Non era riuscito a combinare proprio nulla. Ma quando usciva di casa, fischiava sempre.
Per cinque anni aveva ricamato il corredo di una futura regina.
Era bello forte violento. Un semidio tra pallidi mortali.
Dopo il primo, maldestro tentativo di amare, decise di lasciar perdere.
Avrebbe voluto piövere. *Essere* la pioggia.
In vita ha fatto il pilota d’aereo. Ora fa le parole crociate.
Scrive una lettera, la mette in una busta e si siede accanto alla buca delle lettere.
Oscillava tra il voler sapere e *non* sapere chi era.
Era veramente brutta. Perdonava tutto e tutti.
Suo compito era dire a un certo punto *andate in pace*. Ma ci credeva poco.
Le piacevano gli uomini sposati. Sapeva che si sarebbe rovinata e così fu.
Il suo primo amico era un corvo, il secondo un gobbo.
“Biografia di un leopardo” era il titolo ambizioso dato alla sua opera prima.
Alla domanda perché l’avrebbe sposata rispose perché il cane non abbaia, quando ti vedeva.
Poco prima di morire, fece chiamare il parrucchiere. Era curioso di vedersi con i capelli ricci.
La roulette era la sua vita. Il suo sistema era infallibile, ma non indovinava mai.
Apriva la bocca solo per mentire. Le sue menzogne incantavano mari monti e donne di tutte le età.
Ha sessanta anni, ma i bambini ancora non vogliono giocare con lui.
Quando passeggia lungo il fiume tiene in mano un sogno da ragazza.
A Short List of Destinies

*Everyone is Welcome*
Franz Kafka, *Amerika*

Stefanie Golisch

He never managed to get anything done. But whenever he went out he was always whistling.
For five years she had embroidered the trousseau of a future queen.
He was handsome, strong and violent. A demi-god surrounded by mere mortals.
After a first, clumsy attempt at love, he decided to leave well alone.
She would have liked to rain. To *be* the rain.
He had been a pilot in the old days. Now he does crosswords.
She writes a letter, puts it in an envelope and sits down next to the letter box.
He was caught between wanting to know and *not* knowing who he was.
She was really ugly. She forgave everything and everyone.
I am queen of the roads. I don’t charge much. My kingdom knows no bounds.
His job was to say at a certain point *go in peace*. But he had little faith in it.
She liked married men. She knew that it would ruin her, and it did.
His first friend was a raven, his second a hunchback.
“Biography of a Leopard” was the ambitious title of his first work.
When asked why he’d decided to marry her, he replied that the dog didn’t bark when it saw her.
Just before dying he got someone to call the hairdresser. He wanted to see what he looked like with curly hair.
The roulette wheel was his life. He had an infallible system, but he never got it right.
He opened his mouth only to lie. His mendacity charmed seas, mountains and women of all ages.
He’s sixty years old, but children still don’t want to play with him.
When she walks by the river she holds her girlhood dream by the hand.
Ecco l’uomo in canottiera grigiastra che fuma alla finestra della cucina. A ottantasei anni attende ancora.
Sebbene non avesse mai letto Joseph Roth, lui era il Santo bevitore. Vista l’indiscutibile complessità delle vicende umane, i suoi discorsi non finivano mai.
Da generazioni la parola aveva atteso di essere pronunciata proprio da lui.
Si chiama Aphrodita. Da ragazza era stata sposata con un uomo che non avrebbe mai amato.
Avrebbe voluto fare tante cose, però era anche contento di non fare niente.
In terza elementare decise che il mondo non avrebbe più riso di lui.
La sua bontà era un pozzo senza fondo. A lungo andare stancava.
Non si vergognava di puntare sulla pietà. Le donne adoravano la sua vitale melanconia.
Era matura anzitempo. Arbitro involontario di una coppia di genitori in battaglia.
Alla domanda su cosa voleva fare da grande, rispose: “L’accattone”.
Il suo desiderio fu esaudito.
Qualcuno doveva raccogliere i volti e le voci del suo paese. Non aveva scelta.
Non conosceva affatto sua moglie, ma la trovava molto bella.
Le sue capre lo chiamavano Goldfinger.
Tutte le domeniche regala al mondo l’immagine perfetta del gran signore.
Per lei la felicità esisteva soltanto quando trovava la giusta parola per lei.
Ogni volta che qualcuno in paese morì, egli fermava orologio a pendola.
Gli sarebbe piaciuto essere almeno una volta oggetto di invidia.
Il suo hobby era il modellismo. Adorava i trenini e diffidava delle donne.
Lo avevano chiamato Eros. Come poteva non ubbidire alle leggi del suo dio?
Chiamami, diceva a ogni persona che incontrava. Ma non rispondeva mai.
Mentre lodava la bravura della moglie, si sfogava nelle braccia generose dell’altra.
There’s the man in the greyish vest, smoking at the kitchen window. He is eighty six and still waiting. Even though he had never read Joseph Roth, he was the Holy Drinker. Given the infinite complexity of events, she never stopped talking. For generations the word had been waiting to be uttered just by him. Her name is Aphrodite. When she was a girl she’d been married to a man who she would never love. He could have done many things, but he was also happy doing nothing. In the third grade he decided that the world would never make fun of him again. His goodness was a bottomless well. It was tiring in the long run. He wasn’t ashamed to play the pity card. Women adored his passionate melancholy. She had to grow up quickly. The unwilling arbiter of warring parents. When asked what he wanted to do when he grew up, he replied, “A beggar.” And his wish was granted. Someone had to collect the faces and voices of his town. He had no choice. He didn’t know his wife at all, but he found her very beautiful. His goats would call him Goldfinger. Every Sunday he presented the world with the perfect figure of the perfect gentleman. It was only possible for her to be happy when she found the right words for it. Every time someone in the town died he would stop the grandfather clock. He would have liked to have been the object of envy at least once. His hobby was making models. He loved model trains and he mistrusted women. They had called him Eros. How could he not obey the laws of his god? Call me, he told everyone that he met. But he never picked up the phone. While praising his wife’s virtues, he would give himself to the warm embrace of another.
All’età di sessantatré anni prese seriamente in considerazione la possibilità di farsi nichilista.
Adorava gli aeroporti. Avrebbe voluto viaggiare senza mai arrivare da nessuna parte.
Le piacevano i film erotici. Erano il suo purgatorio.
Era nata triste. La gente non si fidava di lei.
Il suo motto era: Credere nell’incredibile. *Essere* incredibile.
Pazientemente attendeva i baci distratti di cameriere, infermiere, ex-alunne.
Il suo vizio era il gioco. La morte ebbe esattamente la durata di una partita di scopa.
Gli piaceva vantarsi del fatto che suo figlio era stato concepito sotto la doccia.
Era scettica per natura. Sempre vestita bene, ma senza chic. Aveva un segreto.
Con allegra disinvoltura gli piaceva esclamare questa frase: “Che fatica essere uomini!”
Il giorno in cui un paparazzo l’aveva ripreso insieme a una *starlet* in via Veneto. Ecco la vita!
Da giovane aveva comprato una valigia. Bisognava essere pronti per la partenza. In ogni momento.
At the age of sixty three he seriously considered the possibility of becoming a nihilist.
He loved airports. He would have liked to travel without ever getting to a destination.
She liked erotic films. They were purgatory for her.
She was born sad. People didn’t trust her.
Her motto was: Believe in the unbelievable. Be unbelievable.
He patiently waited for the meaningless kisses of waitresses, nurses and ex-pupils.
Her vice was gambling. Her death took precisely as long as a card game.
He liked to boast that his son had been conceived in the shower.
She was sceptical by nature. She always dressed well, but she eschewed elegance. She had a secret.
With happy nonchalance he liked to exclaim: “How tiring it is to be a man!”
The day a paparazzo caught him with a starlet on the Via Veneto. This is the life!
When he was young he had bought a suitcase. You must be ready to leave. At any moment.

*Translation from the Italian: Peter Douglas*