

Responsive Reading

When do bad things happen	Have you ever messed up a relationship
To good people?	
Yesterday evening,	That really mattered
At 10:00 this morning,	Or lost two breasts to cancer?
Wednesday at 5:00 PM.	My friend Annie has.
Bad things happen all the time.	And my father has held the hands
They happen when planes crash	Of two dying wives.
In Scotland.	He has seen one daughter go insane
When cars smash in Des Moines.	And the other go, nowhere.
When bullets fly at schoolyards	Yet he survives, at eighty four years young,
In Detroit.	To play golf everyday with his girlfriend
They happen when floods occur	
In Bangladesh.	Who escaped Hitler's ovens 50 years ago
They happen when rain doesn't fall	And remembers her cousins who did not.
In Ethiopia.	
They even happen in Palm Springs.	When do bad things happen
Bad things happen all the time.	To good people?
Beautiful daughters marry men who batter them.	Bad things happen all the time.
Brilliant sons are stricken with Aids.	God prepares, we do the cleanup.
I have a friend with four children	My secretary killed herself last week.
Who didn't get tenure;	My lover didn't.
And another, who did, was ostracized	And their actions speak less about their pain
For a decade by colleagues	Than their approach.
Threatened by his work.	

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Wedding Day: The Fifth Blessing¹

*You might imagine that such an act
concerns only the immediate players.
A wedding of two, two alone,
paired off and out of the running.
But we, we too, all of us,
who come together
to celebrate this sacred day
know a very different story
is being told:
You are our collective wish for love
and continuance and joy—fulfilled
You are our promise of redemption.*

¹In the traditional Jewish wedding ceremony, seven blessings are recited over the couple. The fifth blessing is a prayer asking for redemption.

by Hellen R. Weingarten

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