Orlando

Bruce Butterfield*
A MAN named Orlando lived in a small town named Sesto in a country named Italy. Sesto is a pretty village. That is not important. That did not interest Orlando. Orlando was a busy man. Orlando had a friend named Pietro. It is nice to have friends, but Pietro also was not important. Friends are never important. “Don’ need ’m,” said Orlando. He had an enemy named Bartoni. Orlando was mindful of enemies. A good man is always nice to his enemy. A good man only does bad things in the presence of his friends. A man who does bad things in the presence of his enemy is called a bad man.

Orlando was a good man — born a Catholic, so he said. He had not been to church in a long time. But that did not bother Orlando. He was a good man. Everybody knew the man named Orlando. Ask anybody in Sesto. They will tell you that Orlando was a good man. Did he not always pay his debts? Is it so bad that he got his money through artfulness? Ask anyone. “Sure,” they will tell you, “Orlando was a good man.” That is what they will say.

Orlando was a dirty man, and he wore a torn, red, tight-fitting T-shirt and faded, blue-gray work pants. These things did not bother Orlando either. Why should they? Was he not a working man? “Mos’ the time,” Orlando said.

“Out of the way,” the man in the automobile, whose custom it was to hit things, yelled to Orlando, and the good man made an obscene gesture at him. “Son of a bitch,” muttered Orlando. “Pig!” he shouted, half turning.

Orlando walked into a little establishment on the Strata Principala. “Hiya,” he called to Pietro, the tender of the bar. Pietro was Orlando’s friend. Did he not help him to dismiss his cares? — for a price, of course, for Pietro is a businessman. Pietro did not turn to call “Hiya” to Orlando. Instead he went on mixing the drink of his only other customer. But
that was all right. That did not mean that Pietro was not Orlando's friend. Ask anybody. "Sure," they will say, "Pietro was Orlando's good friend."

"Be kind to me today, Pietro," bawled Orlando. "Talk with me. Welcome me. See. Today I have money to pay you."

"Shut up, Orlando," said Pietro. "Shut up before you ask my generosity."

But Orlando could pay, and soon he became sleepy, and so he fell asleep in the establishment of Pietro. And Pietro expelled him into the street, and Pietro himself grew sleepy, and he went to sleep in his big, soft bed.

When Orlando awoke, he did not know where he was. He felt the slick, damp, hard stones, and he wondered who would put him in this place to sleep. He tried to get up, but in the dark someone pushed him—pushed Orlando, then slipped away before he could even hear his footsteps. Pig, who would push this good man! Orlando's head ached and he thought perhaps he was catching a cold. What evil man would leave poor Orlando to catch cold on these damp rocks and then push him in the dark. "Don' know," said Orlando. "Don' know."

But then Orlando remembered why he was there, and he felt repentant. And so he did what any good man would do in such a case. He climbed the steps of the church—after cursing the bed of Pietro, of course, for Orlando was a socialist, and he believed in equality. Orlando did not know the inside of the church very well, but he knew the steps. This time Orlando went inside the church. "Hiya, Papa Almighty, up there!" he shouted. But the "Papa Almighty" did not answer Orlando either.

Then Orlando began to sob. So repentant was he this day. Perhaps it was the headache. Orlando took the little bottle which he had concealed beneath his coat and hurled it. "Mos' sorry," said Orlando, as the bottle crashed against the altar.

But then Orlando began to worry. He always worried when he was repentant. Now this church smells like Orlando. How unwholesome is this place of worship, now. Some evil man has poured liquor into this church. Pietro's bar is just as wholesome. This reminded Orlando that he would like to
see Pietro in the morning, or anyway in the afternoon. Orlando left the church. "So long, good Papa!" he called back.

Orlando did not go back down the stairs. This was his home. Orlando did not have a home, but if any place could be called his home the church steps were it. Orlando laid down and swore at the cold cement. Swearing was Orlando's third weakness. But of course that was well known. After all, Orlando was a normal man.

Orlando felt himself being prodded awake. He squinted his eyes in the bright sunlight and saw that it was Bill Bartoni, the village policeman. Bartoni was not Orlando's friend. Ask anybody. They will tell you, "No," they will say, "Bartoni was not Orlando's friend."

"It is late, Orlando," said Bill Bartoni.
"Pietro's bar open yet?"
"This is Sunday, Orlando."
"Sunday! 'sa day of rest!"
"Get up, Orlando."
"Whyrn't you resting today, Bartoni?"
"You are not a religious man, Orlando."

"Nuther're you. Son of a . . . Hooray for the good Papa Almighty, three cheers for all the saints an' the Virgin Mary an' all the other virgins too, an' my good friend Pietro who left me in the cold, an' . . . ." At this point, Orlando's speech became very degenerate. Big, strong Bill Bartoni kicked him once more and then let him sleep.

Perhaps some evil man would imply that the conduct of good Father Petrelli was un-Christian in this matter. Of course, it was not. Was not Father Petrelli a priest of the good Papa? Did he not always tell the truth? Ask him, then. Ask him, and he will tell you. "No," he will say, "no, I have done only my duty." A good Christian, Father Petrelli.

As Orlando was removed from the church steps by two of the heartier members of the congregation, he himself accused the good priest of wrong-doing. But Orlando was a just man. "May thy good friend, the Papa up There Almighty, grow white lilies on thy grave."

Once freed by the men, Orlando walked, head down, across Strata Principala, as it was his custom to walk, and
the fast drunken driver hit him, as it was the driver's custom to hit things; and Orlando died, as is the custom with all men.

But Orlando seems not dead in the town of Sesto. Ask anyone, They will tell you. "No," they will say, "Orlando is not dead."

Only Pietro is uncertain. He misses Orlando and his "Hiya"—and his money. He asks his only other customer. "Is Orlando dead?" he asks. "No," says the man. "No, Orlando is not dead."

But Orlando's enemy knows. "Where is Orlando, Bar­toni?" asks Father Petrelli. "Orlando is dead," replies Bartoni.

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Sensitivity

The tramp slid back the loosened plank and peered
With russet gaze out from the dim recess
Beneath the park pavilion, squinting wryly
At the morning light that glared across
The park's expanse of freshly-fallen snow.
"Oh, damn!"

He poked his head between the boards;
Belligerently tilted it to get
A better view, then blew a frozen sigh,
Disgusted with the scene. An arm appeared
And forced its stubby fingers through his mat
Of stiffened hair. He gave the boards a shove
And followed with his anthropoidal frame.
"Oh, damn!"

He stiffly started hopping up