

# Pianissimo

by Erika Byrne-Ludwig

The trouble was, Bernie couldn't keep his old companion anymore. After having shared his small house with him for the most part of his life he had to let him go. He advertised, asked around, but no one seemed interested. No one wanted his friend, not even as a gift. Shrugging and coughing feverishly in bursts that shook his frail and thin ribs, Bernie stared at the bare wall, evoking the many changes that had dotted his life with both light and dark marks. This was a dark one.

Before making the decision of discarding him piece by piece, Bernie had hesitated for months, possibly a whole year. It was just that as his strength had gradually weakened, things around him had become too heavy to handle. Besides, nobody was tapping the keys anymore, including Bernie whose fingers were crippled with arthritis. And the small agile ones which also played, years and years ago, had long grown and left. Melodies Bernie used to hear once, these days only rang small bells in his mind. Just now, one of his favourites came to him there. He listened then sighed.

Yes, dear Victor, we had good times, didn't we, when everyone was still around. Now we have to separate. He absentmindedly lifted the cover and played a quick tune with his best two fingers before the electric saw began to dissect the big frame, panel by panel, leg by leg. Bernie stood by and watched the sawdust cloud its light-brown ash over him.

He collected the ivory and ebony keys to hold them now and then until Victor, just like his melodies, would become a memory.

