

The Coroner

They said it used to start with a cough. Like one of those old timey diseases that we had evolved away from. Our biosciences were too great to fall back in time. That's what they said.

He knew the start varied. Cough. Loss of smell. Fever. Congestion. Nausea. Depression. Anxiety. He knew the end was lonely. What lived in the middle teetered between faith and despair.

He got into the field because he was interested in the concept of a 1,000 ways to die. He couldn't have fathomed he'd experience 1,000 ways to die from the same disease. It had been about ten years since the experts labeled it the height of the crisis and yet new heights were being met each day.

He thought it would have ran out of people by now. But he was still printing death certificates daily, more now than when it first started. Sure he was printing for more municipalities, more counties, more states, but hey, who else was going to do it? They said he was one of the few who remained.

He typed in the time interval onset to death: a decade. The cause: exhaustion. The underlying cause: sadness. The note: people with it may die due to other conditions such as a gunshot to the head.

He cocked the hammer, hit print, and drew in a breath. The vaccine, a penetrating relief.