

Reflections

A Covid-19 Ghost Story
by Leo Levy



SCAN ME



Content Warning:
Suicide



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by Leo Levy



Ach! 118 years later and here I am, back on the shores of Cayuga Lake again.



History seems to be repeating itself... I hope I'm in time to stop it.

But first, where did I put it?

Ja, there we go.

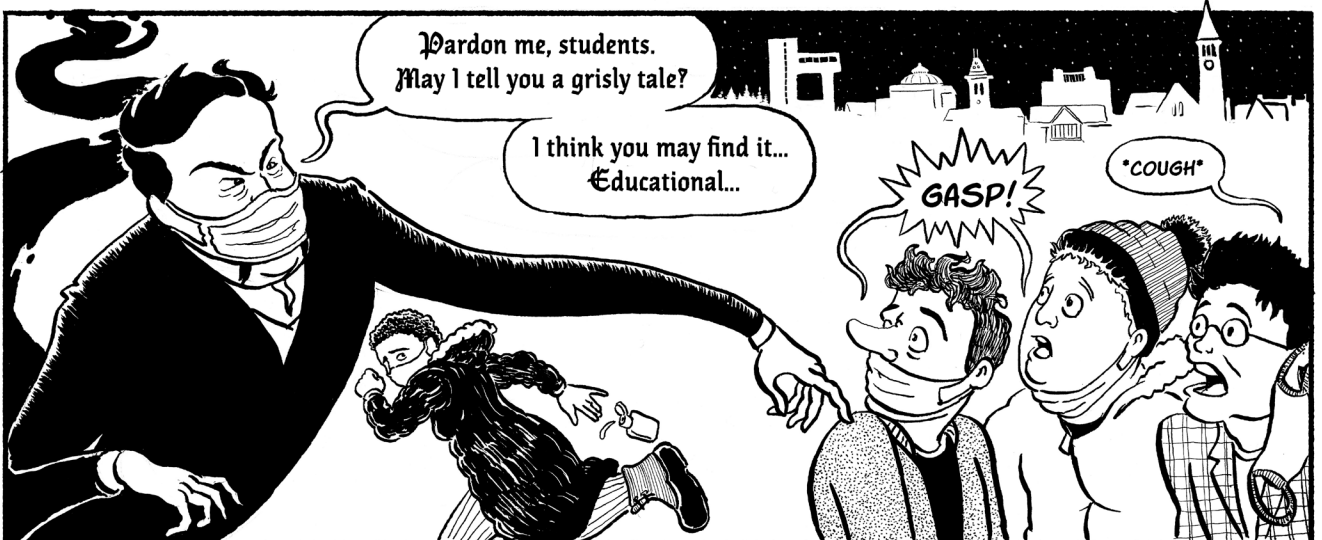
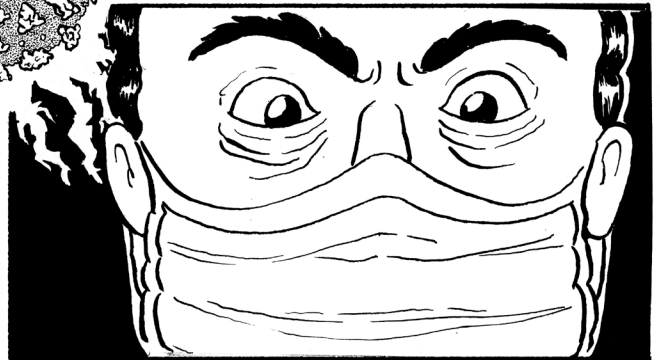
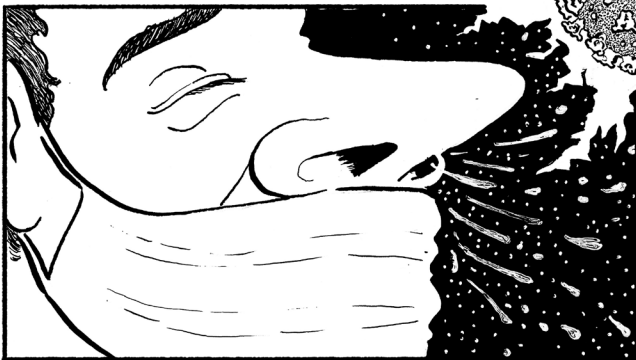
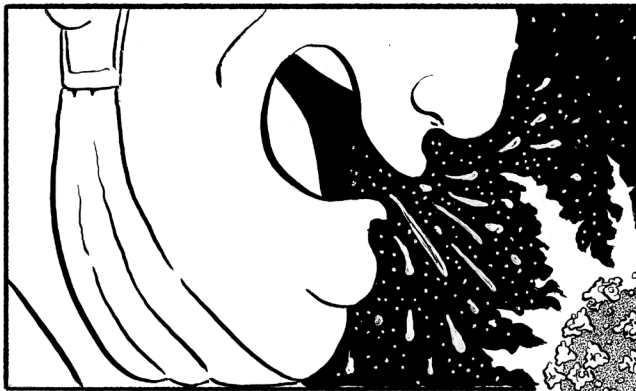
Perhaps, if I can just save them from making the same mistakes...

I may finally find peace.



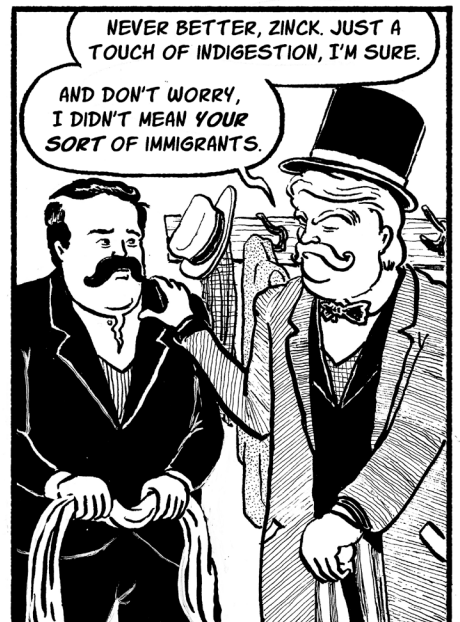
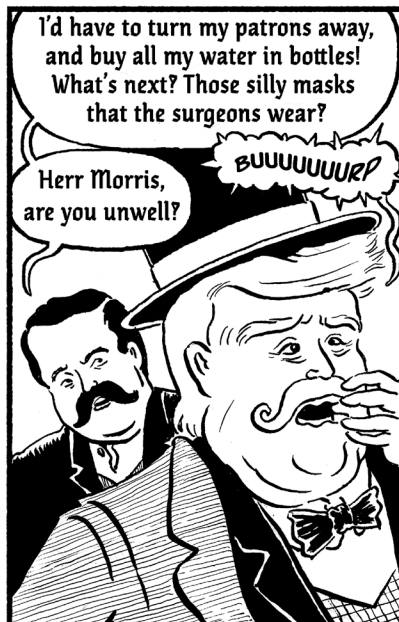
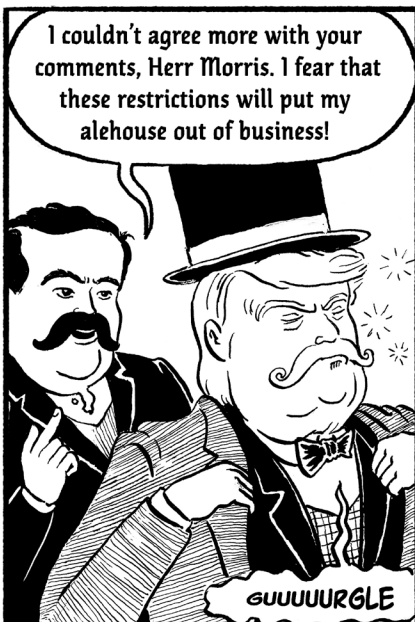
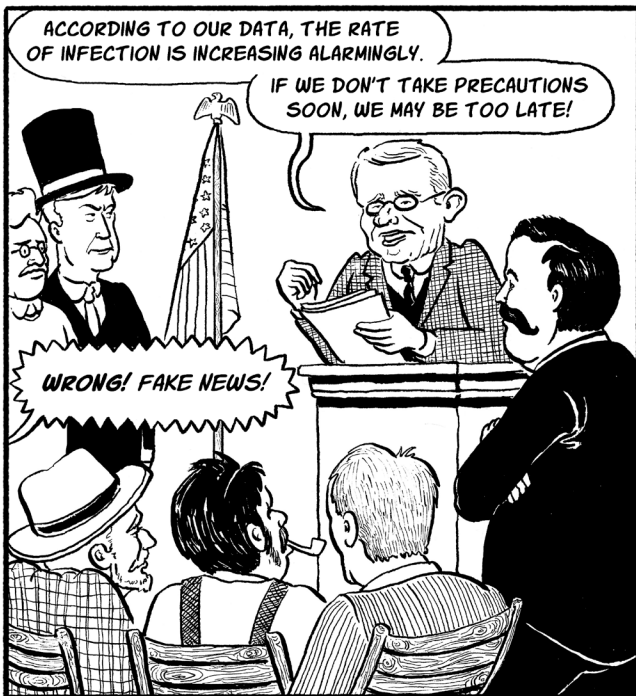


* Give My Regards to Davy, the Cornell University fight song



It was the winter of 1903,
and death was in the air. Or
actually, it was in the water.

Typhoid had come to town.



The sickness spread fast. In a town of 13,000 people, at least 1400 fell ill. Your chance of recovery depended on your age...

Typhoid preys on the young.

INFIRMARY RECEPTION

OH, JUST MILD SYMPT - OH!

GASP!
SOMEONE
CATCH HIM!



As patients flooded into the hospital, the town's few nurses grew overwhelmed and exhausted.

BRING HIM THIS WAY,
BOYS. I THINK A BED JUST
OPENED UP IN THE HALL.

AND DON'T ASK HOW...



And then one night...

I'M SO TERRIBLY
SORRY, MR. ZINCK.

THERE JUST ISN'T
ANY ROOM FOR HER...



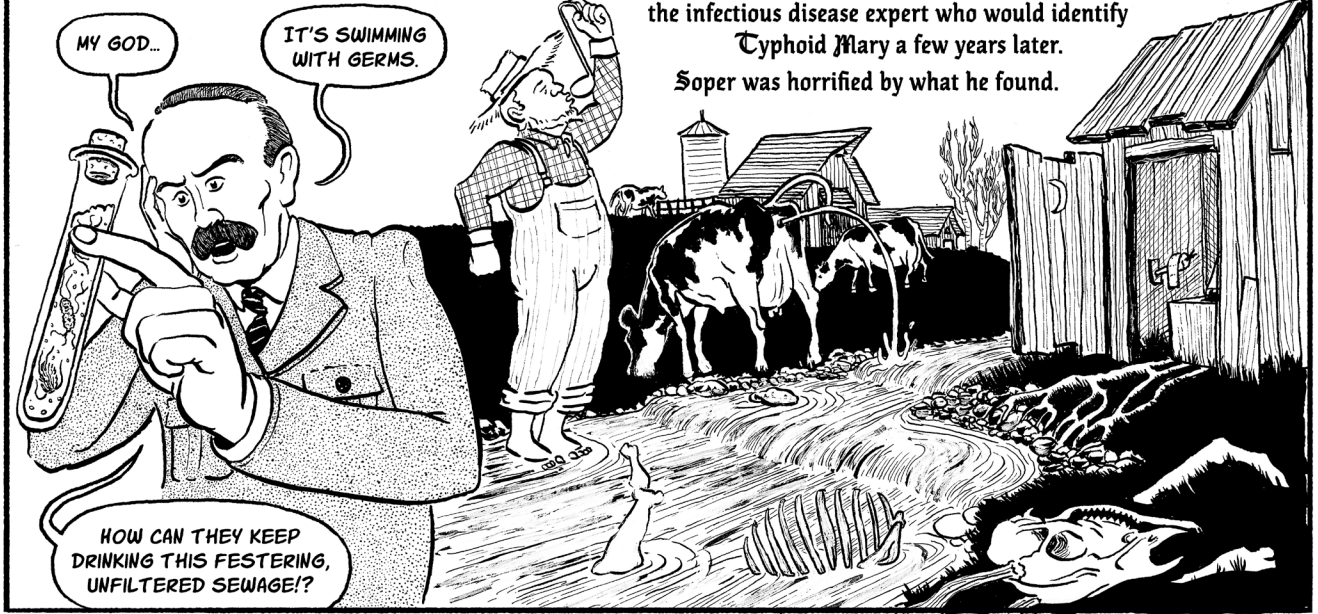
DON'T CRY,
PAPA...

I'LL BE ALRIGHT.

JUST...
PLEASE DON'T CRY.



The epidemic raged out of control, becoming a national scandal. With its reputation at stake, the state sent in Dr. George Soper, the infectious disease expert who would identify Typhoid Mary a few years later. Soper was horrified by what he found.



Guided by science, Soper rallied the town's beleaguered healthcare workers, and together they set to work.

Week after week, the townspeople made painful sacrifices. More than 500 homes had to be quarantined, and over 400 wells were abandoned.



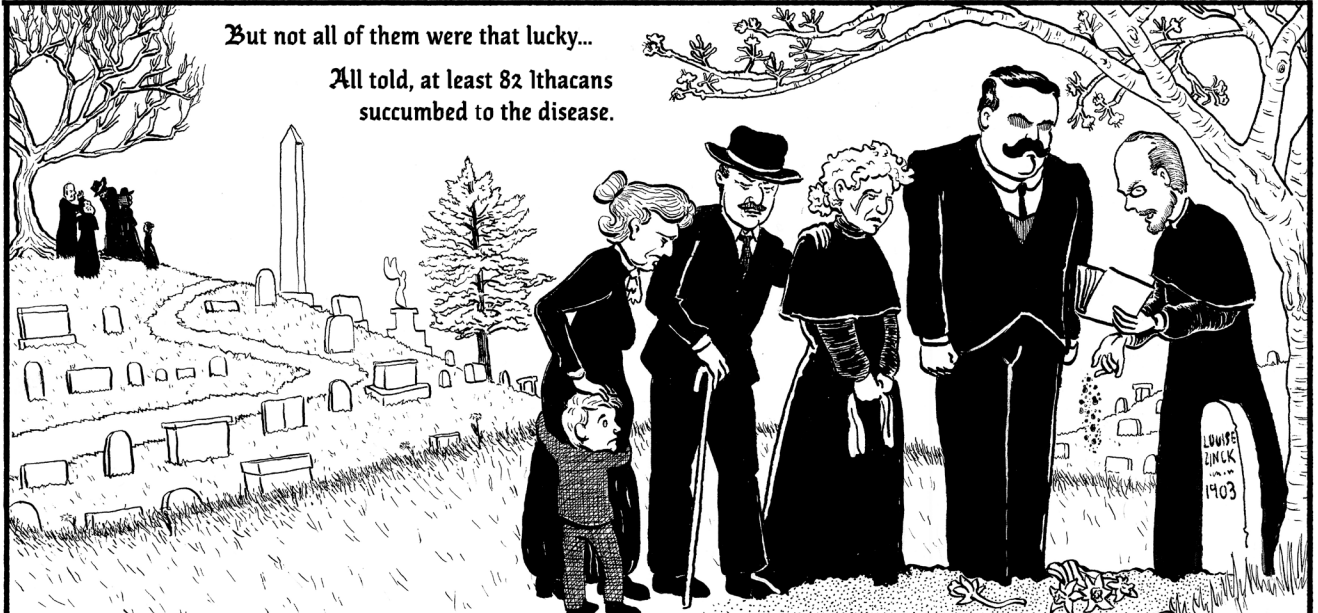
By springtime their efforts paid off. New cases ebbed, and patients headed back to their homes – this time, not in coffins.



Exhausted and scared, the townsfolk united behind them.



But not all of them were that lucky... All told, at least 82 Ithacans succumbed to the disease.

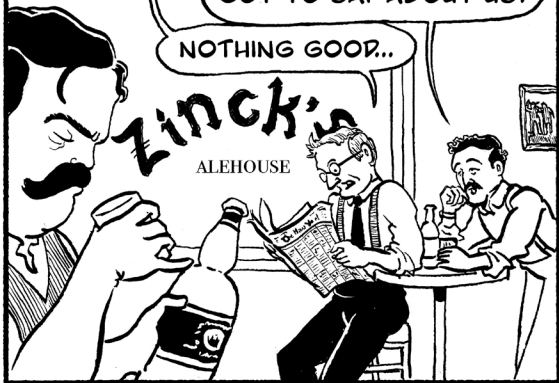


Slowly life returned to something like normal. Men hid from the summer heat in ice-cold beers.

“GEE WHIZ, THE NEW YORK TIMES HAS GOT A CASE OF ITHACA FEVER!”

“AND WHAT’VE THEY GOT TO SAY ABOUT US?”

“NOTHING GOOD...”



The greatest of the many mistakes to which existing conditions are attributable was undoubtedly the failure on the part of the university and city authorities to recognize in this occurrence of "Ithaca fever" a danger signal demanding the attention given to a red light in the path of an express train. Had it been studied, as it might and should have been in the circumstances, and that done which the knowledge thus gained would have suggested, the present outbreak of typhoid might not have been averted, but it is difficult to find the towns and university authorities and would have been averted.

THE ITHACA TYPHOID EPIDEMIC.

As the facts respecting the epidemic of typhoid fever at Ithaca come to hand, they show a deplorable lack of executive capacity and an extremely weak sense of official responsibility on the part of the college authorities. Not only were they unprepared for the emergency which confronted them, but they have neglected to do what the situation demanded of them.

The water company was negligent in the matter of the policing of its watershed and the minimization of causes of possible pollution is not open to discussion.

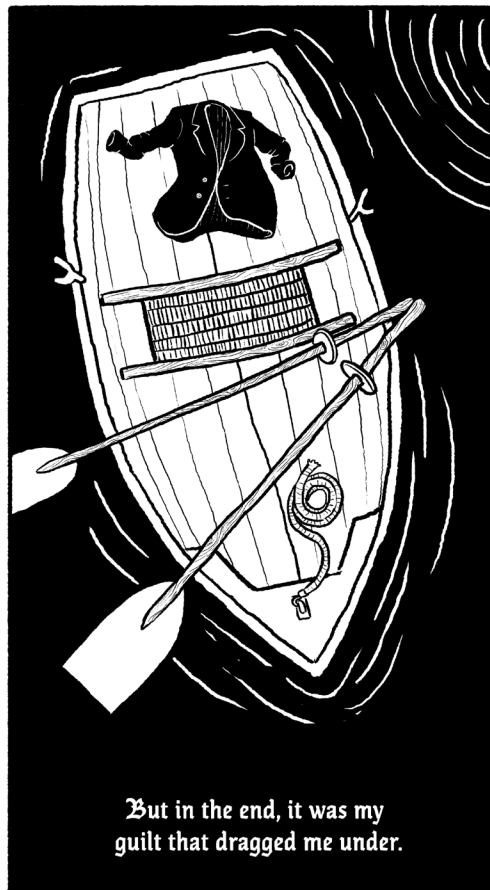
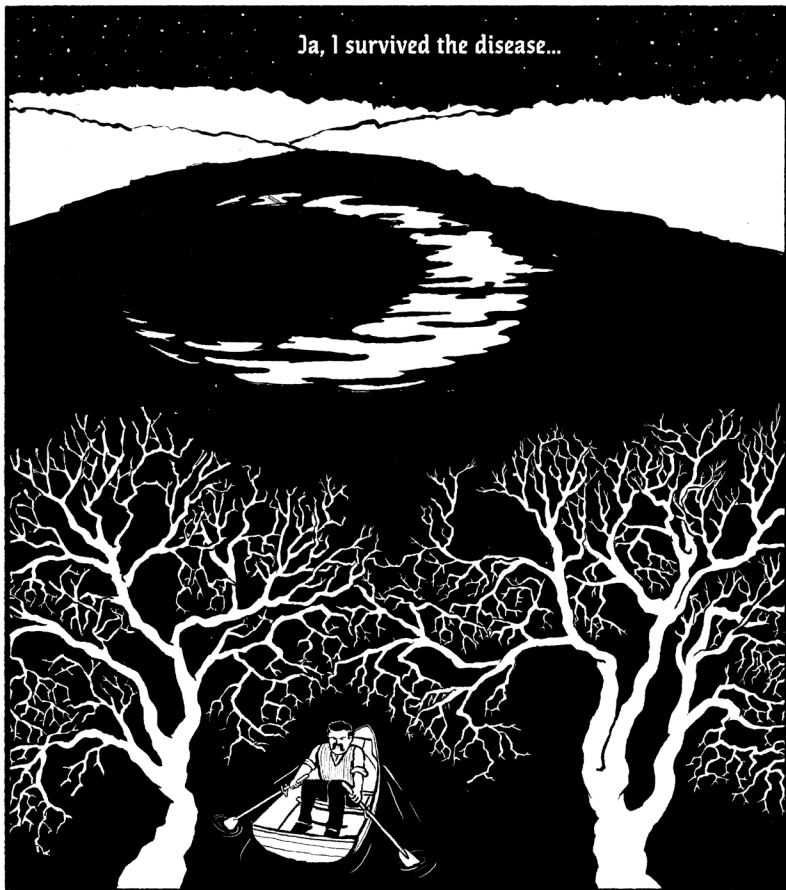
Just a year ago conditions existed in Ithaca which should have started the community into instant and energetic measures of self-protection. I refer to the fact that the water company was negligent in the matter of the policing of its watershed and the minimization of causes of possible pollution is not open to discussion.

The university authorities are certainly responsible for the condition of the city water, but no more so than every other citizen of Ithaca. We are all to blame, Water Works Company, Board of Health, university, and private citizens. We have been careless and thoughtless, and we are paying the price.

We are all to blame. We are all to blame. We are all to blame. We are all to blame.



But for some of us, normality was irretrievable. The newspapers disagreed about who was at fault, but all agreed that things could have played out differently, and all the grief and suffering could have been avoided.



Somewhere in the darkness,
though, I realized my mistake.

It had been wrong to end my life.

Punishing myself was
no solution to my suffering.

And it certainly wasn't what my
daughter would have wanted.

I saw that my death
didn't help anyone.

It only brought
more pain...

And left more
people grieving.

That wasn't fair.

My heartbreak
had taught me so much...

Instead of giving up, I could
have shared those lessons.

I should have survived.

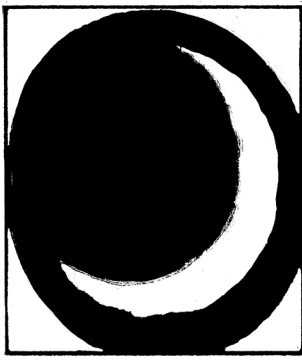
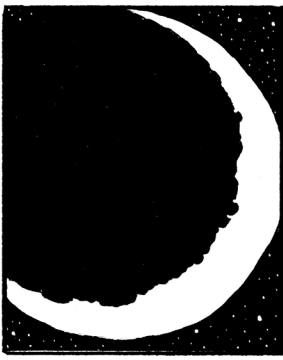
I should have **LIVED!**

But it was too late for that.

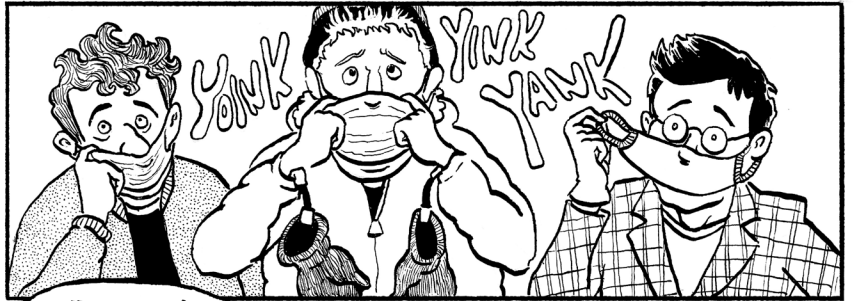


Still, I was determined
to do what I could to make
things right...

And spare anyone
else my fate.



sniffle
So?
UH...
COUGH



Now go and share what you have learned, Kinder.
But keep your germs to yourself!



Oops. Can't lose that!



I THINK... UH I HAVE TO...

YEAH... ME TOO...

MAYBE WE CAN ZOOM LATER?

The End

A Note on Suicide:

While Covid-19 is a new and dangerous disease, suicide has been plaguing humanity for far too long.

The vast majority of suicide attempts are related to ongoing mental health issues, but grief can increase the risk for those already struggling.

If you or a loved one feel vulnerable to suicidal thoughts, free help is available from the following sources:

National Suicide Prevention Hotline
1-800-273-8255 (24/7)

Crisis Text Line
Text HOME to 741741 (24/7)

IMAlive, an online crisis center
www.imalive.org (24/7)