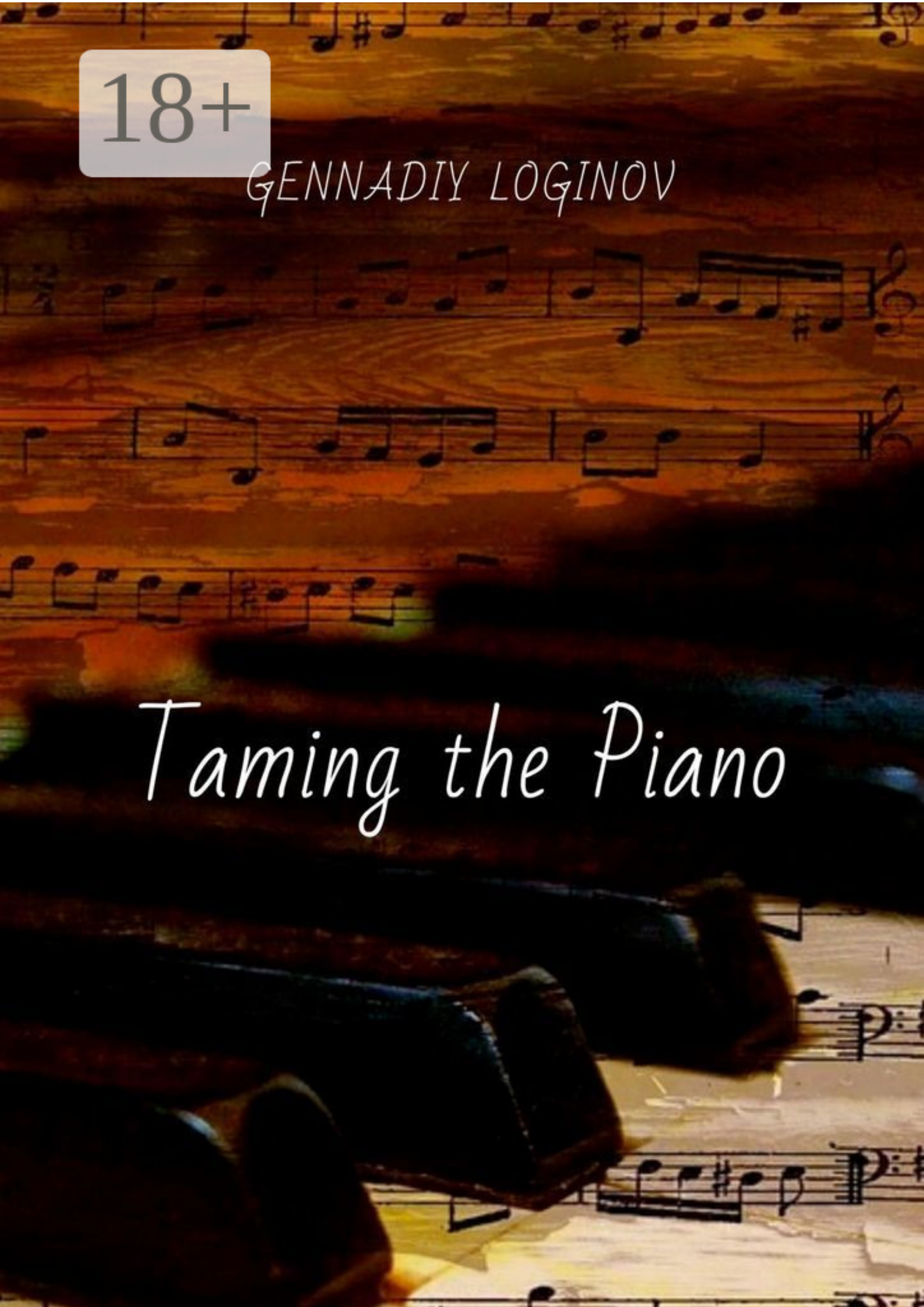


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GENNADIY LOGINOV

Taming the Piano



Gennadiy Loginov

Taming the Piano

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The root of all our problems in the present is often buried in the past. It takes courage to admit our previous mistakes and stand up instead of running away, so that we may overcome the fear, once and for all.

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Taming the Piano

There is another world, but it is in this one.
– Paul Éluard

Ever since he could remember, good luck always favoured him. The coin thrown to settle a dispute could fall invariably even on the edge, and he always rolled only sixes on dice. Fair players had constantly lost to his cards, and cheaters and scammers were immediately shown up. He could find jewels just strolling down the streets of the evening city. And numerous distant relatives and friends of relatives, whom he had either never known or had forgotten since childhood, left him a generous inheritance again and again.

But this didn't bring him joy and happiness, rather the opposite. He had long been refused entry to the gambling houses. Among fair players, he had long ago acquired the reputation of a notorious sharper and a scoundrel; however, no one was able to catch him in the act. Real sharpers who had a grudge against him, repeatedly tried to settle the score, and it was only because of the same notorious luck that their plans never came to anything. All the jewels he found turned out to be stolen. And the relatives of untimely passing people suspected that he was a sorcerer, if not a swindler, since their loved ones, for no apparent reason, signed the real and personal property over to him in the presence of more worthy candidates.

He easily acquired new connections and obtained lucrative positions, but soon lost them with the same simplicity, because, having learned about his reputation, – new acquaintances no longer wanted to deal with such a shady character and didn't want to keep the service of a light-fingered person.

In fact, most of those who called him, with the unwavering conviction, a scoundrel and a bastard, were much more suited to their definitions. This gift (or, perhaps, the curse) was inherited from his father, and he, in turn, inherited from his father, and it might very well be that the chain stretched further.

Anyway, imaginary good fortune brought Lucky (as he was sarcastically called) only misery and suffering. And by no means could he resist this ill fate. Although, perhaps, it was just a God sent trial.

He could recall only one incident from his childhood when he apparently had bad luck in a matter which was dear to his heart: it was also a kind of playing, not with cards, but an instrument. At that time, the lid of the piano fell and hit him hard on his fingers, discouraging the budding desire to become an outstanding player. Over time, the initial flexibility of the fingers and abilities had been recovered, but his hope to establish himself in this field somehow had burnt itself out.

Later, he trudged to war, where he was invincible against either an enemy bayonet or a bullet; he received many decorations and medals, but couldn't make a military career because of another scandal related to gambling. Of course, everyone was enthusiastic about card play, but it was his "luck" that dragged him into such litigations. Taking into account his past merits, they didn't punish him severely but forced him to leave military service. However, he fulfilled his duty to the army completely.

At first, he tried to hang himself – the rope broke, and he suffered only a painful bruise falling to the floor. Then he wanted to shoot himself: at the first attempt, the gun misfired, at the second

it just backfired, injuring his hand. Then he jumped off a bridge, but the good Samaritans promptly fished him out of the cold city canal and brought him to his senses. Further: he tried to stab himself with a dagger, but powerlessness paralyzed his hand, forcing him to drop the weapon in another failed suicide. Then he decided to throw himself under a train, but it derailed shortly before arriving and miraculously avoided a meeting with Lucky. To top it off, he climbed onto the roof of a building with the firm intention of jumping and crashing to the pavement. It seemed that now he had foreseen everything, then no chance happening could save his life; but what he couldn't foresee was the exact moment before the fatal landing – he just suddenly woke up in his bed, *as if it was an ordinary dream*. And so, again and again, time after time, something prevented his tragic plans from coming true.

Realizing that he was, in fact, powerless to commit suicide, he despaired even more, although it seemed to him earlier that it was principally impossible. Not knowing where he was going and why, Lucky simply wandered through the streets, whistling a sad song: the words were forgotten, it was just a single tune, and for some reason, it reminded him of the yellowed skeleton of a dead man, freed from the once rotten flesh.

Of course, he could roam around the grim backstreets, pestering all sorts of sinister characters, hoping to get stabbed with someone's knife. Or bypass the brothels, asking to pick up some terrible infection. Or, at the very least, switch to morphine, alcohol or opium, getting himself into a deadly condition. But he suspected that these ridiculous ventures would end no better than all the other nonsense before.

From the outside, it might seem that the problem was contrived. One way or another it was possible to simply move to a new place, starting over with a clean slate, making new acquaintances, finding a wife and a job, quitting the gambling permanently or, at least, be only interested in games in which the role of luck is insignificant compared to skill and calculation. Naturally, all this came to mind a great many times, but every time he tried to implement the plan, he faced the same difficulties as when trying to take his own life.

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

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