

ENGLISH LEARNING FOR CURIOUS MINDS



Thank you - your ongoing membership makes Leonardo English possible.

If you have questions we'd love to hear from you: hi@leonardoenglish.com

Episode #063

The Disappearance of Emanuela Orlandi

16 June 2020

[00:00:05] Hello, hello, hello, and welcome to English Learning for Curious Minds by Leonardo English, the show where you can listen to fascinating stories and learn weird and wonderful things about the world at the same time as improving your English

[00:00:21] I'm Alastair Budge, and today we are going to tell the story of a [scandal¹](#) that [rocked²](#) Italy.

[00:00:30] It involves the Vatican City, the Pope, a Turkish ultra-nationalist organisation, an organised crime ring and an unfortunate girl called Emanuela Orlandi.

¹ (an action or event that causes) a public feeling of shock and strong moral disapproval

² caused feelings of shock or surprise

The Disappearance of Emanuela Orlandi

[00:00:44] This podcast is actually a request from one of our members, a lady from Argentina, in fact, who had asked for more episodes of true crime.

[00:00:54] So Karen, this one is for you, if you're listening, I hope you enjoy it.

[00:00:59] As a quick reminder, as a member of Leonardo English, you can submit requests for episodes, just log in, and there is a request episode button right there.

[00:01:10] And as this episode shows, we do actually make them.

[00:01:14] Just as a quick warning before we get fully into the episode, it is about the disappearance of a young girl.

[00:01:22] So if this is something that you don't want to listen to, then now is probably the time to press pause.

[00:01:31] Okay, then let's get started.

[00:01:33] Our story starts in the Vatican city in 1983.

[00:01:38] For those of you who haven't ever been there, the Vatican city is a strange place.

[00:01:47] You know it's small, but you probably don't realise quite how small it is.

[00:01:54] It is 0.49 kilometres squared.

The Disappearance of Emanuela Orlandi

[00:01:58] And to put that [in perspective](#)³, Disneyland Paris is 19 kilometres squared.

[00:02:05] So the Vatican City is almost 40 times smaller.

[00:02:10] It's tiny.

[00:02:12] Ercole and Maria Orlandi worked and lived in the Vatican city with their five children.

[00:02:19] The Orlandi children were free to [roam](#)⁴ around the Vatican gardens as they pleased.

[00:02:26] It was almost like it was their own garden.

[00:02:30] Their fourth child, Emanuela was 15.

[00:02:34] She was a talented [flautist](#)⁵, she played the [flute](#)⁶ very well, and she would take lessons three times a week at a school, a bus ride away from the Vatican city, which was where she lived.

[00:02:48] On Wednesday, the 22nd of June, 1983 Emanuela Orlandi was getting ready to leave to go to class.

³ in comparison (with something else)

⁴ to move about or travel, especially without a clear idea of what you are going to do

⁵ someone who plays the flute

⁶ a tube-shaped musical instrument with a hole that you blow across at one end while holding the tube out horizontally to one side

The Disappearance of Emanuela Orlandi

[00:02:58] She tried to get her older brother, Pietro, to give her a ride to the school, but he said he was busy.

[00:03:06] They had a [row](#)⁷, they had a fight, and she ran out, [slamming the door](#)⁸.

[00:03:13] She arrived at the music lesson, but then left 10 minutes earlier than normal.

[00:03:20] Outside the school, she phoned her sister from a public phone box to tell her that the bus wasn't coming and that she had been approached by a man in a green BMW, an expensive car, who had offered her a job selling [cosmetics](#)⁹.

[00:03:39] She said that the man had offered to pay her today's equivalent of around 500 euros for a few hours work promoting a [cosmetics](#) brand.

[00:03:51] Her sister warned her against accepting it and said she should come home to talk it over with her mother.

[00:04:00] Emanuela then went to the bus stop to go home with two other friends from her course, and reportedly also told them about this strange job opportunity, but said that she would have asked her parents' permission before doing anything.

[00:04:21] Her two friends got on the bus, but it was crowded.

⁷ an argument

⁸ closing the door with force

⁹ substances put on the face or body that are intended to improve its appearance or quality

The Disappearance of Emanuela Orlandi

[00:04:25] Emanuela said that she would wait for the next one, so she didn't accompany her friends home.

[00:04:32] And that is the last thing that we know for sure about Emanuela Orlandi.

[00:04:39] She disappeared into the night, never to be seen again.

[00:04:44] And to this day we still don't know what happened to her.

[00:04:49] The events immediately after her disappearance are mysterious and this has added to the [intrigue](#)¹⁰ surrounding her [vanishing](#)¹¹.

[00:05:01] She was last seen on Wednesday, the 22nd of June.

[00:05:06] When she didn't return home, her father and brother contacted the music school to ask if anyone knew anything about where she was.

[00:05:16] The master of the music school said she was probably just out with friends and to not worry too much yet.

[00:05:25] Nevertheless, Ercole Orlandi, the father, was understandably incredibly worried.

[00:05:32] He went to the police station to report her as a missing person.

¹⁰ to interest someone a lot, especially by being strange, unusual, or mysterious

¹¹ disappearance

The Disappearance of Emanuela Orlandi

[00:05:36] Yet the police told him to wait until the following day to report her missing, to [file](#)¹² an official report.

[00:05:45] When she still didn't arrive home the next day, she was officially reported as a missing person.

[00:05:53] The day after that, two local newspapers published the story, appealing for information, in the hope that someone knew where she was.

[00:06:05] Then the day after, so two days after she went missing, on June the 25th, the family received a mysterious phone call.

[00:06:17] It was from a young man who said that his name was Pierluigi and that he was 16 years old.

[00:06:24] He said that he had met two girls in Rome's Campo dei Fiori, a famous square in Rome.

[00:06:32] They were selling [cosmetics](#) and one called herself Barbara.

[00:06:38] Barbara matched the description of Emanuela Orlandi.

[00:06:43] She had a [flute](#) with her and when Pierluigi asked her to play it for him, she said she wouldn't, because she needed to put on her glasses and she didn't like wearing glasses, she was embarrassed to wear her glasses.

¹² to officially record something

The Disappearance of Emanuela Orlandi

[00:06:58] But then Pierluigi [hung up](#)¹³ the phone, and the call ended.

[00:07:03] Three hours later, he called back.

[00:07:07] He added that the glasses were to correct an [astigmatism](#)¹⁴, a particular type of vision problem.

[00:07:17] The family had fresh hope.

[00:07:18] Emanuela did play the [flute](#).

[00:07:22] She was embarrassed about wearing her glasses.

[00:07:25] She did have an [astigmatism](#)¹⁵ and Pierluigi knew about the [cosmetics](#).

[00:07:30] These weren't all things that were in the public [sphere](#), they weren't public knowledge.

[00:07:37] So this gave the family hope that Pierluigi had actually seen Emanuela.

[00:07:44] They asked to meet him, but he declined; he said he wouldn't meet the family.

[00:07:50] The following day, the family received another call.

¹³ put down the telephone

¹⁴ a fault in the lens of the eye that reduces the quality of sight, especially a fault that stops the eye from focusing

¹⁵ arena, knowledge

The Disappearance of Emanuela Orlandi

[00:07:55] This time, the call was from someone who said that he was the owner of a bar in Rome.

[00:08:03] It was a man, and he said he was 35 years old and called Mario.

[00:08:10] He said that he had seen a man and two girls come into his bar, the girls were selling [cosmetics](#).

[00:08:20] One of the girls claimed to be from Venice and to be called Barbarella.

[00:08:27] When he was asked how tall Barbarella was, he hesitated as if he couldn't remember exactly.

[00:08:35] He just responded by saying, well, she was pretty tall.

[00:08:40] This was again, a positive sign to the family.

[00:08:43] Emanuela was indeed tall for her age, at one metre sixty, or around five foot two.

[00:08:51] But something seemed a little bit strange about this phone call.

[00:08:55] When Mario had been asked how tall Emanuela was, there was the sound of another man who was with Mario in the background, who said, 'no, no, she's taller than that'.

[00:09:07] So it was as if there was another person on the call with Mario.

The Disappearance of Emanuela Orlandi

[00:09:13] This was another [hot lead](#)¹⁶ though.

[00:09:15] It seemed genuine.

[00:09:17] Mario called back later, and said that this Barbarella had told him that she had run away from home because she was bored, but she was planning to come back home at the end of the summer for her sister's wedding.

[00:09:35] This did seem [credible](#)¹⁷.

[00:09:37] Her sister was getting married and potentially this could have been something that Emanuela Orlandi could have done.

[00:09:47] But still, they were no closer to actually locating the girl.

[00:09:53] The search continued.

[00:09:55] There were other [sightings](#)¹⁸ of girls who matched Emanuela's description.

[00:10:00] A policeman said he had seen a girl matching her description with a man who was around 35 years old in a green BMW.

[00:10:11] They managed to locate the BMW, and found that it had been recently repaired in a garage.

¹⁶ believable source or clue

¹⁷ able to be believed or trusted

¹⁸ an occasion when you see something or someone, especially something that is rare or trying to hide

The Disappearance of Emanuela Orlandi

[00:10:20] When the police went to the garage to see what they could find out about the car, the owner of the garage said that the car had been brought in by a blonde woman and had some very strange damage to it.

[00:10:37] The inner right window had been [smashed](#)¹⁹, but, unlike normal [breakages](#)²⁰ where the window is [smashed](#) from the outside, this window appeared to have been [smashed](#) from the inside.

[00:10:52] They managed to track down the blonde woman yet she said she knew nothing.

[00:10:58] On the 3rd of July, 10 days later, Pope John Paul II mentioned Emanuela Orlandi during prayers, [appealing](#)²¹ for any information surrounding her disappearance.

[00:11:12] Then two days later, the Vatican's press office received a phone call.

[00:11:19] This time, it was from an [anonymous](#)²² man with an American accent who was given the nickname, the American, 'l'Americano'.

¹⁹ broken into lots of pieces

²⁰ something that has been broken

²¹ asking for

²² made or done by someone whose name is not known or not made public

The Disappearance of Emanuela Orlandi

[00:11:31] He claimed to be holding Emanuela [hostage](#)²³, and said that Pierluigi and Mario, the two men who had previously called the Orlandi family, were also part of his criminal gang.

[00:11:45] In exchange for Emanuela, he demanded the release of Mehmet Ali Ağca, a Turkish man who attempted to assassinate the Pope a couple of years beforehand.

[00:11:57] This man said that they had until July the 20th, 15 days time, to free Mehmet Ali Ağca, otherwise Orlandi would be killed.

[00:12:08] An hour later, he called again, this time to the Orlandi [residence](#)²⁴ and played a [tape](#)²⁵ of a young girl's voice, reportedly the missing girl's.

[00:12:21] The American called a total of 16 times providing different pieces of evidence, yet none of them were considered believable enough to properly take seriously.

[00:12:36] And since then, since 1983, there have been multiple new [leads](#), supposed [sightings](#) of Emanuela Orlandi.

[00:12:45] Yet her [whereabouts](#)²⁶ are still a mystery.

²³ someone who is taken as a prisoner by an enemy in order to force the other people involved to do what the enemy wants

²⁴ a home

²⁵ thin plastic in a long, narrow strip with a magnetic covering that allows sounds or sounds and pictures to be recorded and played again, especially one on which sound is recorded

²⁶ the place where a person or thing is

The Disappearance of Emanuela Orlandi

[00:12:50] At various points over the years, there have been the discoveries of bones within the Vatican City, which at least gave hope to the family that there would be some sort of [closure](#).

[00:13:05] Of course it would be horrible to know that she wasn't alive, but it would provide some kind of [closure](#)²⁷ on the event.

[00:13:14] It would allow the family, at least to a certain degree, to move on.

[00:13:19] Most recently, in 2019, the lawyer representing the Orlandi family received a note containing a photograph of a [tomb](#)²⁸ below the Vatican, and directions to 'look where the angel is pointing'.

[00:13:38] There was, in the [crypt](#)²⁹ that housed the [tomb](#) in the photo, there was a marble angel who was pointing in a particular direction.

[00:13:49] Was this the final clue of the [whereabouts](#) of Emanuela Orlandi?

[00:13:54] She was buried in the Vatican all the time?

²⁷ the feeling or act of bringing an unpleasant situation, time, or experience to an end, so that you are able to start new activities

²⁸ a large stone structure or underground room where someone, especially an important person, is buried

²⁹ a room under the floor of a church where bodies are buried

The Disappearance of Emanuela Orlandi

[00:13:58] The [tip-off](#)³⁰ was considered serious enough to get the attention of top Vatican officials who said that they would look into it.

[00:14:07] And sure enough, they did actually look into it.

[00:14:11] The [tomb](#) in question, the [tomb](#) that was in the photo, was the resting place of two princesses who had died 200 years before.

[00:14:22] When they looked at the [tomb](#), it became clear that it had been opened recently.

[00:14:28] There were even the remains of flowers at the site, which indicated that people had been visiting it.

[00:14:36] So in July, 2019, the Vatican agreed to open it up.

[00:14:43] When they opened the [tomb](#), they didn't find any evidence of Emanuela Orlandi.

[00:14:50] But mysteriously, they found no evidence of the princesses who had been originally buried there either.

[00:14:59] Very suspicious, right?

[00:15:01] What happened to the remains of the two princesses?

[00:15:05] And why had the [tomb](#) been opened so recently?

³⁰ a secret warning or piece of secret information

The Disappearance of Emanuela Orlandi

[00:15:09] There were a lot of questions that remained unanswered.

[00:15:13] There is still no [conclusive](#)³¹ evidence of what happened to Emanuela Orlandi.

[00:15:19] But there are plenty of theories.

[00:15:23] One theory is that she was kidnapped by this Turkish terrorist group called The Grey Wolves in an attempt to free Mehmet Ali Ağca, but that she hadn't actually been killed, and instead was living in an integrated Muslim community, probably in Paris.

[00:15:45] Ağca the terrorist for whom the [swap](#)³² had been proposed, claimed that he knew she was safe and well, but he didn't have any evidence to prove it; he just knew it.

[00:15:58] Ağca was released in 2010, and shortly after his release, he claimed that Orlandi was living as a Catholic [nun](#)³³ in a country in central Europe, and that her family could actually see her as frequently as they liked.

[00:16:17] But with no evidence to support this, his claims have been [rubbished](#)³⁴; they haven't been considered believable.

³¹ proving that something is true, or ending any doubt

³² to give something and be given something else instead

³³ a member of a female religious group that lives in a convent

³⁴ considered not believable

The Disappearance of Emanuela Orlandi

[00:16:25] There are several other more unpleasant theories.

[00:16:30] Firstly, that she had been kidnapped by an organised crime gang.

[00:16:35] The theory goes that Orlandi's father, who some people say worked within the Vatican bank had seen evidence of [wrongdoing](#)³⁵ by the president of the bank, an American Archbishop called Paul C Marcinkus.

[00:16:54] In order to stop the [clerk](#)³⁶ speaking, Marcinkus had got a gangster, Enrico de Padis, who was actually from a famous Italian organised crime gang called Banda della Magliana, he had got her to take Orlandi [hostage](#).

[00:17:12] If Emanuela Orlandi's father knew that his daughter's safety was [at stake](#)³⁷, he would keep silent about the things that he had seen going on at the bank.

[00:17:25] Another theory again, involving this gangster, de Padis, suggested that they had kidnapped Emanuela Orlandi as a way of [extorting](#)³⁸ money out of the Vatican.

[00:17:39] There was a bank called Banco Ambrosiano, which had lent a lot of money to the Vatican, but had then [collapsed](#)³⁹.

³⁵ a bad or an illegal action

³⁶ a person who works in an office, dealing with records or performing general office duties

³⁷ at risk

³⁸ to get something by force or threats, or with difficulty

³⁹ went bankrupt

The Disappearance of Emanuela Orlandi

[00:17:48] A large amount of this money that was lost reportedly came from organised crime gangs.

[00:17:56] They wanted a way of getting their money back, so they [kidnapped](#)⁴⁰ this girl as a way of forcing money out of the Vatican.

[00:18:06] De Padis, the gangster had reportedly confessed to a girlfriend that he had kidnapped Emanuela Orlandi, and they even opened up De Padis' [tomb](#) to look for DNA evidence that would link him to the crime.

[00:18:22] But none was found.

[00:18:26] And there are other theories too, the most [scandalous](#)⁴¹, and also the most unpleasant, is that there was a sort of sex ring in the Vatican and that young girls were brought to parties for the pleasure of older men living in the Vatican.

[00:18:46] This theory exists because a Roman priest who was an [exorcist](#)⁴² for 60 years actually claimed in 2012, that Orlandi was taken by the Vatican secret police for a sex party and then murdered.

[00:19:05] He also claimed that officials from an unnamed foreign embassy knew what had happened, but no evidence was provided.

⁴⁰ to take a person away illegally by force, usually in order to demand money in exchange for releasing them

⁴¹ making people shocked and upset

⁴² to force an evil spirit to leave a person or place by using prayers or magic

The Disappearance of Emanuela Orlandi

[00:19:16] In 2020, 37 years later, the family of Emanuela Orlandi is really not much closer to the truth.

[00:19:27] There are, of course, people who know and although many have now died, some of them are probably still alive today.

[00:19:37] Emanuela's older brother, Pietro, is still fighting for the truth, and he certainly thinks that the secret, the truth, lies within the walls of the Vatican city.

[00:19:50] He said "from John Paul the second to Ratzinger and Pope Francis, they all know what happened.

[00:19:59] But due to this being so damaging to the image of the church they've been doing all they can to ensure that the truth doesn't come out."

[00:20:13] Okay then, that is it for this story of the disappearance of Emanuela Orlandi.

[00:20:20] It is, of course, a sad story, even if Orlandi is living a happy life in some [convent](#)⁴³ or a large house in central Europe.

[00:20:29] But one thing that is hard to deny is that it is [intriguing](#)⁴⁴; the Vatican, organised crime, terrorists, it all makes for a pretty interesting story.

[00:20:42] As always, I would love to know what you thought of the episode.

⁴³ a building in which nuns (= members of a female religious order) live

⁴⁴ to interest someone a lot, especially by being strange, unusual, or mysterious

English Learning for Curious Minds | Episode #063
The Disappearance of Emanuela Orlandi

[00:20:46] You can email hi - hi@leonardoenglish.com.

[00:20:51] You've been listening to English Learning for Curious Minds, by Leonardo English.

[00:20:56] I'm Alastair Budge, you stay safe and I'll catch you in the next episode.

[END OF PODCAST]

Key vocabulary

Word	Definition
Scandal	(an action or event that causes) a public feeling of shock and strong moral disapproval
Rocked	caused feelings of shock or surprise
In perspective	in comparison (with something else)
Roam	to move about or travel, especially without a clear idea of what you are going to do
Flautist	someone who plays the flute
Flute	a tube-shaped musical instrument with a hole that you blow across at one end while holding the tube out horizontally to one side
Row	an argument
Slamming the door	closing the door with force
Cosmetics	substances put on the face or body that are intended to improve its appearance or quality
Intrigue	to interest someone a lot, especially by being strange, unusual, or mysterious

The Disappearance of Emanuela Orlandi

Vanishing	disappearance
File	to officially record something
Hung up	put down the telephone
Astigmatism	a fault in the lens of the eye that reduces the quality of sight, especially a fault that stops the eye from focusing
Sphere	arena, knowledge
Hot lead	believable source or clue
Credible	able to be believed or trusted
Sightings	an occasion when you see something or someone, especially something that is rare or trying to hide
Smashed	broken into lots of pieces
Breakages	something that has been broken
Appealing	asking for
Anonymous	made or done by someone whose name is not known or not made public
Hostage	someone who is taken as a prisoner by an enemy in order to force the other people involved to do what the enemy wants

The Disappearance of Emanuela Orlandi

Residence	a home
Tape	thin plastic in a long, narrow strip with a magnetic covering that allows sounds or sounds and pictures to be recorded and played again, especially one on which sound is recorded
Whereabouts	the place where a person or thing is
Closure	the feeling or act of bringing an unpleasant situation, time, or experience to an end, so that you are able to start new activities
Tomb	a large stone structure or underground room where someone, especially an important person, is buried
Crypt	a room under the floor of a church where bodies are buried
Tip-off	a secret warning or piece of secret information
Conclusive	proving that something is true, or ending any doubt
Swap	to give something and be given something else instead
Nun	a member of a female religious group that lives in a convent
Rubbished	considered not believable
Wrongdoing	a bad or an illegal action
Clerk	a person who works in an office, dealing with records or performing

The Disappearance of Emanuela Orlandi

general office duties

At stake

at risk

Extorting

to get something by force or threats, or with difficulty

Collapsed

went bankrupt

Kidnapped

to take a person away illegally by force, usually in order to demand money
in exchange for releasing them

Scandalous

making people shocked and upset

Exorcist

to force an evil spirit to leave a person or place by using prayers or magic

Convent

a building in which nuns (= members of a female religious order) live

Intriguing

to interest someone a lot, especially by being strange, unusual, or
mysterious

We'd love to get your feedback on this podcast.

What did you like? What could we do better?

What did you struggle to understand?

You can email us at hi@leonardoenglish.com.