

LITTLE DEATHS * ORIGINAL MISSION STATEMENT

The original mission of this book was basically "how do good people cope when bad things happen to them?" In the original conceptualization, Simon Wise was a basically good man. In this book, he has been overwhelmed by tragedy – the deaths of his wife and daughter. His suffering (overlaid with a little survivor guilt, but not primarily guilt-ridden - he sees himself as an afflicted innocent) is so pervasive (although dulled by the passage of time) that, although he doggedly tries to do his duty, he cannot fully attend to the ongoing business of his life – in his case, family, work, the possibility of new love. As a result, he brings even more suffering on himself – and on others. His children's pain at being ignored, Henrietta's frustration at not ever being "heard" by Simon, Penelope's inability to get Simon to come out of his relational shell, and most strikingly Murdoch's death are all examples of how his reluctance to reengage with life only causes more pain. Throughout this struggle he is sensitive, thoughtful, introspective – and indecisive, passive. Ultimately (in the last few pages of the book) he realizes that whether or not we can put things in order, whether or not we can make sense of suffering, nevertheless in the face of the little deaths we experience throughout life, we must remain committed to life and relationship.