

## LITTLE DEATHS \* CHARACTERS

### WISE HOUSEHOLD

SIMON WISE - 40; tall, lean (maybe a little thin), dark-complected, face somewhat lined, a look of suffering in repose, dark, somewhat shaggy hair, intense dark eyes, strong hands; b. 1835 in Manchester; as a boy, admires failed revolutions of 1848 ; raised by free-thinking, emancipationist father (DESCRIBED); volunteers for Crimean War in 1854 to prove loyalty to England (SHOWN in conversation with friend Reuven); during war sees much senseless suffering; also commits an act of which he is deeply ashamed (NEW)(attempts to kill a wounded soldier, a friend begging Simon to kill him. Before Simon can oblige, the boy is killed by enemy fire. Simon then steals his blanket and boots). He quickly represses memory of this incident, and tries to redeem himself by being a purely "good" man (NEW), becoming something of a hero for his selfless devotion to comrades (DESCRIBED in early Crimean chapters). No one knows about the incident with the soldier, and no one, least of all himself, understands his bravery for what it really is, self-punishment (NEW) and an unconscious feeling that he deserves to die (NEW). After the war, Simon experiences PTSD, depression, nightmares, flashbacks (SHOWN when he thinks he sees old comrades), based primarily on the incident with the soldier (NEW); his mother has died while he was at war, sensitizing him to the experience of motherlessness, both in himself and in his younger siblings (NEW); a year later marries Rachel, joins police force in London through the assistance of his sergeant major in the Crimea Matthew Turner, and starts a family.

Over the subsequent fourteen year period, Simon begins to put his life back together. His nightmares recede as his family grows, and he increasingly sees himself as a "good" man, deserving of the good things in life.. He has a caring, although somewhat conventional, relationship with his wife Rachel, to whom he has never confided his intention to kill the soldier (NEW). Their arguments center mainly about how Jewish a household theirs should be (NEW). He has some success in his work, notably uncovering the involvement of British police and government officials in the 1867 Fenian bombing of the Clerkenwell prison. For this discovery he receives promotion to detective inspector in 1868. However, this incident is fraught with irony, for in fact Simon suspects he did not do nearly enough to stop the bombing, in which Matthew Turner was horribly injured (NEW). Nevertheless, he suppresses these doubts, and accepts the promotion.

Then, after finally having achieved a measure of order, stability, and success in his life, his world falls apart again. In 1872 Rachel dies in childbirth, leaving him with an eighth child, their seventh girl, who has Down syndrome. A year later, his favorite daughter Leah dies in a typhoid epidemic. Once again, events have challenged his image of himself as a "good" man. He has been unable to protect his innocent wife and daughter from the ultimate injustice (NEW). Overtly, he blames God (SHOWN in anger toward God at Yom Kippur) and Emily (SHOWN when he enters house in thoughts that Emily is responsible for Rachel's death) , and does not acknowledge his own sense of guilt. Since Rachel's death, Simon has attempted to regain a sense of control through isolation and withdrawal (SHOWN in staying late at work, avoiding the house when Emily is sick, not

coming home for Sabbath) He has never formed an attachment to three year old Emily, and leaves the management of his household to his capable cousin Henrietta Gelbstein. His work performance is mechanical, distant, and uninspired (NEW). This provokes concern (and some interest) in both his detective sergeant, Thomas Murdoch, and in his superior Superintendent Walker (NEW).

Simon entered the Crimean War as an idealistic youth, intending to prove his loyalty to England despite his Jewish background. Instead he encounters the horrors of war, as well as his own capacity for evil (NEW). During the war, in reaction to his murderous intention, he tries to reclaim the status of "goodness" by saving others. However, after the war, with no one to save, he is overwhelmed by survivor guilt and engages in a similar pattern of withdrawal and despair. What impels him to engage in life again is the unquestioning love of a good woman, and the opportunity to continue creating order out of chaos on a personal basis, punishing wrongdoers and assisting victims. Simon feels if a pure woman (Rachel, and later Penelope) can love him, it will prove he did not really have murderous intentions toward another fellow human being, just as he feels if he convicts enough criminals, helps enough victims, it will mean he could not really be capable of committing a horrible crime himself..

In the Crimea, Simon turns his back (although somewhat passively) on Judaism. He concludes that in such a world as he has seen, that allows and encourages such atrocities, including his own intended act, how can there be a God? Or if God exists, how can He be good? Perhaps he also feels his evil intention has made him something of an outcast, put him outside the pale of a spiritual community, that he does not deserve to live within the bosom of the chosen people. Thus he becomes a policeman not so much to challenge existing ethnic stereotypes as to justify his existence. In challenging crime, he has the opportunity to both punish wrong-doers (as he unconsciously feels he should be punished) and help the innocent (as a way of proving to himself he doesn't have the capacity to be a murderer)..

Up until Rachel's death, there is a papering-over of Simon's guilt about the Crimea and later about Clerkenwell. He becomes known for his logically analysed, methodical investigations tempered by compassion and flashes of insight. He is a kind and considerate, although somewhat distant husband and father. He begins to think he has succeeded in wiping out the stains of his past, to convince himself that he could not be capable of evil. He begins to feel he has done enough tikkun olam, repair of the world, to absolve his guilt. But when Rachel dies, he is consumed anew by guilt and grief, which triggers a resurgence of his PTSD. His guilt stems from the fact that, if he had not insisted on continuing a sexual relationship with her, she would not have had to endure so many childbirths, the last of which proved fatal. So he feels specifically responsible for her death in a way: he is a murderer after all (SHOWN when Baumgarten talks about the risks of childbirth; and when Penelope talks about women wanting to avoid endless deliveries). More globally, he feels guilty that he should have done more to protect and save Rachel. These feelings are simply exacerbated by Leah's death.

Thus in the beginning of the book we see Simon withdrawn, passive, afraid of engaging with life, paralyzed by his sense that he is not a "good" man, feeling he can never do enough to wipe out his own guilt. He attempts to protect himself by remaining detached, uninvolved because he is afraid more action will lead to more failure, more mistakes, more evil. His attitude toward his work is that if he is no longer good, then how can he presume to apprehend evil?

What interrupts this despair is Simon's encounter with Lady Penelope, and she disrupts his withdrawal in two ways. First, he feels a strong emotion for Lady Penelope from the start, and begins to think perhaps he could love again. In this stage, Penelope becomes a mechanism to redeem Simon, just as Rachel served the same purpose earlier. Also, through Lady Penelope's narrative, Simon begins to see Lady Fairhaven as someone whose death deserves to be avenged. Whereas initially he was struck only by the contrasts with Rachel, now he sees the similarities: wife and especially mother, an intelligent and vibrant woman, a woman who had much to live for. Just as in the Crimea, Simon begins to feel that although there is no way to restore Rachel to life, he can justify her death (and his own failure) by avenging the death of another.

Simon's evolving feminism is an important subtheme, that allows him to fall in love with Lady Penelope, as well as to become more engaged around Lady Fairhaven's murder. He admires Lady Penelope from the start, but gradually realizes that she is very different from Rachel, an independent thinker and suffragist. He becomes more sympathetic to Henrietta's discourses as a way of understanding Lady Penelope. Simon's gradual adoption of a feminist viewpoint allows him to humanize women who differ from his wife (Lady Penelope, as well as Lady Fairhaven, Arabella, and Moly Reid), and at the same time realize his earlier attitudes imposed limitations on the quality of his relationship with Rachel.

Simon sees both the Fairhaven case and Lady Penelope as a "second chance" to save himself, but in reality his thinking is distorted, he is running from his grief and guilt, trying to bury rather than face them. He will never be a good detective, never be able to truly love until he faces his past. Because Simon is not "seeing clearly," he is determined to punish the guilty husband (a stand-in for himself) rather than objectively seek out the true perpetrator of the Fairhaven crime. Because he defines this crime as his potential salvation, he also continues to ignore other aspects of his work (such as the infanticides). Emily is another failure that he cannot face, cannot even admit he feels responsible for. Therefore, he cannot really care about the baby deaths, because partly he feels these are not truly crimes. Finally, although there is a true connection between him and Lady Penelope, his neediness distorts this relationship as well, and initially he uses it as an escape and a justification of his existential innocence.

The final "awakening" for Simon comes with Murdoch's death. At this point Wise is forced to face up honestly to himself because in fact he has much more culpability for this event than for the deaths of the Crimean soldier, Rachel, Leah, or the victims of the Clerkenwell bombing. He admits clearly to himself for the first time that he has committed murder (in intent anyway), that his vacillation and timidity cost lives and

suffering in the Clerkenwell bombing, that he could not save his wife and child, that he is the father of a defective child whom he does not love, and that the world is filled with people he has let down. He realizes his obsessive focus on the Fairhaven crime, and his desperate clinging to Lady Penelope, have been ways of attempting to avoid the "truth" about himself. It is only by looking at this truth that he can once again be a good detective, a good father, and perhaps a good lover. Simon must understand that there is no way the present can absolve the past, but that the mistakes of the past do not justify giving up in the present. He realizes he can never be whole until he forgives himself and asks God's forgiveness as well. As part of this awakening, he confesses the Crimean incident to Lady Penelope. Simon will at last have some sense of closure and peace.

In terms of personality, Simon is thoughtful and introspective (SHOWN in how he analyses the Fairhaven murder scene; how he reflects on John the Beak, Hyde Park, and Clerkenwell; his concluding thoughts in the Epilogue); has good analytic skills (SHOWN as he explores the Fairhaven case with Murdoch) ; has an ironic turn of phrase (SHOWN when he grasps why he is assigned to the Fairhaven case; thoughts about contacting emigration societies for single women); and is sensitive (SHOWN in his recollected description of how he responded to Rachel's death; and when he cries over Murdoch).

RACHEL Wise: Simon's wife; already dead at beginning of story; b. 1837 in Manchester; came from an Orthodox religious home and broke with her family to marry Simon (NEW); was a good Jewish wife, and worried that Simon did not encourage keeping a Jewish home or raising the children observantly (NEW); was devoted to Simon; was traditional but independent (SHOWN in recollection that she did not wear a wig); saw sex as part of the biblical injunction to procreate (NEW); she represents to Simon an idealized version of female purity.; part of his "awakening" will include the realization that Rachel was not as perfect as he has enshrined her to be (NEW)

REBECCA Wise: Simon's oldest daughter; she is 18 at the beginning of the story; she is the "little mother," devoting herself to her younger siblings (SHOWN in her teaching Emily sign language and in her championing of keeping Emily at home; also in her kindness to Miriam about her dress pattern); she embodies both Rachel's maternal nature and her independence, wanting to become a teacher of handicapped children (SHOWN when she looks through Dore's book; also when she discusses the subject in the park with Dr. Talbot). She also challenges Simon's conviction that the proper place for a woman is in the home, and thus plays a part in his evolving feminism.. Rebecca is also the one who must humanize Emily for Simon.

Rebecca falls in love with Michael Talbot (SHOWN in her initial curiosity about him; then in exchange of poetry in the park; then in exchange with Sarah; finally in speculation about being his wife), apparently replicating in a more extreme way (by defying her father to consider marriage with a Gentile) her mother's decision to reject her Orthodox parents to marry Simon (NEW). Simon wants to believe that Rebecca's love necessarily redeems Talbot, just as he believed her mother's love somehow redeemed him. (NEW) Thus his daughter's love for the doctor will influence him to set aside his doubts about Talbot's character (NEW). In the end he sees that Victorian social

conventions prevented Rebecca from really getting to know Talbot and thus being able to judge him truly (NEW). She fell in love with an illusion, rather than a flesh-and-blood man (NEW). Rebecca is "blinded" to his true nature (NEW).

MIRIAM Wise: Simon's second daughter, two years younger than Rebecca. Miriam represents Simon's stereotyped ideal of an admirable Victorian woman. (SHOWN in his opening thoughts about Miriam as a perfect young woman). She consciously emulates the Victorian stereotype (SHOWN in her devotion to sewing, in her desire to wear a corset, in her dreams of lovers). As his feminism evolves, he begins to admit some of her limitations (NEW).

SARAH Wise: Simon's third daughter, David's twin, 14 years old, and the most intelligent of the Wise children (SHOWN in her scientific inclination, her knowledge of insects, her curious mind as she contemplates the Queen, and her desire to be a detective). She also is Simon's eyes when he is "blind" to Rebecca's romance (SHOWN when she reveals the romance to Wise), as well as to Talbot's true character (NEW).

DAVID Wise: Simon's only son (14). He is a foil for his father's chauvinist attitudes (SHOWN when he belittles women in the conversation about detectives), as he receives special treatment, education, and privilege because he is a boy. As Simon grows, he will realize he often values David for his gender, rather than for who he is (NEW).

DEBORAH Wise: Simon's fourth daughter; 10. She is the musical one of the family (SHOWN when she plays the pianoforte); her playing the violin (NEW) brings Simon in touch with his painful feelings of loss and suffering, which he tries to repress (NEW).

LEAH Wise: Deceased at age 7. Perhaps Simon's favorite child, she acts now as an extra burden of guilt (SHOWN in his thoughts that he paid insufficient attention to her illness).

NAOMI Wise: Age 7; she is the "loved baby," the last child Simon loves. Her function is primarily to contrast her privileged treatment by Simon (SHOWN in her reading in his lap) with his ignoring of Emily (NEW).

EMILY Wise: age 3. Her purpose is to show that children with disabilities have feelings and character (NEW). She is hurt by Simon's indifference (SHOWN during the finger-signing scene with Rebecca), loves playing with her siblings, and has a willful streak that causes her to get her own way (SHOWN when she plays a game with siblings her own way) (NEW). She is a survivor (DESCRIBED in her surviving infancy).

HENRIETTA Gelbstein: age 38, Rachel's cousin from Germany, she has lived with the Wise family for the past 5 years. She comes from an assimilated background, but strives to keep a kosher, observant household in honor of Rachel's memory. She was originally supposed to earn her living as a governess, but she proved too Teutonic for the English households where she sought employment. After Rachel's death, she takes over running the Wise household and tutoring the children (ALL OF ABOVE IS DESCRIBED). She is a strict disciplinarian, and also an outspoken feminist (SHOWN in scene of corset,

eating the last biscuit, in discussion about marriage, Aldershot, George Eliot). She is secretly a bit in love with Simon (NEW). She enjoys occasional conversations with him about his cases, as this is her window on a larger, more interesting world (NEW). Her function is to raise Simon's consciousness, as well as to give him feminist insight into people's motivations.

MARTHA, the Wise all-around maid: Martha is a faithful servant, "given" to the Wise family by Rachel's mother "under the table" so help her survive alone in London (NEW). Martha can provide some information about how Rachel was alienated from her orthodox wealthy family when she married Wise (the family may even have sat shiva and said kaddish for her) (NEW). Martha may be a surreptitious link back to Rachel's family, passing along news of the grandchildren etc (NEW). Martha rightly saw herself as a surrogate mother to the young wife, and made it her business to guide her in becoming a good Jewish housewife (NEW). Martha, though a Gentile, had thoroughly learned the ways of a Jewish household and, after Rachel's death, forms an alliance with Henrietta to maintain observance in the family (DESCRIBED). However, she may also feel insecure about her continued employment since Henrietta has assumed management of the household (NEW). She also provides an opportunity to show Simon's compassionate side toward someone even lower down on the class hierarchy (NEW).

#### CONNECTED TO WISE HOUSEHOLD

ZADOK Wise: The patriarch of the Wise family. Originally an itinerant tradesman from Germany, he eventually established a watch repair and jewelry store in Manchester. A free-thinker, he loves Voltaire and Thomas Paine as much as the Torah. He is a strong believer in Jewish emancipation, and urged his son to join the army to prove the family's loyalty to England. He experiences guilt and resentment when his son comes home crushed, and is sympathetic to Matthew Turner's suggestions for reconstructing Simon's life (SHOWN in scene between him and Turner). He influenced Simon to be an independent thinker, to question God, and to be a faithful British subject (ALL OF ABOVE IS DESCRIBED).

Dr. ELIAS BAUMGARTEN: Wise family physician. He was present at Rachel's death and assisted in the delivery of Emily. Initially he recommends institution for Emily, but the child's sheer survival ability impresses him and he develops a personal stake in her progress. For this reason he refers Simon to Michael Talbot, as someone who espouses progressive techniques in working with the disabled (ALL OF ABOVE IS DESCRIBED)..

#### FAIRHAVEN HOUSEHOLD

LADY ALICIA FAIRHAVEN - wife of Sir Gregory; her dead body opens the book. She turns out to have been a beautiful, and somewhat bored, aristocrat (SHOWN through Wise's eyes, Murdoch's information, Lady Penelope's description to Wise). She loved her children, and had made her peace with her husband (SHOWN in Lady P's description to Wise). She supported his political aspirations, and he allowed her independence. She

was curious about the world, especially the men in the world, and hobnobbed with explorers, adventurers, missionaries, professors, business tycoons, and sometimes went to bed with them as well. She also flirted with feminism (SHOWN in Lady P's description). She liked adventure, and was the mysterious A.B. who exposed a baby-selling ring in the early 60s (SHOWN in Lady P's later disclosures). This was an activity she kept secret from her husband, and even from her best friend, Lady Penelope, although at some point she had disclosed it to Talbot. Initially, Wise is somewhat contemptuous of Lady Fairhaven as an immoral woman who does not know her place, and cannot have been a good mother (NEW). As he learns to see her through the eyes of people who loved her, he develops an appreciation of her adventurous nature and appetite for life (NEW). Something about Lady Fairhaven's death reminds Simon of Rachel, and triggers an angry desire to solve her murder (NEW).

SIR GREGORY FAIRHAVEN: Lady Alicia's husband and Wise's prime suspect in her murder (NEW). He is a (vaguely) liberal MP, and a typical country gentleman (hunting, shooting, more comfortable in the company of men than women) (SHOWN through Lady P's description). He is also a gambler, and has amassed considerable debt, which Rothschild discovers (SHOWN in Rothschild's disclosure to Wise). Somewhat intimidated by his intelligent and forceful wife, he takes his sexual pleasures elsewhere, at the moment with the exclusive prostitute Arabella Bowdoin (SHOWN in his thoughts of their sexual relation). He may be involved in two of the scandals referred to in the book: the Druscovitch affair, which involved rigging a series of Ascot horse races (NEW); and the Aldershot incident, in which an innocent woman whose daughter was persecuted by police under the Contagious Diseases Act committed suicide (NEW). In the first case, Sir Gregory could have been helping the swindler set up wealthy people in the race horse scam, as well as paying detectives under the table, in an effort to resolve his financial problems (NEW). In terms of Aldershot, he could have been an original sponsor of the legislation, then urged authorities to the fullest prosecution of Mrs. \_\_\_ and her daughter (NEW). Such an action would highlight his hypocrisy, since he is sleeping with a dollymop himself, who was harassed under the Contagious Diseases legislation, while he was completely immune.

Although Sir Gregory feels some genuine affection toward Arabella, he would never have thought of leaving his wife for her. He actually suspects Arabella might have done away with Lady Alicia, while Arabella suspects the same of him. Since neither fully trusts the other, they play games around their alibis for each other. To Wise, Sir Gregory represents everything despicable in a husband – someone who does not love his wife, is unfaithful to her, has squandered the family fortune, is more concerned with status and wealth than with family (NEW). Wise obsessively pursues Sir Gregory until near the end of the book, ignoring the man's more humane qualities that make him unlikely as the murderer, and determined to convict him (NEW). Although initially Sir Gregory appears as an unqualified scoundrel, there is evidence he is fond of his own children, and has been paying to support his and Arabella's child in the country. He would never stoop to actually murdering his own wife.

JAMES, the Fairhaven footman - James is an early suspect in the Fairhaven murder, because it was rumored he was having an affair with Lady Fairhaven. He denies that it was more than flirtation, and her taking a personal interest in his future. He presents as an alibi spending the night with the laundry girl. He is also responsible for impregnating Molly Reid. His function is to show a compassionate, although flirtatious side, to Lady Fairhaven; and to drive home to Wise that men are equally implicated in the negative consequences of out-of-wedlock births. His interview also shows the naïve, unskilled side of Constable Brown (ALL OF ABOVE IS SHOWN IN INTERVIEW WITH BROWN AND MURDOCH).

#### CONNECTED TO FAIRHAVEN HOUSEHOLD

PROFESSOR THEODORE MAXIMUS: Professor Maximus is a professor of political philosophy and an admirer of JS Mill who also enjoys photographing naked young girls. He is briefly a suspect in the Fairhaven murder, as he knew Lady Alicia. His purpose is to show Wise Lady Alicia's walk-on-the-wild side aspect, as well as to distract attention from Sir Gregory. (ALL OF ABOVE IS SHOWN IN INTERVIEW WITH WISE) He might also have a connection back to the Rothschild brother Alfred, or to Talbot (NEW).

FREDERICK BRYANT MAY: an industrialist who founded a matchstick factory and made millions. He had a prior affair with Lady Fairhaven, and attempted to renew it, but was spurned. Sir Gregory may be trying to use him to obtain a loan (NEW). Again, his purpose is to provide more information about Lady Alicia's character to Wise, as well as to be a competitor in Wise's mind for the role of murderer. (ALL OF ABOVE SHOWN IN SCENE WITH WISE).

NATHANIEL ROTHSCHILD: a highly successful banker who engineered the purchase of the Suez canal for Britain, and was involved in the highest governmental fiscal dealings of his time. In this book, his role is to emphasize for Simon his role as outsider in English society (SHOWN IN FIRST INTERVIEW WITH WISE). As it turns out, he has a one-night stand with Lady Alicia the night of the ball (NEW). He is also trying to protect his brother Alfred from scandal, not regarding Lady Fairhaven, but because he is a homosexual. He is the one to bring Sir Gregory's debt-ridden status to Simon's attention (SHOWN IN SECOND SCENE WITH WISE).

ALFRED ROTHSCHILD: A libertine and closet homosexual, Alfred is the scandal of the Rothschild family. Although he knows Lady A, and has invited her to several of his more outrageous gatherings, they have no relationship. However, Lady A was aware of his sexual orientation. This may be used as an extra lever with Nathaniel, in trying to secure a loan for her husband (NEW).

LADY PENELOPE ABBOTT: Wise's love interest. Lady Penelope exists in rather genteel poverty, although with the help of relatives has sent her oldest son to Cambridge and her second son to public school. She is independent-minded, a semi-feminist and a friend of Lady Alicia's, but is also lonely (SHOWN IN FIRST SCENE WITH WISE).



She is attracted to Wise because of his otherness, although she could never consider marriage because of the scandal for her children. She is somewhat motherly and nurturing to him, but not incapable of imagining romance between them, and perhaps acting on it as well (NEW). In Wise's eyes, Lady Penelope holds the promise that Rachel held fifteen years before (NEW). If he can win her love, it will somehow redeem him (NEW). He does have feelings for her, but he also falls in love with the idea of being loved by her (NEW).

**MOLLY REID:** Molly is considered briefly as a suspect in the Fairhaven murder. She is included to show the degradation of the "fallen" woman (SHOWN IN INTERVIEW WITH MURDOCH AND BROWN). She also becomes a suspect (briefly) in the baby murder ring (not really developed).

**ARABELLA BOWDOIN:** Arabella was a street prostitute who met Sir Gregory in a military town in the north, (Aldershot), became pregnant with his child, and moved up in the world. She now lives in Kate Hamilton's establishment, and is kept primarily for Sir Gregory's pleasure. She plans to use her child as leverage to obtain still more material security (SHOWN in train ride). She suspects Sir Gregory might have killed his wife, but she provides him with an alibi in any case (SHOWN in interaction with Sir G when he visits her). She left Kate Hamilton's that night to confront Lady Alicia, and when she returned Sir Gregory was gone (in fact, he had gone into town to try to get some resolution on his debt situation). She did see a male figure struggling with Lady Alicia, but is unable to identify him (DESCRIBED to Wise). Arabella is the type of woman Simon despises, but he learns to see her more compassionately as the novel progresses (NEW).

**KATE HAMILTON:** the proprietress of an elegant house of ill-repute. She lays some groundwork for Arabella being sufficiently cold-blooded to do away with Lady Alicia (SHOWN in second interview with Murdoch). She also brings out the worst in Sir Gregory, perceiving him as pleasure-seeking and unconcerned about his wife's death (SHOWN in scene where Sir Gregory visits).

**JOSEPH WINKEEP** - The gardenboy who runs away because he makes a connection between the note he takes to Talbot, and Lady Fairhaven's death (SHOWN in interview with Brown).

## POLICE

**THOMAS MURDOCH:** Murdoch is by origin a Scot. A few years older than Wise, he served in the Crimea, although the two did not know each other there. Murdoch fell in love with a young Nightingale nurse Nancy and, when the war ended, followed her back to London (DESCRIBED). He joined the Metropolitan Police Force, and moved up through the ranks with Simon. They were friends as well as colleagues. Their relationship became complicated in 1868 when Simon was promoted to inspector and Murdoch was not. His superiors felt Murdoch was a good sergeant, and managed men

well, but did not have the logical analysis and keen insight necessary to operate at the level of inspector (NEW). Murdoch is still fond of Simon, but he is also jealous (NEW). As Simon's skills have deteriorated over the past three years, Murdoch has become increasingly resentful that Wise is his superior (NEW). Murdoch longs to prove himself, not only in Walker's eyes, but in Simon's as well (SHOWN in his feeling hurt when Simon feels he is pursuing Brantley without foundation) (NEW). He feels that Wise has a little contempt for his style of detection, and wants to prove his abilities (SHOWN when he decides to pursue baby death investigation on his own). He confronts Wise about his lack of involvement early on (NEW), and later points out that Wise is devoting all his attention to the Fairhaven case, while ignoring the baby deaths (NEW). But Murdoch also consults with Walker privately, and sees solving the infanticide case as a way of moving up the career ladder (NEW). Murdoch's personal motivation to solve the infant deaths is that he and his wife are childless, and he takes personal affront at anyone who would voluntarily discard the life of a child, no matter how deformed (NEW). Yet, paradoxically, Murdoch also reflects Victorian attitudes of prejudice and loathing toward the disabled (SHOWN in first scene with Brantley, and later discussions with Wise). He suspects Brantley, and is especially offended that these crimes could be perpetrated by "one of their own." (NEW).

**WILLIAM BENJAMIN BROWN:** Constable Brown brings out the parental mentoring in Murdoch, who has no children of his own. Brown's greatest desire, however, is to impress Inspector Wise (SHOWN in bringing plaster of Paris information to Wise). He is responsible for tracking down Joseph Winkeep, the gardenboy, thus uncovering the information that Brantley took a note from Lady Fairhaven to Talbot the day before she was murdered. Brown is also responsible for making the discovery of the plaster of Paris print that matches Arabella's shoe. Wise uses this information to confront Arabella, and eventually to get her to recant her alibi for Sir Gregory. Finally, Brown leads the investigation of the baby deaths into the lying-in homes. There should be tension between his need to follow through on what Murdoch sees as an important investigation (the baby deaths) and his desire to work on the Fairhaven case, and thus win Wise's favor (NEW). After Murdoch's death, one of Wise's responsibilities is to take over a mentor role toward Brown, although he initially resists this.

**MATTHEW TURNER-** a minor character in this book, Turner is Simon's mentor, his sergeant in the Crimea, and the person responsible for bringing him into the Metropolitan Police Force. Turner had a successful career of his own with the Force, rising to the rank of inspector, until he was severely injured in the Clerkenwell bombing of 1867. Simon blames himself for Turner's present state (NEW), in which the blind and maimed man lives quietly with his wife off a small pension. He can act as a sounding board for Wise at various points in the book, urging him in one direction or another in the investigations (NEW). He might also interact once or twice with Superintendent Walker to defend Simon (NEW). He can also challenge Simon's views of Emily, and question why Simon has remained loyal to him while rejecting his own child (NEW). Toward the end of the book, Simon will make a confession of his Crimean killing to Turner (NEW).

ROBERT WALKER: Wise's immediate superior, Superintendent of the Whitechapel station. He resents Simon as a Jewish interloper, but also historically has relied on his excellent detection skills as well as required him to handle politically delicate situations. Now he is growing increasingly annoyed that, since Rachel's death, Simon's work performance has been detached and mechanical (NEW). Early on he may warn Simon to apply himself, while simultaneously conferring with Murdoch about possibly replacing Wise (NEW). As Wise becomes obsessed with the Fairhaven murder, Walker starts to worry he is pursuing Sir Gregory too relentlessly (based in part on Murdoch's informing him there might be many other suspects) and encourages him to back off (NEW).

## TALBOT HOUSEHOLD

MICHAEL TALBOT - a young Anglican Irish doctor, about 28, trying to develop the emergent specialty of pediatrics, who is interested in diseases and conditions of children. In London, he has started a Research and Educational Institute for the Study of Childhood Deformities and Handicaps. In the past year, Lady Alicia helped him to raise funds for this effort. He carried on a sometime affair with her over this period, with Brantley as the go-between (they might have favored sending each other love sonnets - ie., Elizabeth Barrett Browning etc.) (NEW). He carries a guilty secret that his successful society-doctor father went insane and eventually committed suicide. His sister experienced severe post-partum depression and had to be institutionalized. These events have made Talbot decide that he should not have children and run the risk of transmitting this terrifying legacy. Initially his professional activities were directed toward educational and medical interventions designed to improve the condition of disabled children. However, by the time the book opens, he has started engaging in unapproved experimentation that usually results in the death of his patients. Later, after Lady Fairhaven's death, he moves to outright murder, but with the rationalization of mercy killing. Talbot believes he is relieving suffering and improving the quality of the species by eliminating these defective infants, although he also realizes he is committing a crime that he cannot confess to. Wise sees him as one of the "good" people of the world, trying to wrest order from chaos, therefore can't suspect him of evil deeds.

Talbot falls in love with Rebecca, or at least with the image of Rebecca as a pure and innocent girl. He might be concerned that she is Jewish, but on the other hand might take Disraeli's position that they represent a "race" superior to English aristocracy. (NEW) He is still looking for a woman who will understand and support his advanced scientific insights. Lady Fairhaven disappointed him, but perhaps someone younger and more naïve can be swayed by his passion and intellectual arguments. Wise sees himself and Rachel reflected in this romance (NEW). Just as Rachel "redeemed" him from his PTSD and despair through the purity of her love, so he believes that Rebecca can "temper" Talbot's more impetuous and dangerous qualities (NEW). The denouement of the book will be his abduction of Emily and Rebecca, first to justify himself to Rebecca, then to put Emily (out Rachel) out of their misery, and finally to end his own life (NEW). Wise will rescue them (NEW).

**OLIVER BRANTLEY** - Oliver is a young man in his early twenties with cerebral palsy and a curvature of the spine. He is Talbot's assistant, devoted because Talbot rescued him from a life on the streets, and has treated him humanely since. Talbot might talk to Brantley about his ideas regarding deformity, and its place in the natural order (NEW). As part of his work, Brantley procures infants on which Talbot performs his experimental procedures, and likely disposes of their bodies afterwards. Oliver is perturbed by the increasingly erratic nature of Talbot's behavior, and by the growing number of infant deaths (NEW). He also realizes that Talbot is responsible for murdering Lady Fairhaven, of whom Brantley was very fond. However, Oliver remains loyal to his master, and in a sort of role reversal, becomes his protector and guardian. He feels he owes him a debt that extends beyond right and wrong. When Brantley thinks Murdoch is getting too close to the truth, he kills him, then commits suicide to make it appear as though he were responsible for both the baby deaths and Lady Fairhaven's murder.

Brantley is also the foil for Murdoch's prejudices against the disabled, as Murdoch sees in him a moral ugliness equivalent to his outward deformities. From the start, Murdoch dislikes and mistrusts Brantley, projecting onto him a murderous anger and pecuniary instinct that leads him to set up a baby murdering ring, and a sexual appetite that motivates him to kill Lady Fairhaven (NEW). However, Wise sees Brantley through Talbot's more compassionate eyes, and Brantley becomes a bridge for Simon back to Emily (NEW). Talbot models a relationship with Brantley that causes Wise to admit the humanity of the man, and therefore potentially of his own daughter (NEW). Because Wise trusts Talbot; he wants to believe his good opinion of Brantley.

#### CONNECTED TO BABY DEATHS

**NICHOLAS PRODGER** - a boardman and wall poster man. Prodger's function is to lead Murdoch to Brantley's involvement with baby acquisition; and to Mrs. Martin, the midwife who has been accused of disposing of unwanted children in the past. He makes Murdoch suspicious of Brantley, but is not convincing to Inspector Wise.

**MRS. CATHERINE MARTIN** - A midwife who has been involved in the past in the disposal of unwanted infants. She could be a suspect in her own right in Murdoch's eyes. However, she also points a finger at Brantley by identifying him as the receiver for the babies. She is paid, by Brantley, for procuring these infants.

**MR. DAWSON:** Administrator of St. Giles workhouse. He is a slimy apologist for a corrupt institution that treats its inmates harshly and contemptuously. He offers no useful information about disposal of infants, and virtuously declares that they require their mothers to adhere to high Christian standards in obtaining dry-nurses for any infants delivered in the workhouse. However, when Murdoch and Brown are there, an anonymous woman informs them of a "bent" midwife being willing to take unwanted children off their mother's hands. Dawson is also forcing women of the workhouse to have sex with him in exchange for food, and Murdoch promises he will put a stop to this. Dawson's function is to motivate Murdoch even more strongly to solve the baby murders.

