



COMICS

#26

MIGHTY WRITERS



THE IMMUNIZERS



About Mighty Writers:

Mighty Writers teaches kids of all ages to think clearly and write with clarity through free educational programs that improve academic performance, address racial and cultural inequities, and build social-emotional skills. Mighty Writers supports communities by distributing free food, books and other essential resources in Greater Philadelphia, New Jersey and Texas.

About This Book:

This comic book was written and produced by Mighty Writers' teen students as part of a project with the Philadelphia Department of Public Health. The project aims to increase vaccine confidence among underserved Philadelphia youth through vaccine education and resources.

This story is entirely fictional and not based on any real virus, vaccine or serum.

Class Roles and Titles:

Akofa Deh: Storyteller, creator of “Vital Mind”

Elijah Sanders: Storyteller, creator of “Lion Knuckle”

Eten Anderson Jr.: Storyteller, creator of “Rue”

Kinaya Williams: Storyteller, creator of “Valencia”

Malcolm Mulpagano: Storyteller, creator of “Lorenzo”

Semaj Hasaan: Storyteller, creator of “Sword Slicer”

Timothy Carter: Storyteller, creator of “Micro”

Victoria Kurneh: Storyteller, creator of “Vaxxine”

Yania Strawberry: Storyteller, creator of “Alkai”

Hind Underdue: Storyteller, creator of “Shadow”

Shawn Alleyne: Comic book educator

Dr. JaBaris Swain: Science educator

Meghan Turbitt: Illustrator

Shout-outs to real-life superheroes:

Illustrator Meghan Turbitt and the Mighty Writers team who worked on this project: Maureen Boland, Bryana Crump, Naomi Levecchia, Rachel Loeper, Sukripa Shah, Liz Spikol, Dr. JaBaris Swain and Shari Young, and designer Kelly Lasserre.

And, of course, the students whose voices and creativity are planted throughout this comic.

Characters



Valencia

Valencia is a genuine “gift from God,” born first in Heaven and sent to Earth at Westmoreland, Jamaica. She has a staff that allows her to teleport to Heaven as needed and two giant crosses that double as guns that regenerate blood and remove bacteria from victims.



Vaxxine

Vaxxine, 24, was born on Planet Immunia, a planet of intelligent viruses and bacteria. She has an advanced immune system, a healing aura, telepathy, and the ability to manipulate microbes with her mind. She is a microbiologist determined to fight vaccine resistance.



Shadow

Shadow, 23, is a biologist from Santa Cruz, CA. Her dad died before she was born and her mom is serving a life sentence. She met her best friend and soulmate, Carmen, in foster

care. When a mysterious chemical spilled into an open cut, she gained the ability to “glitch,” or move in and out of invisibility and teleportation. She conducted experiments on herself to learn how to channel her powers for good.



Rue

Rue, 17, is from Philadelphia. She inherited superhuman speed and strength and the ability to manipulate energy from her mother. She has deep red eyes.



Alkai

Alkai is a lawyer from West Philly and was raised by two adoptive moms. She has a spear that kills bacteria and viruses, an unusual ability to calm others, an outsized jumping ability, and an incredible brain.



Micro

Micro originated in Hawaii during an experiment on bacteria, which formed him into a human-like blob with flimsy limbs. He is very intelligent but completely mute. He can go into human bodies and cure them of disease or take control of them.



Lion Knuckle

Lion Knuckle, 26, is a doctor from New Orleans. When he focuses his mind and hands he can use his chi to remove sickness. His superpower was gifted to him by an old man in a mysterious hotel after a canceled flight. He is motivated by wanting to save lives.



Vital Mind

Vital Mind, 19, has struggled to adjust to her superpower of manipulating minds and reality. She fled her home village in Ghana when her grandmother accused her of witchcraft. At 15, she faked her own death to protect her parents from her powers and set out on her own. She is motivated by guilt and survival.



Sword Slicer

Sword Slicer was born into poverty in Philadelphia. He has the gifts of flight, telepathy, and super agility. His loving family was killed by bad blood cells, just like his mentor's family. His mentor teaches him martial arts and how to use weapons so that he can avenge their families' deaths.



Lorenzo

Lorenzo is almost 10 feet tall and was born 697 years ago in Venice, Italy. His family died during the Bubonic Plague, but something in his genes kept him alive. His blood has been used for good and evil many times over the centuries. He has super strength, is immune to viruses, and can use his blood to infect or disinfect humans.



Victor Ransom

Ransom is the wicked villain — a wealthy CEO of Humanity First, a deceptively named organization that spreads vaccine disinformation.



Hi Mom. It's me, Valencia! I know you don't check your WhatsApp messages like you should, but I'm leaving you this voice note for posterity instead of calling because I didn't want to lose my nerve if I heard your voice.

I did it, Mom. I found the last of the heroes from my vision. It's a girl by the name of Rue. It took longer than I thought it would 'cause she's from — get this — another dimension. Did you imagine any of this was possible before Ambus showed up on your doorstep? Ever since my powers awakened and I started this journey, I swear I feel as though I was never really alive.

But back to the mission. We found out who's behind everything. The 24X Virus, the missing people with powers, the media manipulation — everything! It's Victor Ransom, the head of Humanity First. I already tried alerting various media outlets, law enforcement, even social media, but everything gets buried. I feel it's a combination of him having bought everyone with a pulse plus he must have people with powers on his side. And not just political power. I'm thinking superpowers.

Hence why I needed my own team. We even came up with a name: The Immunizers. Corny, I know, and not my first choice, but I was outvoted. Anyway, the team is at our pseudo headquarters, this real swanky house slash straight-out-of-a-comic-book lab one of the team members owns. Her name is Victoria but her codename is Vaxxine, with 2 X's. And get this — SHE'S from another planet!! I'm telling you, Mom, we're going to have sooo much to catch up on after this.

But hey, this is longer than I thought it would be, and I have to go. I'm taking Rue to the base and from there we're going to confront Ransom once and for all. Tell Kevin and Marveta I love them. Be safe. I love you, Mom.



Headquarters of The Immunizers

On TV:
"Thanks
for setting
the record
straight, Mr.
Ransom!"

"I told you before, Becky
call me Victor."

"I'm sorry, Victor. Thank you for setting the record
straight on that last point. But now tell, what about
the people who say Humanity First is spreading false
information about the vaccine to fight the 24X virus?"

"What false
information,
Becky? We're trying
to enlighten the
public about the
lies they tell."

"Well,
what about
the document on
Humanity First's
website that says
vaccines cause
autism?"

"We have
substantial
evidence that
we are willing to
bring forth to
prove that."

What?! That's a blatant lie!!
There's no link between vaccines and
autism. How are people allowed to get
on TV and say anything?

I know, it really
boggles my mind. A
few of you are doctors
as well, if I remember
correctly. And a ...
whatever that is.



He's fascinating.

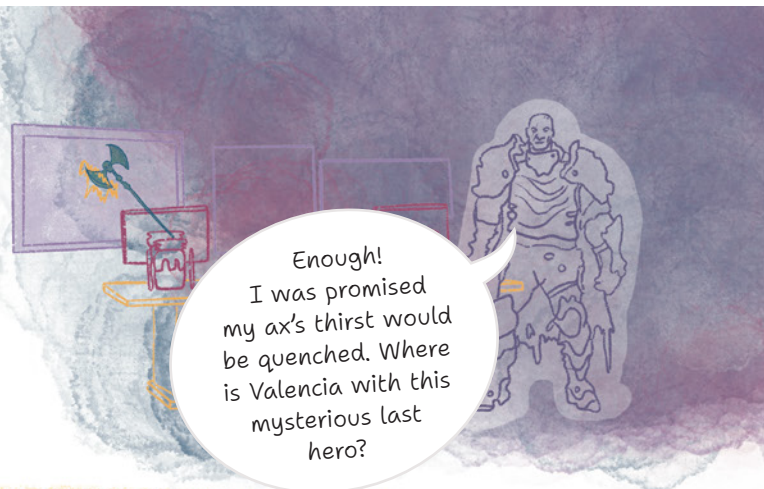
I don't find
anything unusual
about him.

Hush! Let
me hear
what else
this fool is
saying...

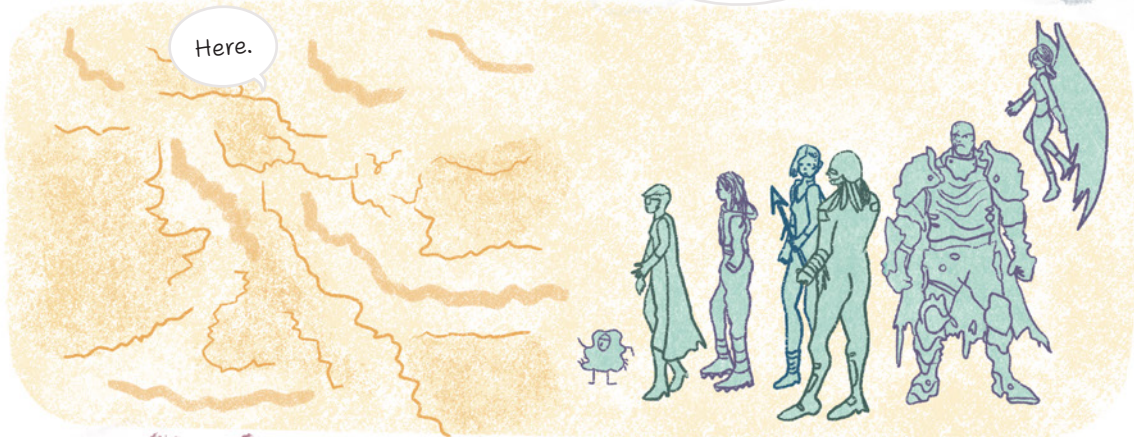
"What about our
kids? Their futures? Our
children's lives are at stake.
They are at a greater risk from
the vaccine than from the disease
itself. Look, this virus was clearly
made by the government and now
they want to take away our
rights and force us to get
vaccinations! This will all
just blow over."

Ancestors, give me mercy.
This is getting worse and worse!
Immunization is the best protection
AGAINST deadly diseases! I did
research...

KRASH!



Enough!
I was promised
my ax's thirst would
be quenched. Where
is Valencia with this
mysterious last
hero?



Here.



Everyone,
welcome Rue to
The Immunizers.



So we're reaaaally going
with that, huh? The
Immunizers?

Coming from the walking
blood cell who calls himself
"Sword Slicer"?



I like both.

Of COURSE you
do. Where are you
from again? The
planet "Immunia"?
This is a joke.

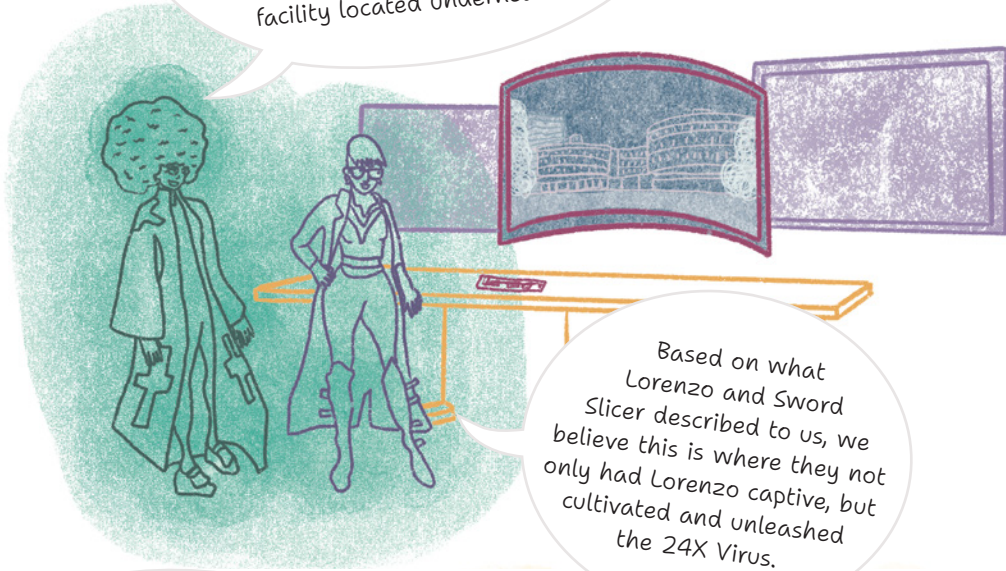


Enough!! We are
finally together, my
vision has come to
fruition, and we have
work to do.

Vaxxine, pull up
the schematics of
the plan on the table,
and let's try to bring
Rue up to speed.

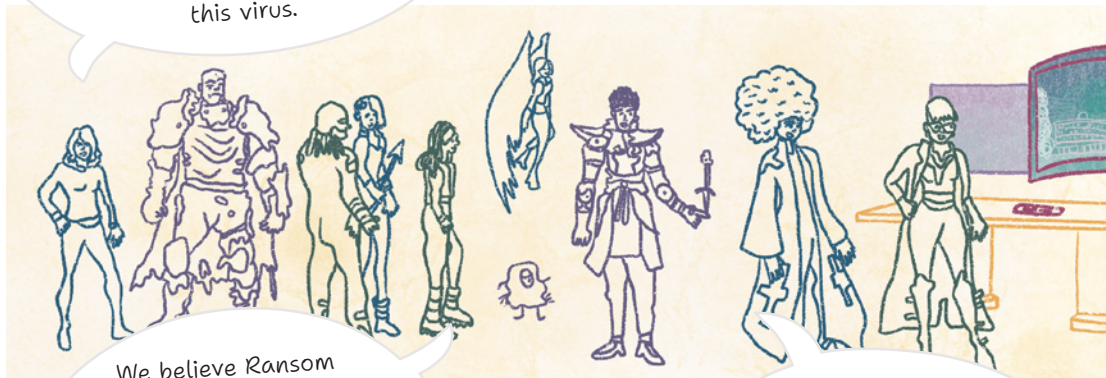


OK, what you see here is a shot of Humanity First's main headquarters right here in Philadelphia. What most people see is just a quiet, mundane, philanthropic organization. What they DON'T see is the massive medical facility located underneath it.



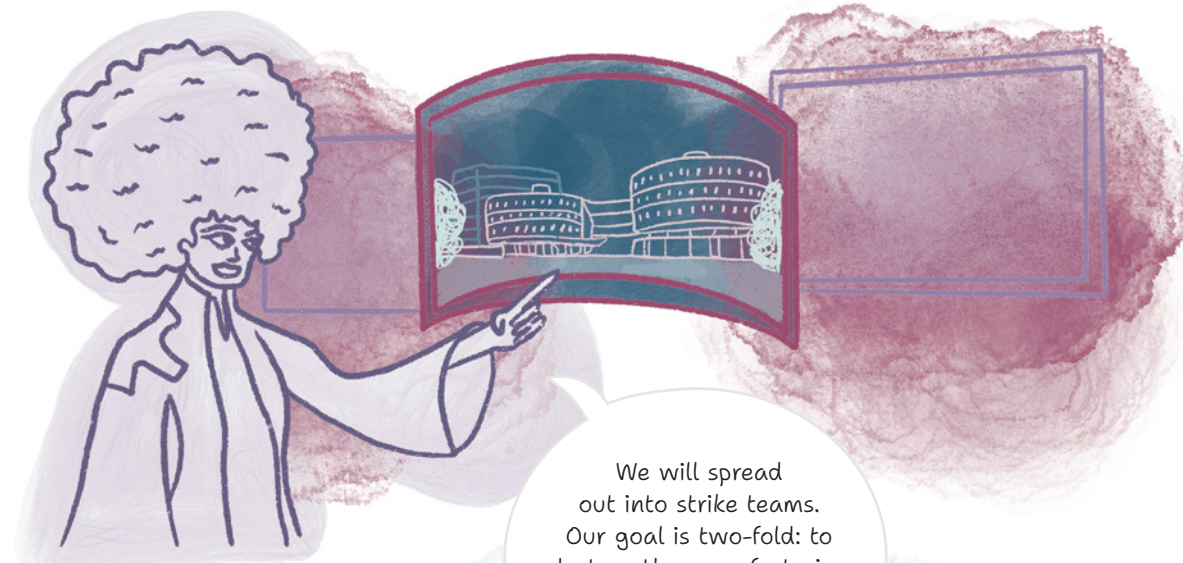
Based on what Lorenzo and Sword Slicer described to us, we believe this is where they not only had Lorenzo captive, but cultivated and unleashed the 24X Virus.

Wait, Valencia, I know I'm the new kid, but I thought you told me that the man that was just on that magical square was claiming the government made this virus.

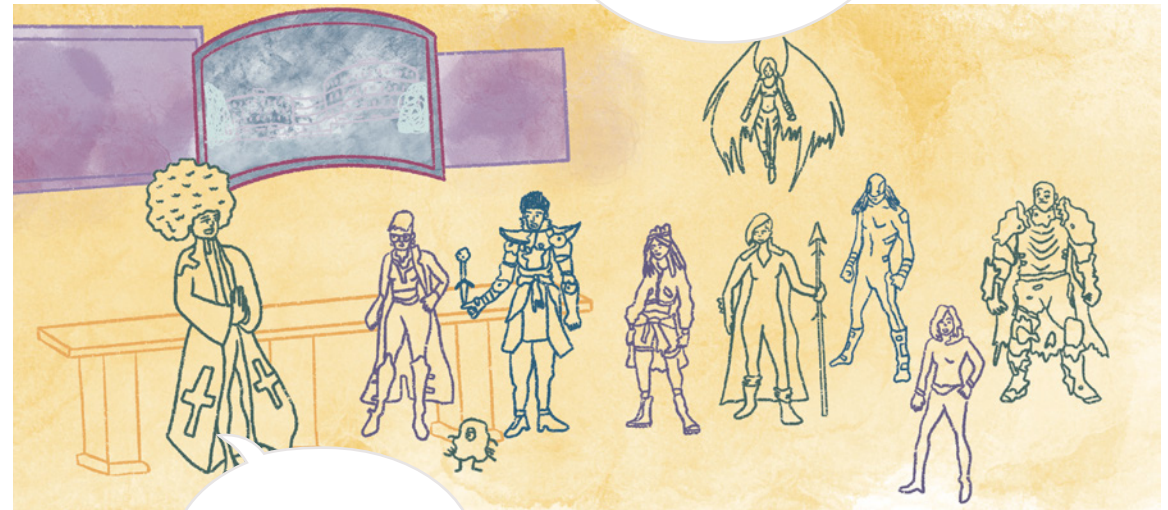


We believe Ransom is the one behind the virus to shake humanity's trust in the vaccines. We can't fully prove it and we don't know why he's doing what he's doing.

We strike tonight. I have it on good authority that Ransom will be there this evening handling business along with some foes familiar to some of you and some unknown enemies. I will teleport us into the compound here.



We will spread out into strike teams. Our goal is two-fold: to destroy the manufacturing facility and capture Ransom to bring him to justice.



Now, all of you rest up while you can. We leave in 2 hours.

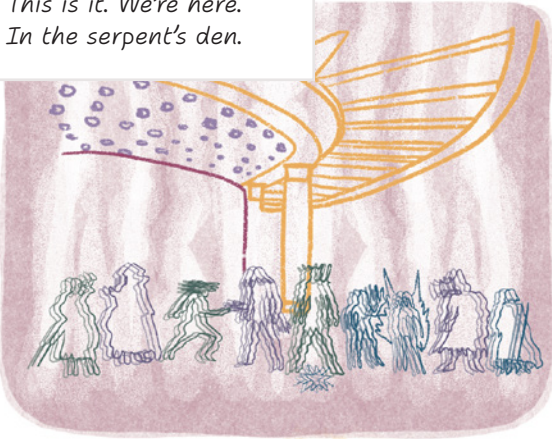
Let me speak with you briefly.



Humanity First Main Headquarters



This is it. We're here.
In the serpent's den.



We split off into 3 groups. The first squad is the distraction. Sword Slicer is reckless but good. Shadow and Lion Knuckle will keep him in line and their strike-and-run skills will keep the guards busy enough to buy us the time to do what we need to do.

The second squad is all destruction. Which conveniently will also serve as another distraction. The power of Alkai and the fury of Lorenzo will bring these walls crumbling down like Jericho. Rue will be needed to deal with the Omnitessence's Underlings.



And I know my squad is ready ... but there's always the unknown.

'Cause while we may fight for something as simple as revenge ...



or as grand as the multiverse ... at the end of the day ... we all fight to save a life.



And we will expose Ransom and shut this war down once and for all.





Ahhhh, so the whole gang is here for the party. Finally. I was worried you would miss the whole show.



Wait, you were expecting us?

But of course. Just as you've been researching me, I've been researching you. And what's a party without a surprise?!



You people with your powers. You think you're so special, don't you?! You'll never know what it was like for someone like me growing up. Sick. Beaten and abused. No one with special abilities ever saved me. So why should you have all of this power?

So this is why you developed the 24X Virus?!

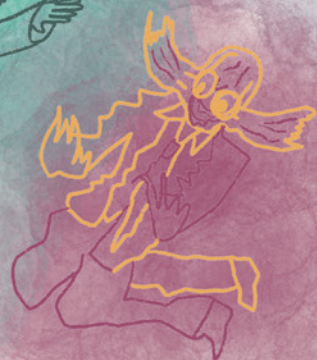
Exactly! I was secretly funding Merzer this whole time. It's unfortunate that some regular humans have to die, but we found it took away the powers of any "special" human. Now you get to know what it feels like to be regular.

But look at what you've become! What did you inject yourself with?

A little something called the Super23X Serum. I will mass produce it and market it to the highest bidder. I will control who receives power. I will be a GOD!

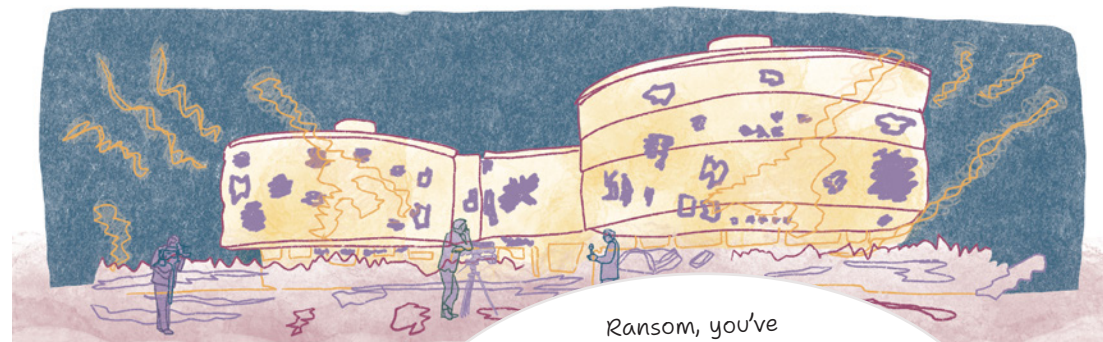
No, at the end of the day you're just a corrupt, money-hungry, sad man.

You're nothing more than a sick murderer!



Wait ... what?

You lost from the moment I entered the room.



Ransom, you've been locked in a mental prison for 6 hours thanks to Vital Mind's reality warping powers. In that time, not only did we defeat your entire little army, but using Micro's abilities, and the combined properties from the healers in our group, we were able to wipe that serum from your blood AND devise a vaccine for the 24X Virus.



See?! That's another thing about these vaccines. How could you devise a cure so quickly?!



More myths you want to spout? We've been working on a cure for a while. We just needed your specially cultivated lab samples for the final secret. We will be doing more trial testing soon.



And by spreading the truth about vaccines, eventually we can make a difference.



Keep thinking this is over. I promise you, there are more powerful people who think like me that won't let this be the end.



You're probably right about that. But guess where'll we'll be? Right here waiting for them. Fighting the good fight. While you're rotting away in a cell.



I'm not naïve. I know that even though this was a decisive win, that doesn't mean there isn't more to be done.

Vital Mind, I swear, you're the only person I know who can be happy but still look sour.

I know, after what we accomplished today, we deserve to express a little joy.

You're right. It's just ... I didn't want to tell the others ...



When I entered Ransom's mind, he revealed a lot of secrets. There are dangers on the horizon even your visions don't fortell, Valencia. For instance ... have you ever heard the names Derek and James Moreno?





We invite you to visit our Philadelphia locations:

MW El Futuro: 1025 S. 9th St., 215-602-0236

MW Germantown: 12 E. Church Lane, 267-239-0899

MW North: 2300 Master St., 610-263-5379

MW West: 3520 Fairmount Ave., 215-387-1066

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Immunization Program

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