

Kirsty ([00:00](#)):

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Narrator ([00:31](#)):

This episode features frank discussions about death and human remains. Listener discretion is advised.

Dr. Stevens ([00:42](#)):

The first AVS case I saw, I don't actually remember the first AVS case I saw. I guess it had to be a lot earlier than when. I think it was just because we didn't know we were supposed to be looking for something at the time, honestly, it felt like one day we were treating migraines and setting arms and helping people recover from heart attacks, and the next day it was paralysis, fever, fatigue, death. Except of course, that day never ended.

Narrator ([01:12](#)):

Dr. Brielle Stevens, Age 37. interview.

Dr. Stevens ([01:19](#)):

There weren't a lot of kids at First. General is near a college, and colleges are Petri dish, even when there's not a once in all generation virus ripping the world apart. Sorry, off topic or was that right? We were near a college, and so most of those first few patients I saw were professors and grad students. We didn't know how fast it moved Back then we thought people might have had time. You have a fever, you're coughing, can barely keep your head up. Alright, stay a night here, then go back home. It's what we always used to say, go home.

([01:51](#)):

It just moved so fast. There was one professor, professor Declan. She was a chemist. One of my nurses, Mary was her big sister. Declan was only in her thirties, but she'd seen a lot of life, had brain cancer as a kid, but she won in the end. She great sense of humor, A very sweet, nice, kind young lady. She came to the ER one afternoon, I guess. I guess she was one of my first a BS cases. One of the first times I knew something was wrong. She wasn't feeling well. She had to cancel her class because she just couldn't stop wheezing. She sounded like one of those old dog toys with a cracked squeaker. She could barely pick up her expo marker. She called Mary and Mary told her to come in immediately. We run all the usual tests, nothing. We run them again, nothing.

([02:37](#)):

She has a fever though, and that plus the muscle weakness and the wheezing, the coughing. It was too much. We decided to keep her overnight. She protests, but Mary puts her foot down. That's why she was a good nurse. She was good at that kind of thing. We keep her overnight next morning, she couldn't move a right arm. That's a red alert. We do everything we can to figure out what's going on. Cat scan, MRI. We even ran an echo just in case nothing. She never looked scared. She looked, she looked like she'd win in the end this time too, no matter what it was, five hours later she was dead. Once Declan died, it was like a gate was unlocked. There were so many cases, so many people, bodies, the morgue ended up getting overfilled. The bodies were stored in these two story storage units with AC out on the street.

([03:31](#)):

You couldn't look outside without seeing them. And a couple months they lined the boulevard, took you 10 minutes driving to pass all of them. That was before we started burning them. By that point, we were in total lockdown, so families couldn't be with them. The people would die alone. And then we marked the door with this bright red streak and another team would come take the body, try and disinfect the room, and 30 minutes later there's a new body in the bed. And a day later, the whole thing starts over again. Like a reverse Passover. Of course, that means we were the angels of death.

[\(04:03\)](#):

There's a paperwork nightmare. I'll tell you that. I can't tell you how many bodies were lost because the wrong form was signed or the wrong address was on file, or there was an overlap with 12 other bodies in the tracking wasn't Jesus. You don't wanna hear about paperwork. Once we saw how fast it spread in Central America, we were in level DPPE. Once we started seeing cases by the tens in the states, we were upgraded to level C. Of course, we knew by then that people in Central America were seeing cases by the hundreds of thousands, and I don't think anyone in the hospital, maybe even the country, could really appreciate what that's spelled out for our future. I, I'll never forget the, well, there's a lot. I'll never forget. I'll never forget the feeling of tiny hands curling around my finger when they got scared.

[\(04:52\)](#):

I'll never forget how quiet it all was. You could walk the entire building and you'd hear footsteps and machines beeping, maybe the occasional tv, the coughing, but it was so quiet. No one could be outside. Remember, it was a lockdown. So it was just doctors and nurses and techs and patients. Kids, kids can be really brave. If you're not crying, then they don't think that they should cry. Of course, some of the older ones, they can't help it. They know what it all means dying, but the younger ones <laugh>. When you're four, what do you know about dying? You just know the adult said they were going to take care of you. Why wouldn't you believe them? Why would they lie?

[\(05:44\)](#):

I'll never forget the caught in the break room and how that little piece of metal kept poking me in the back. I hate that cot, but when you've been working four on that cot feels like a slice of paradise. I'll never forget the taste of the coffee. We started reusing grounds. Terrible. But um, I'll never really forget the smell. Hospitals, you know, they usually smell like antiseptic and rubbing alcohol and sometimes bleach. It smells sterile and clean too clean, really. But that's what you want in a place where people are cutting you open. But after the people, uh, the bodies after things got bad, there just wasn't time to clean anymore. All the hospitals were full, but we were trauma one. We had the most beds in the county, so everyone was at general. When I say everyone was at general, I mean, everyone, geriatrics, cancer patients, people with chronic illness, people with severe flu, that's something you don't think about, is it? When people talk about those days now, you think the destroyer was the only thing killing people, but it wasn't. And the smell, it was sour. It's like people always smell sour and warm, like everything in their body is fermenting, but usually it's contained to about a foot radius from them. But when the numbers started getting larger, we had to create makeshift beds. People were sleeping 10 to a room. There were mats in the hallways. Some people didn't even get mats. It was just blankets and maybe a pillowcase stuck with rags. I had to step over people just to get to the break room, and there were people in there too. It smelled so warm and thick like rott and,

[\(07:18\)](#):

And I think even when I die, he'll still remember that smell.

[\(07:28\)](#):

You wanna know what the worst part of the whole wave was? It wasn't the kids, it wasn't the smell, it wasn't the dead coworkers. It wasn't the way the streets got emptier and emptier. It wasn't the despair on the faces, it wasn't any of that. The worst part is that I got used to it. Another dead kid. Great. A bed opened up and kids burned fast. Mary jumped in front of a train. Yes, we'll have to rearrange shifts. A girl

broke into a storage unit to find a father that's gonna back up the morgue for a week. That sucks. I became a doctor because I wanted to help people. It's cliché, but it's true. I wanted people to be able to heal. I still want, I stayed at general, stayed in the ER, I tried to switch to a couple of different departments, but they were too quiet. And, uh, I do my job. I set arms. I treat headaches, treat people with heart attacks. I help people get back out there and live because life is something worth doing. Life is worth doing. It was a lot easier to believe before the destroyer. Everyone thinks they're important until school's worth of children die by the day until you get more used to dead faces than living ones until you can't tell them apart. Live, die. What's the difference? People are just bodies. Bodies burn. There'll be more bodies tomorrow. Sorry, I, um, I thought I'd be more ready to talk about. I I didn't know I'd, um, sorry, I I couldn't be more help.

Narrator ([09:24](#)):

This episode of Chronicles was written and directed by Jade Madison Scott. Featuring the voice of Sophia Early

([09:41](#)):

Produced by Faith McQuinn. Editing by Faith McQuinn. Sound mixed by Joshua Suhy. Credits by Matthew Boudreau. Theme music by Alice in Winter.

([09:52](#)):

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([09:54](#)):

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