VAX
AND THE
VIRUS

BY ERIN P. MYERS
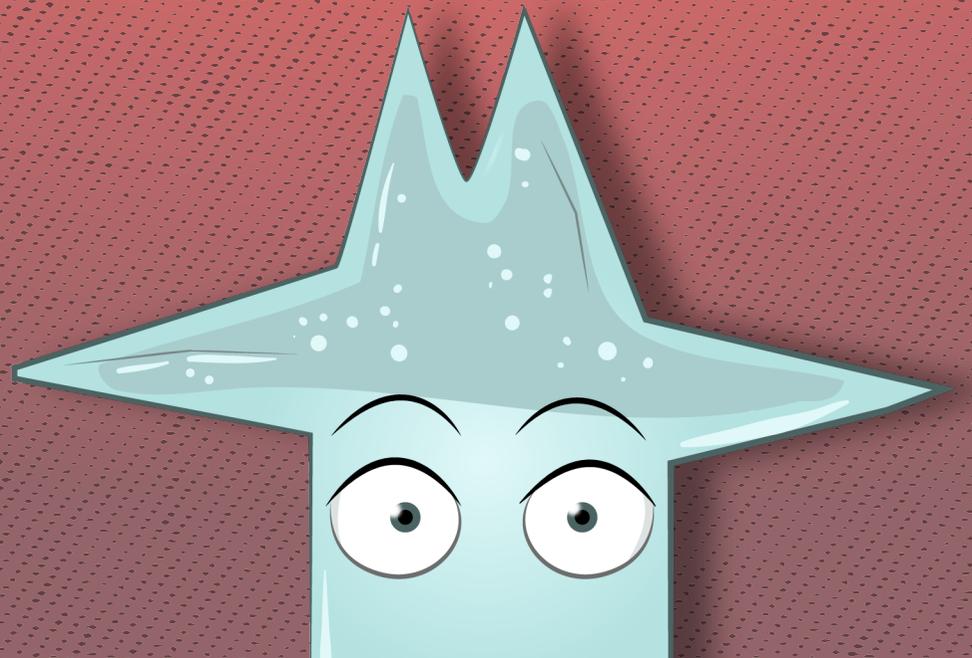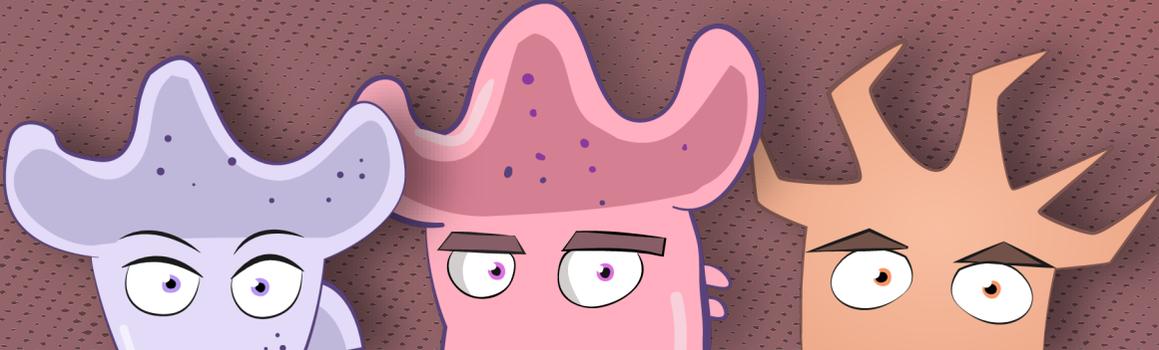
VAX
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WRITTEN BY
ERIN P. MYERS

ILLUSTRATIONS BY
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KNOCK KNOCK KNOCK

The door opened slowly and a woman in a long white coat walked in. Jack buried his face in his mom's shoulder to hide.

"Hi, I'm Doctor Ruby," she said. "You must be Jack."

Jack kept hiding.

"I hear you are starting school next month Jack, is that true?" she asked.

"Yes," Jack mumbled.

"Let me guess," said Doctor Ruby. "You heard you're going to get some shots today?"

Jack nodded, "I don't like shots."

"I didn't like shots when I was your age either," replied Doctor Ruby. "But now that I know how the vaccines inside shots work I think they are pretty cool."

Jack looked confused, "Really?"

"Really!" she said, "Let me tell you a story."

Once upon a time, inside a little girl about your age, there lived a village of immune cells. There were big immune cells and small immune cells of all different shapes and colors. They worked together to protect the little girl.

They worked as a team: Manny Macrophage, Nancy Neutrophil, and Dexter Dendrite.

Dexter

Manny

Nancy

When they caught the bad guys, they would lasso them up and toss them in jail so that they couldn't make the little girl sick.

One day, the immune cells were on patrol in the tonsils when they heard a frightened shriek coming from the windpipe. They ran down to investigate the noise and found Farmer Cilium crying.

"What's wrong Farmer Cilium?" asked the immune cells.

"My crops! They've all been destroyed!" he cried, "Without the fields to stop the dust tumbleweeds, they will roll right on down to the lungs and make a mess!"

"Uh oh,"replied Manny. "That could make the little girl cough for weeks!"

"This looks like the work of a virus," said Nancy.

"I agree," replied Dexter. "We'd better get to work and find the bad guy before he does any more damage!"

"Or starts replicating!" exclaimed Farmer Cilium.
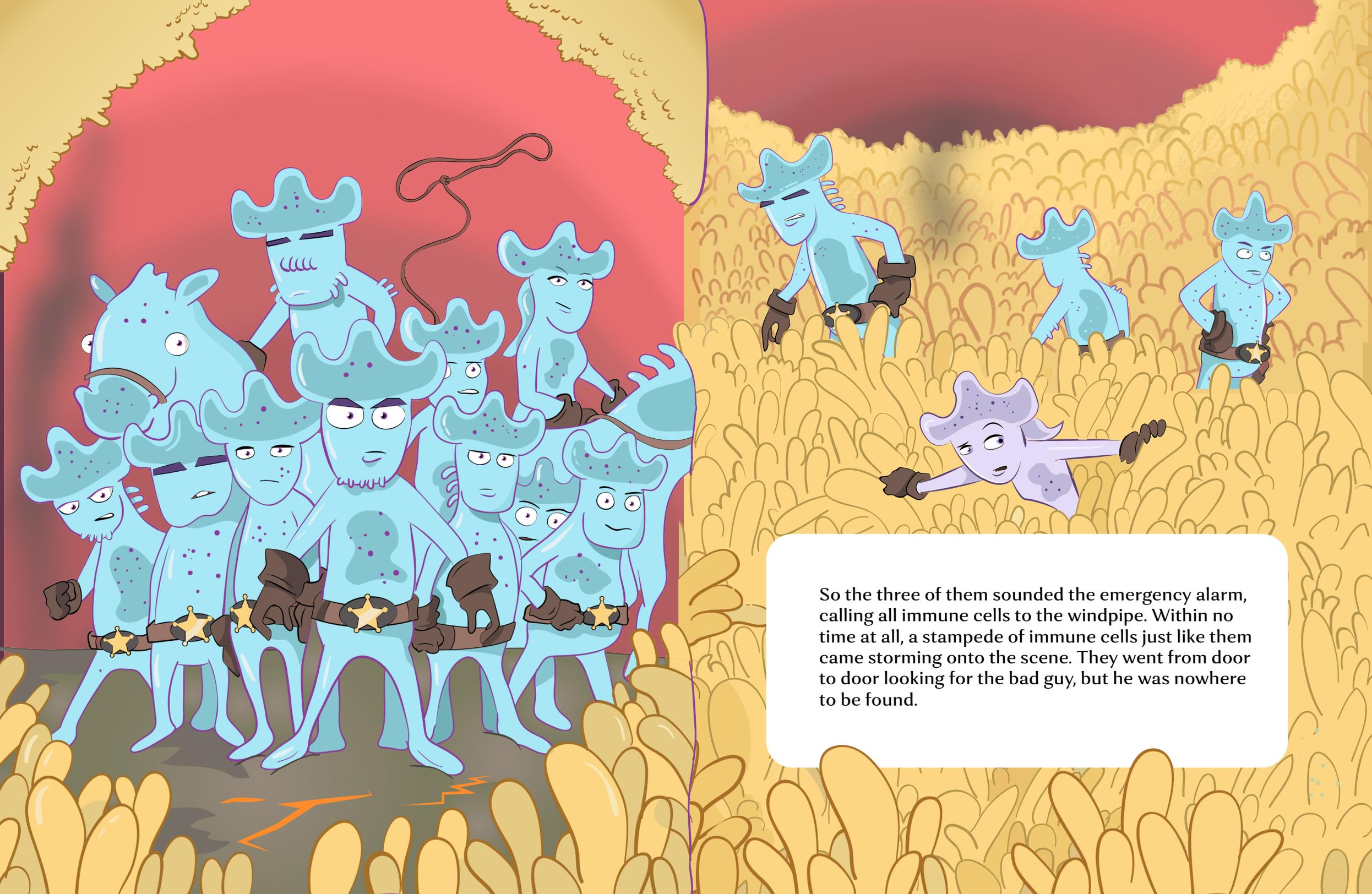
So the three of them sounded the emergency alarm, calling all immune cells to the windpipe. Within no time at all, a stampede of immune cells just like them came storming onto the scene. They went from door to door looking for the bad guy, but he was nowhere to be found.

"If only we knew what the virus looked like," said Nancy. "We could surely find him then!"

"I've gathered descriptions from the locals and we are printing wanted posters," replied Manny. "But it takes a very long time."
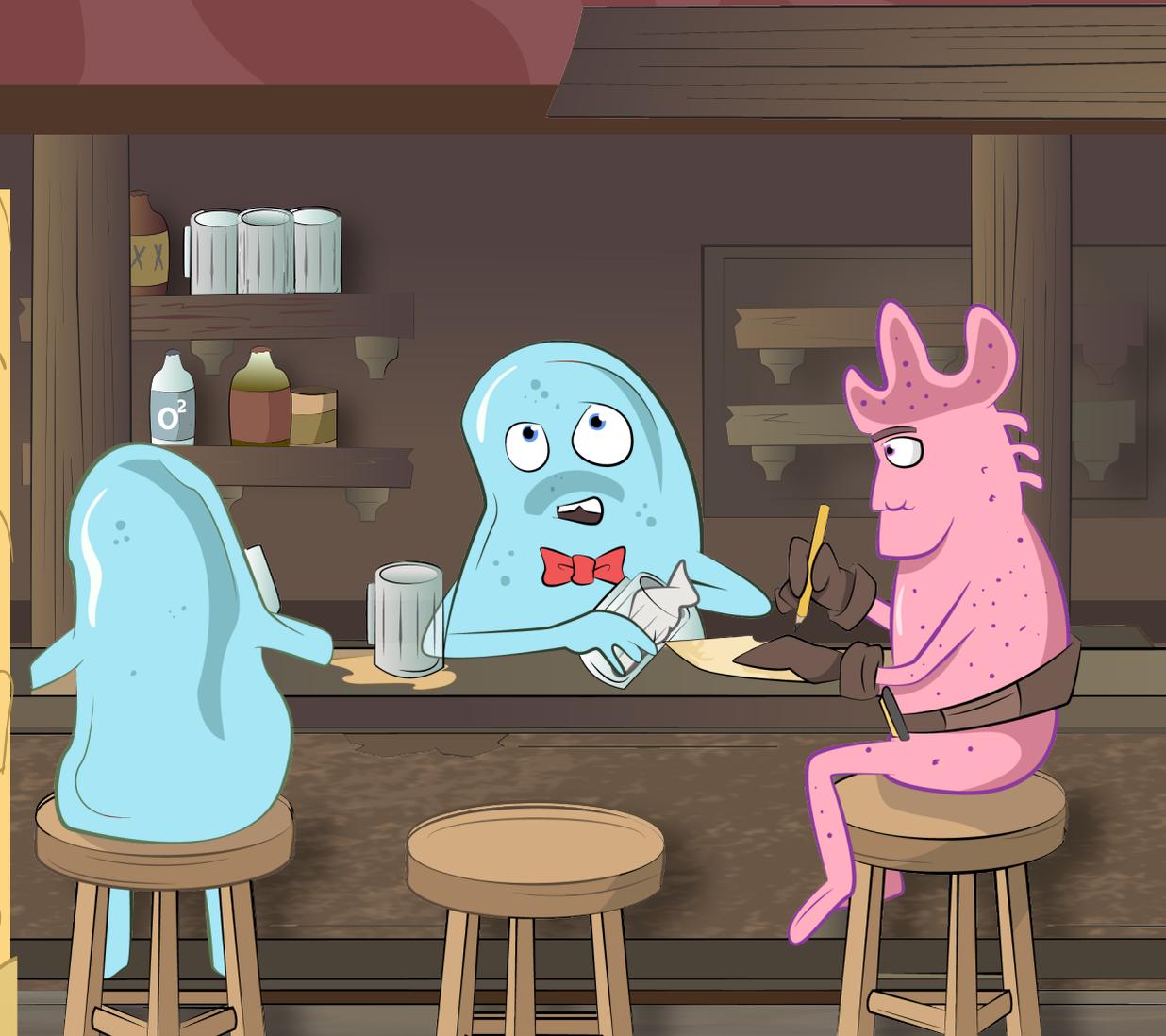
So the team printed wanted signs and posted them all over the body.

NTED

virus last spotted in throat
reward for more info on suspect
contact immunity
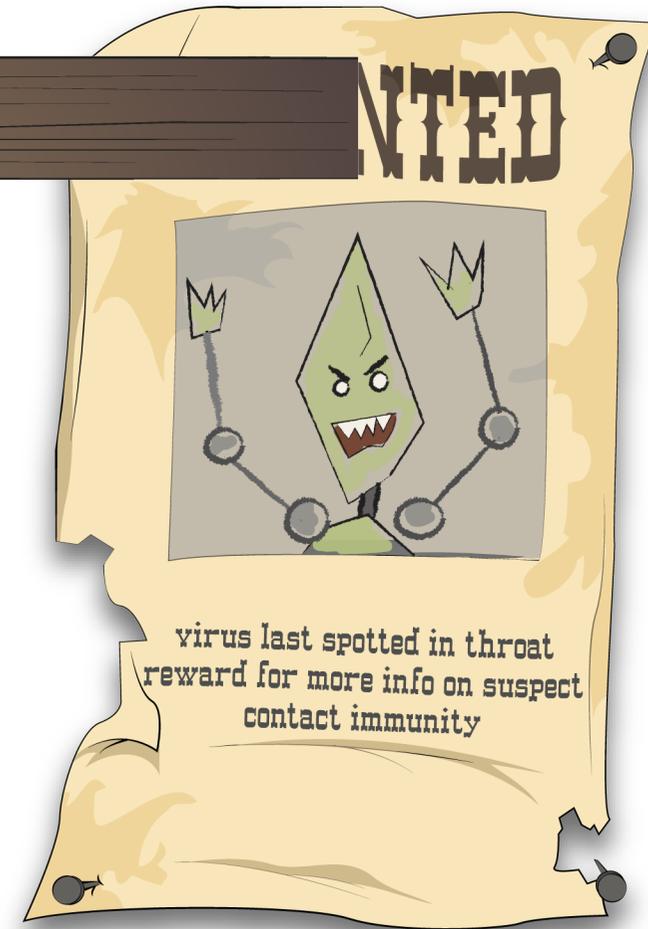
Meanwhile, the virus was hard at work too. Wearing a disguise to keep himself from being recognized, he was infecting the cells of the little girl's body and making as many copies of himself as he could.

WANTED

virus last spotted in throat
reward for more info on suspect
contact immunity
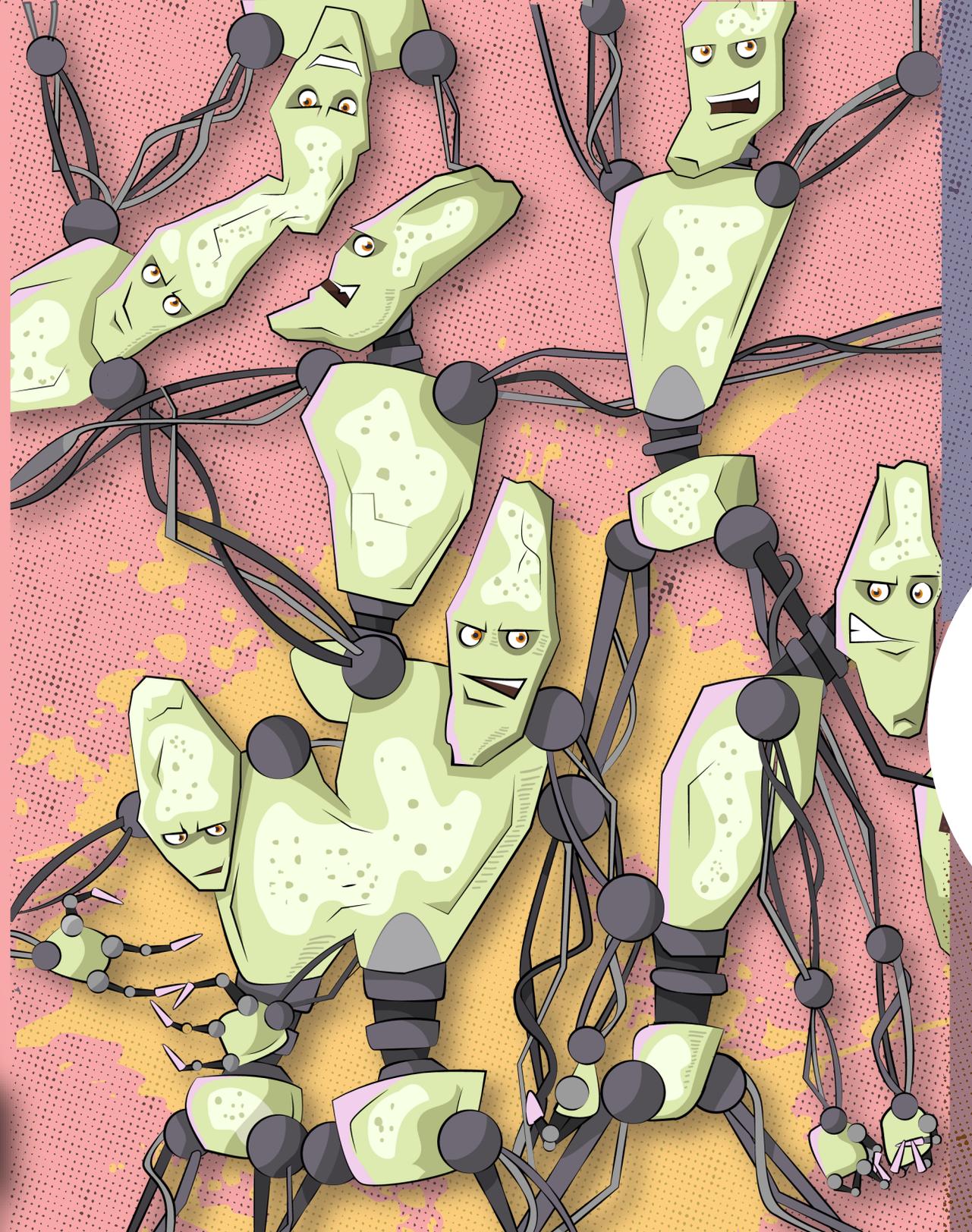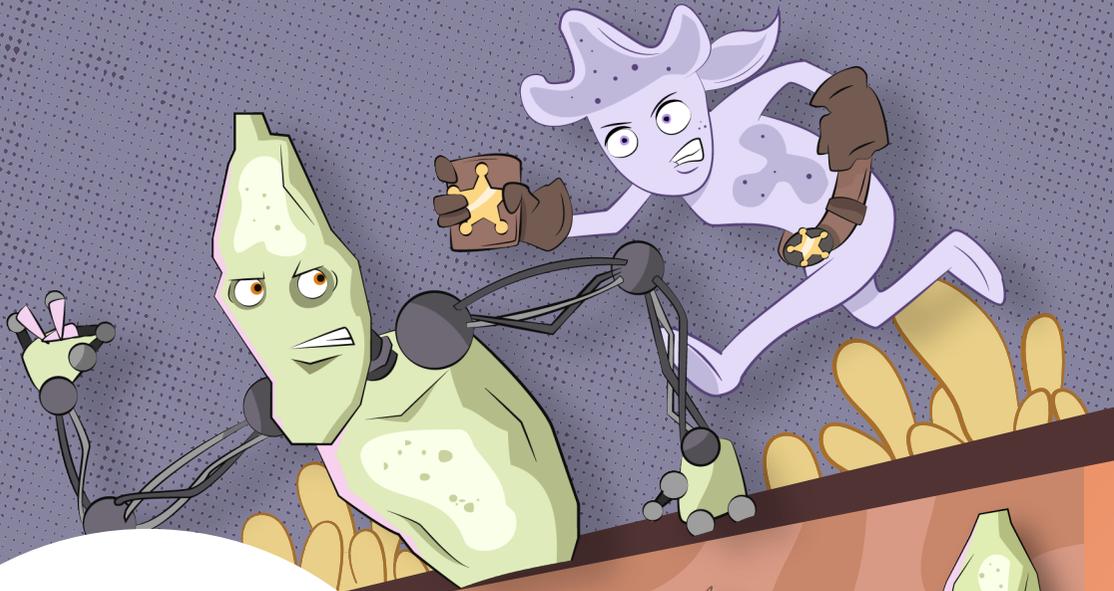
It took a very long time and lots of teamwork, but eventually the immune cells managed to wrangle up all copies of the virus. They tossed him in jail and put him on the next train out of the body, never to be welcomed there again.
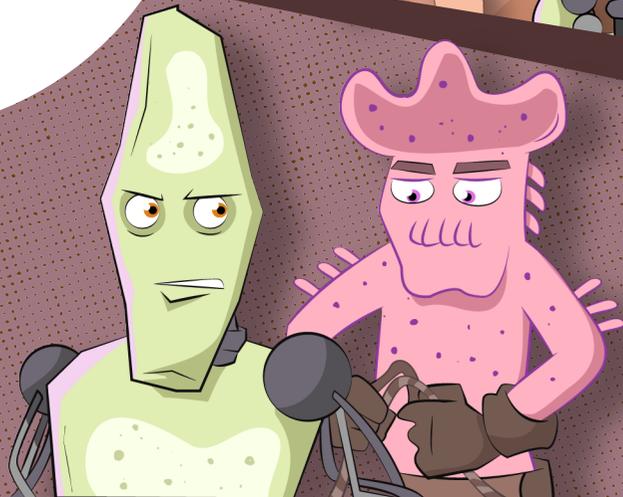
The immune cells were very tired. After all, catching bad guys is hard work. It was worth it though. Before they knew it, Farmer Cilium's crops had grown back to keep out the dust tumbleweeds and the little girl was feeling much better.

A few weeks later, the team was enjoying a hoedown in the Lymph Node Ranch. They were dancing and having a swell time when all of a sudden, the barn doors swung open and the music stopped.
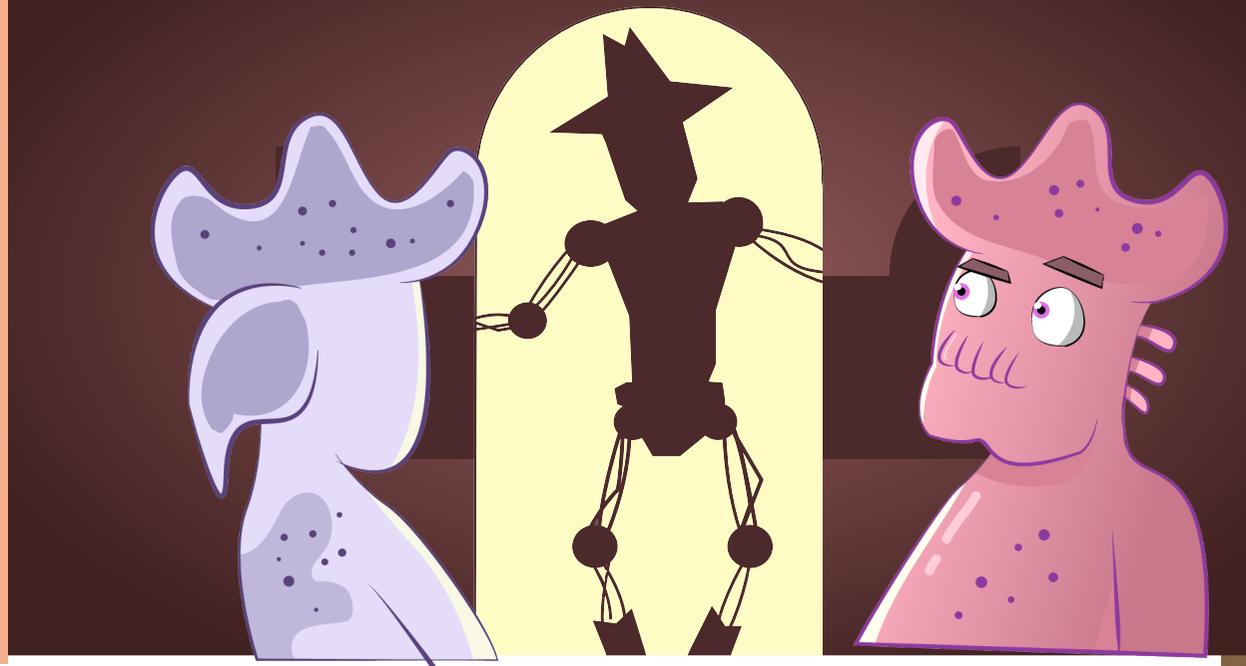
In walked the strangest looking thing the immune cells had ever seen. She was tall and wore a very pointy hat that looked quite sharp.

Fearing she was a bad guy, the immune cells ran to confront her. Dexter took out his lasso and was about to round her up when she pulled out a shiny, star-shaped badge.

"Hold your horses, cowboy!" she exclaimed. "My name is Vax and I'm the new sheriff in town."

The immune cells were speechless.

"I am what you call a vaccine," Vax explained. "I come inside bodies through shots and train immune cells like you to better recognize and stop bad guys like viruses and bacteria."

"We already know how to catch viruses," said Manny.

"Well sure you do, but I bet I can make it a lot easier for you," replied Vax. "Instead of having to wait until the virus is already here to find out what he looks like I can give you a head start!"

IMMUNITY

WANTED
FLU VIRUS

She reached into her bag and pulled out a stack of wanted posters.

"How did you get those?" asked Nancy.

"Vaccines are made with material that helps show immune cells what certain viruses look like. That way y'all recognize him before he has a chance to raise a ruckus and get your little girl sick," answered Vax. "

"Wow!" exclaimed Nancy. "That sure would help us out!"

So the four of them lead by Vax saddled up and took off with the wanted posters in hand. They rode all over the body until every immune cell had received one.

It was a lot of work putting up all the posters. When they were all done they decided to take a break. No sooner had they sat down than the emergency alarm began blaring. They got back on their horses, and rode up to the mouth just as fast as they could.

When they got there they couldn't believe their eyes. A large crowd of immune cells had gathered around the tonsils. The team made their way to the middle of the crowd where they found the virus from the wanted poster, tied to a post!

"We caught him!" Nancy shouted with joy. "Fast too, before he had a chance to make any copies of himself or make her sick!"

"We sure did!" said Vax.

They all cheered as they hauled the virus away.

"How can we ever repay you?" asked Manny.

"Keep doing such a great job keeping an eye out for bad guys and be nice to the next vaccine that comes to visit," Vax answered.

"There will be more like you?" asked Dexter.
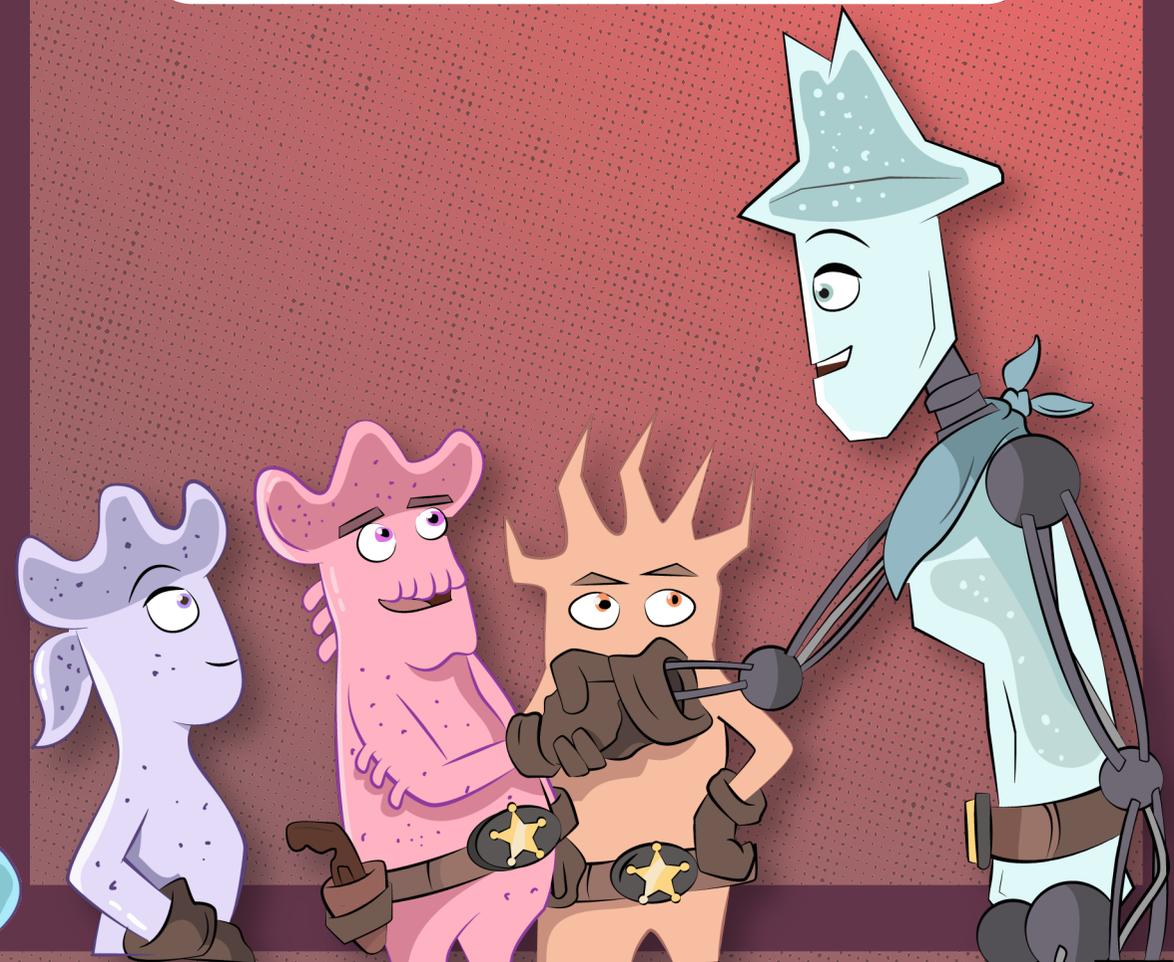
WANTED
FLU VIRUS

"You bet your silver dollar!" she replied. "Each vaccine can only carry so many wanted posters so it cannot protect against all bad guys. And sometimes viruses and bacteria wear disguises so we need to come back and with new signs. Together we will work to keep this body safe and healthy!"
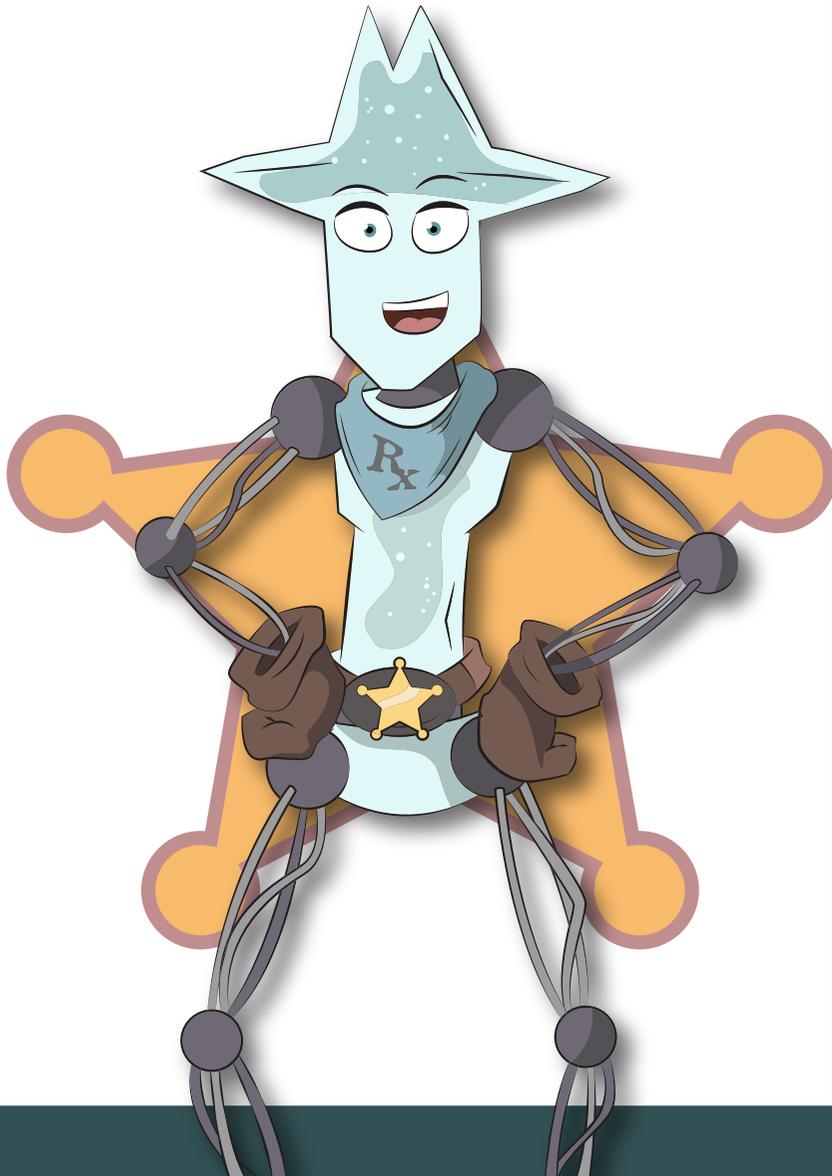
"Did they keep her safe Doctor Ruby?!" asked Jack.

"They sure did!" she replied. "What do you think about getting the vaccine now?"

"I guess it's alright if it helps catch the bad guys," he said.

Jack closed his eyes, felt a pinch in his arm, and before he knew it Doctor Ruby was putting a bandage on his arm. "All done?" he asked.

"All done!" she replied.

THE
END