

Poem by Weldon Kees

A Good Chord on a Bad Piano

The fissures in the studio grow large.
Transplantings from the Rivoli, no doubt.
Such latter-day disfigurements leave out
All mention of those older scars that merge
On any riddled surfaces about.

Disgusting to be sure. On days like these,
A good chord on a bad piano serves
As well as shimmering harp-runs for the nerves.
F minor, with the added sixth. The keys
Are like old yellowed teeth; the pedal swerves;

The treble wires vibrate, break, and bend;
The padded mallets fly apart.
Both instrument and room have made a start.
Piano and scene are double to the end,
Like all the smashed-up baggage of the heart.

Weldon Kees (1914–1955) was a poet, painter, playwright, novelist, and jazz pianist. His poetry collections include *The Last Man* (1943), *The Fall of Magicians* (1947), and *Poems: 1947–1954* (1954). Reprinted from *The Collected Poems of Weldon Kees*, edited by Donald Justice, by permission of the University of Nebraska Press. © 1962, 1975, by the University of Nebraska Press. © renewed 2003 by the University of Nebraska Press.

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