conjunction. You want a connection. Sure. The alarm clock is ringing. So naturally I turn it off. You see? But I am already awake. I've been awake for hours. I cannot sleep. I'm just lying in my bed. I'm on the edge of realizing something. You lie. You offer. You make things up. You put them into existence. And they move. They move from Trier to Luxembourg and to Metz at the same time. And you are still in Konstanz remember. From Luxembourg to Aachen. From Metz to Saarbrücken. Do you want to stop them? Then you should wait for them. In Bremen. And in Eisenach. And in Nürnberg. And you should move fast. Konstanz remember. You could move. By plane or by car or by train. The train is departing. Enter decision. In case you choose the train. Which platform. The train is departing. I have decided where to go. But which platform. Now departing from any platform. My decision will be part of my history. I hope. Two minutes. I have two minutes. If my watch is

correct. Where is platform three. An arbitrary choice. Of course. Doesn't matter. And then. Leave. Personal stories. Departed. Origo relations departed. Leave. And you should move in straight lines. You should move. Move. Anywhere. You could move anywhere. It's your move. Your lines. Do anything. Doesn't matter. Beauty free. Cigarette. Lit. And cigarette ends. Undo the crack of an eggshell. Then eat the egg. And turn the radio off. If you listen. And do. This. You haven't learnt. Anything. Like some unimportant envelope mailed. With an address. An envelope. But no letter inside. This may mean something. This must mean something. Allegories. I didn't think about it and I don't care what it means. Collect the material. Peep into it. And the trees and the houses and small fields of grass and of wheat are departing 'cause now you are moving. You. Paralyzed. On your reserved seat in the train and yet you are moving. Because. Why. Flee. Meet. Doesn't matter. Trees. A forest. Industrial areas. The station. The platform. Concrete and grey and with cigarette ends. Departed. Allusions departed. Really? Unsheathe and exit allusions. No. Are you saying no just to be negative? No. You are being a bit negative. Yes. I know. Verification. As. After dinner. An excuse to leave the table. Take a leak. Make some important phonecalls. And going through the hostess' drawers up in her bedroom. Make some mess. Accidentally leaving a clue somewhere. Give myself away. Perhaps my telephone number. With her lipstick. On the

mirror. In the bathroom. Make the husband know something he doesn't. He. A former friend. She is just somebody's darling at the moment. And afterwards thank him. An address. But no name. A knock upon the door. Surprise. A letter in the mailbox. And this time not from the bank. Some sudden etwas trotzdem everything. You know the sound of this. What am I trying to sell you? Any conclusion. Precision time. Tear. Drop of liquid coming from the eye. Again this need for definitions. Self modifying modes. Drip. Drop. And then. Not. Could be any definition. What is it that you really want to know? To rest? To sleep? And something else. But I need to sleep. I'm so tired. I need some rest now. You may rest. You are useless. Perhaps you would like to be useless. Personally I'm not very fond of contradictions. And in the beginning it can also be dangerous to put them on the table. I am what I am. Or something like that. Windy. Streets wet. A damp August evening. A match lit. To light a cigarette? To set something on fire? To see? You see? There are many options. One second I get a glimpse of everything. The bottom structure. All the nuances. And the next second it's all gone. And I know nothing. Or. Another possibility. Really? I want some answers I think. Now. The answer is moving. For whom? From where? Where to? How? You couldn't afford it anyway. Please. What answer would please you the most? Please please me. Please please me. Thank you. And then? Your sleep? The rest? I would very much appreciate some

peace inside my head. I do not like my own private brain to be bombed every day. Because I don't really need it. I'm so tired of blitzkriegs. Of soldiers with this ridiculous green paint in their faces. Listen to him. Truths move in circles. Or at least round figures. And where are you in this round geometric figure? I don't know. You're not in the centre. I'm not in the centre. And so what happens? Not much, really. But they come back to you. And suddenly you like the colour blue again. And for so many years you haven't liked the colour blue at all. And now you see that blue is right and everything else is wrong. And then? And then suddenly red comes back to you. And now blue must go of course. And if I don't want blue to go? If blue didn't go, everything in your mind would be totally purple and very confusing no? I see. Of course purple is also quite nice. And it will come. Confusing or not. They do come back to you. The result. Was. I think. That I didn't know what to say. Extraordinary. I thought. At the time. That I. For once. Did not know what to say. I told him. Just that. No more. I'm glad. He said. That you came to me. We didn't speak. In different ways. On different topics. Meaning something else. We spoke. Directly. About the same things. And we understood everything. I think. You can reimagine thinking as thoughting. I think that all the thinking that is going on really isn't thinking. It's just thoughts that somehow get into our minds. And they stay there for a little while. And then they move to new homes. We can put

this on the table if we want to. Off course. In the air. In a huge Boeing or Concorde. I don't know. The biggest of them all. Handing out newspapers to the passengers. Just before take-off. And then the safety instructions. That also before take-off. And going all the way. Really kicking out the emergency exit door. Positioned just after the last row of the business class section. Really opening the parachute. Or the lifevest or whatever it is that they have. Making everyone panicking. There will of course be no take-off. Everyone will be throwing their newspapers at me. And I would feel real bad. You're coming in. I met someone on this very spot. A long time ago. An old man. Old. He told me things that you will understand when you are no longer a child. When you are on the same level as I am. Listen to him. Yet another example. Of what? What similarities do you see? None. Good. You are not here to invent. I'll never accept that. Doesn't matter. I'm referring to me. I. The person I am. Don't you understand that. The real me. You are not here to invent. Listen to him. It's your lines. Your move. Any move will be accepted. I need to do something. Any need is preferable. I need to get away. To Singapore. Anywhere. Anywhere but Bulgaria. I once was in Bulgaria but Bulgarian men really do not have my sense of humour. If they have any sense of humour at all. I doubt it! Your lines. Your palm. Three possibilities. First. Your right hand. The fist. There are so many places to go to and I really never go anywhere. I'm

stuck here. With my boring wife whom I've never loved deeply though I must admit I liked her eyes when she was younger. And my two teenage girls who now are wearing stupid earrings in their noses and they are playing the guitar all night in the basement because they have a band. Someone should tell them something. First they dragged ugly boys into my house now they hate all men and they don't love anyone not even themselves and me they love the least. It's funny because when you look at your children you always see something of yourself but in my two teenage girls I do not even get a glimpse of my wife which is a pity because then I do not get any value at all by looking at them so I naturally try to look at something else if it's possible. Second. The same direction. But your left hand. And your palm. You know your lines by now. So. In your kitchen. In your old house next to nothing. A quiet vormittag in June. A damp August evening. A rainy day in May. Basically whenever you want. When you are tired. And preparing a cup of strong tea. And you suddenly remember you forgot to phone someone. And now it is too late. I knew it! And the third? The third using both hands. On your back. When in motion. A stroll. Streets wet. Hosed. All these possible worlds. That people live in. Houses. Apartments. With bathrooms. And milk. In the refrigerator. And a clean white towel. For the guest. Arriving later this evening. You should move in straight lines. Explosion! The whole fucking generator just blew up. We have to leave this

area. Something else may explode as well. Somewhere. We cannot stay here any longer. We have to leave. We have to get away. Now. We have to take action. And then. A lifeless body. Quietly in the water. The waves get hold of him. They take him in towards the beach. To civilization. To where he belongs. To his family. If he has a family. To his hammock in the shade. And the afternoon tea with a novel of Bove. The waves take him in. This short moment of undecidability. And then. They bring him out again. A lifeless body. With no memory. With no need. You may rest now. Most of the days we were just sitting. Watching. In a row. But in separate cabinets. Every twelve minutes we had a break. Of two minutes. And they figured that one minute would just disappear. To get to the breaks. To get back from the breaks. At least this is what I think because each day we did this for four hours and it was perfect timing. But it is also possible that the breaks were three minutes and we only got two minutes value. Yes, I think that is possible too. When we do not know the overall structure it is extremely difficult to know all the little details completely. We were positioned in these little cabinets so that we should learn what we had done wrong. Perhaps we were not especially bad people, but we had been moving into this big big net, with all our bad habits and bad ideals, and now we had been spinning so deeply into this net that we were about to be strangled. So I think it was better that we were saved. Inside the cabinets it was mostly very

dark, and of course we cannot know for sure that we all saw the same pictures, but it is very likely that this was the case, because in the breaks we all spoke from the same platform. One minute passed. After that a photograph popped up before our eyes, and we could study it for about five seconds, and then it was dark for fifty-five seconds before the next photograph and so on. All the pictures had a beach setting, and they were of old women and couples and small children with their small green plastic spades in their hands. And of course most of them were looking straight into the camera. But the pictures were all upside-down. That's because we needed to realize that so far we had seen the world upside-down, and that is wrong. The problem was that we only had fifty-five seconds, in solitary darkness, to contemplate on each photo. Because you really need more, at least I do. There were so many details, a woman missing a tooth in her smile, a ship in the background. Anyway. I was considered a hopeless case. I'm in some other programme now, where we use only the light. On. Off. I don't think I will ever learn anything. My brain is so slow. I'm so absent minded. I just don't get it. To know what we know. As if we didn't know already. As if a pair of worn out shoes revealed no memories. Sudden shifts of insecurity. Sudden awareness. A telephone number in the corner of an old newspaper belongs to what name. The frightened eyes that pop up in your head when you want to picture a face you loved. This is what we know. The presence of light

rain. When it rains lightly. Think so. Yes. Think so. All these impossible worlds. That people live in. Caravans. Bunkers. Containers. Your lines. Your feet. Your marks. Your enquiry. The surface is smooth. No traces. And the size? Forty-two square metres. Any age? Quite new. Temperature? Quiet. Have you touched anything yet. Only the iron edges on the corners. And the instruments? Prepared. Good. Please lie down. Just a minute. Can you feel anything? No. Now? No. Just a minute. Now? Yes, I feel a pain in the neck. Good. Please close your eyes. This might hurt. Now? My feet are burning. Only the feet? My feet are really burning. Only the feet? But my feet are really burning. And the neck now? I cannot move my feet. They are burning. So you tell me. It's about time that we stood up and smiled. Had a big laugh of it all. Just let bygones be bygones and shake on it. Scenario. The coal is still burning. Red. The black smoke on top and the white, not so dense smoke underneath give the impression of levels, several floors. But there are no buildings here. We are ready for inspection. You have moved from. Here. To here. Computable. You rearranged the dots and you did draw the lines. And you did move. Where to? Doesn't matter. And the scenario. Red coal. Black and white smoke. Could be anything. Enter inspection. How are your feet? I cannot feel anything. It's moved up the knees. My knees are burning. Are you afraid? Yes. Good. They have this special look in their eyes. Like they wanted to touch you or

something. And I don't know why they don't. I wouldn't mind you know. If they want to come up to me and touch me, I think they should just do it. If they're trying to make a hint or make some kind of signal or something. I don't know. Like they were trying to touch you with their eyes. I don't get it. Why can't they just come up to me and say it. Plainly. I don't know. Nächste Haltestelle. Heerenveen. Kiel. Salzburg. A triangle. Quite nice. But a little bit out of context. So easily build. You're ruining the picture you were drawing with your line. I'm sorry. Won't happen again. You really shouldn't excuse yourself. You shouldn't feel that this is what you are here for. I'm sorry. I'm here to tell you a sad story about a man who died. During his breakfast. He had an important meeting at the office at ten. In the evening he was supposed to pick up his daughter at the railway station. After he had eaten his boiled egg he turned the radio off. He died in his chair. They couldn't figure out what of. He just very quietly died. I knew him well. Registers. Stories. Personal stories. Given or taken. Offered. And moved. Deeply moving. Your comments. Simple band-aids. Plastic on the one side. Perhaps even multi-coloured. And glue on the other of course. I see. I've been awake for some time now. Most of my dreams are gone. I had a dream once. But it was very unclear. So. I couldn't use it. They told me that they were looking for uses. All of a sudden they were just walking in and out of my rooms and they told me only once that they were looking

for uses. They didn't repeat it. One of them told me to sit down in a chair, but he didn't tell me which one, so I chose the one I had inherited from my grandmother. It's sort of blueish and it's very old, and I think it's worth a lot of money. My grandmother told me that it once belonged to a king in Germany, but she was of course at the time very ill. I like sitting in this chair. It gives me a feeling of taking part in history. Confession time. That cool and immature feeling of total honesty. Modifying anything. Rotating. Give me no clue for your reasons. Leave compensation. Exit flux now. Stop rotating please. You're making me dizzy. No. No. No. Negations moving in every direction. Penetrating everything. So easily. And then. A shoe. Torn. On the pavement. Sun shining. Crowd. Or. The same shoe. Beside the other one. In the closet. Newly polished. Pair made. Or. Your shoes. Your feet in them. Walk. For hours. Streets wet. Unhosed. Lost in a big city. Asking for directions. But no consensus. Your appointment. Departing. Enter navigator. Please. There is a sense in which this is good. Now is the nearest. Concludes our business. Could be any suggestion. Could be. Completes our mission. Now you take over, successor. And then? The rest? Go tell some mountain. We do not want to make any Präzedenzfall here. Do we? Oh. Not at all.