

# BAD MEDICINE

**B**ad *Medicine* is a short introductory adventure for an Iron Age *Mutants & Masterminds* game. It is intended for a team of four to six power level 9 characters, with some suggestions for adjusting it to suit other power levels.

The adventure is set during the Iron Age of Freedom City, as described in **Chapter 5** of this book. Access to the *Freedom City* campaign setting sourcebook is useful, but not required, to run this adventure. Gamemasters wishing to set *Bad Medicine* somewhere other than Freedom City should adjust the names and locations to suit the new location.

The plot of the adventure involves criminal efforts to recover certain designer drugs that have found their way into Freedom City's underground while the heroes trace down the origin of the newest scourge on the streets and encounter a larger scheme than they originally expected.

## ADVENTURE SUMMARY

Grant Conglomerates is an international company with assets all over the world. Unbeknownst to its shareholders, it also serves as a front for the sinister criminal conspiracy known as the Labyrinth. GrantCo's primary purpose is scientific research, including the work that pioneered the DNAscent process. A secondary purpose is producing illegal goods for the black market, particularly designer drugs, banned genetic enhancers, and so forth.

GrantCo exec Kyle Harrison doesn't know a thing about the Labyrinth, but he does know his company is involved in some dirty business. That's because Harrison is the kind of man you hire if you want executives who don't care how dirty your business gets, so long as it remains profitable. Unfortunately for GrantCo, Kyle Harrison's corruptibility has led to serious drug abuse issues.

In order to feed his habit, Harrison leaked samples of some of the company's black market goodies to his dealer, who fed them up the chain to his supplier. They haven't figured out all the implications, but they *have* cracked enough of the formula to start selling a new designer drug called "meta," one that's taking the city's party scene by storm.

Of course, meta is also creating a new culture of addicts, and having some unexpected side effects. Based on one of the drugs used in the DNAscent process, meta temporarily "unlocks" certain genetic potential in the user. It has granted some users feelings of invincibility, and sometimes gives them the superhuman strength and durability to back it up!

GrantCo has traced the new drug in town back to their own labs and wants the security leak plugged, permanently. The heroes, on the other hand, want to find the source of this new and deadly drug and stop it for good.

The adventure starts off with the heroes following up on a tip leading them to a street lab where meta is being produced. Clues then lead them to GrantCo executive Kyle Harrison, but super-powered mercenaries associated with the Labyrinth also show up to deal with Harrison. The heroes have to try and keep their informant alive while

fending off the mercs and hopefully gathering enough evidence to trace the source of the drugs back to Harrison's employers.

## GETTING THE HEROES INVOLVED

You can get the heroes involved in the events of *Bad Medicine* in a number of ways, depending on whether the characters are already members of a team, not yet part of a team, or perhaps not even superheroes yet (if you want to use *Bad Medicine* as the first adventure in an *Iron Age* series).

### EXISTING TEAM

If the heroes are already an existing team of crime-fighters, it's a fairly easy matter to involve them in the investigation of meta and the drug's source. Just tell the players their heroes have been looking into the new drug and have gotten a lead that has brought them to the drug lab late one night, and you're ready to go.

If you want to introduce *Bad Medicine* into an ongoing series more gradually, you can start things off with the heroes first hearing about this new drug called meta, and perhaps encountering an out-of-control meta addict or a low-level dealer who doesn't know much, to show them what a potential threat it is. Then they get a lead on the production lab, leading into the start of this adventure.

To provide a personal hook, you can have a friend or loved one of a hero get caught up in the investigation. Someone in law enforcement might be investigating meta as well, or could have gotten injured by a meta addict or a dealer. A reporter could also be investigating for a story and get in too deep. Younger siblings have friends who try meta or run with the wrong crowd, and so forth.

### NEW TEAM

If the heroes are not yet allied as a team, the events of *Bad Medicine* might convince them to do so. The potential spread of meta and

### META

The designer drug called "meta" on the streets of Freedom City plays an important role in this adventure as a catalyst for the heroes' investigation, but isn't likely to see much use, unless a character foolishly decides to give some a try. If that's the case, or you simply want to drive home how dangerous the drug can be, feel free to treat it as a plot device and give it suitable effects.

Generally, meta creates an inflated sense of power and confidence in the user, and it can have unpredictable effects on some people, unlocking latent genetic potential. For a superhuman user, the effects could be almost anything. You can introduce complications to the hero's personality or powers as you see fit for the adventure (see **Complications**, *M&M*, page 122).

Meta's effects are temporary, lasting only a matter of hours, although a meta-induced origin or other alteration (see **New Heroes**) can be permanent at the Gamemaster's discretion.

## ADJUSTING FOR OTHER POWER LEVELS

This adventure is suitable without modification for a group of about four PL 10 heroes or four to six PL 9 heroes. If the heroes in your series are lower power level (PL 6 or 7), you might want to eliminate one or two of the members of RIOT in the opposition to even things out a bit. You can also alter the stats of RIOT, making them a power level or two lower, particularly if you're starting a lower power level *Iron Age* series and you want RIOT to be a recurring villain team fairly evenly matched for the heroes.

If you're running an *Iron Age* series with government agents or police officers (possibly using the guidelines from *Agents of Freedom*), you'll want to drop a member of RIOT for each power level below 8, and each character below six, so a PL 6 agent series with five characters should face only three members of RIOT rather than all six (with the others on another job, perhaps). You can also substitute a rival agency for RIOT, such as giving the Labyrinth their own trained agents roughly equal in ability to the heroes.

the creation of new addicts threatens a major crime wave, and the revelation that a major organization is ultimately behind the drug's creation could lead the heroes to (rightly) conclude that it's more than any one of them can handle.

You can choose to handle the heroes getting together "off-camera," in which case it's much like the introduction of an existing team, except they haven't existed for very long. You can also have the heroes meet up in the first scene of the adventure, either upon breaking into the drug lab or just outside of it, with each of them following their own investigation. The drawback to this approach is the possibility the heroes *won't* cooperate or decide to work together. You may want to suggest to players beforehand the importance of their characters forming a team in this first adventure.

## NEW HEROES

Lastly, you can use *Bad Medicine* to as an origin for entirely new heroes with personal reasons for investigating meta and fighting crime in Freedom City. A common origin gives the heroes something

in common from the very beginning of the adventure and good reason to cooperate.

The characters could all be people granted super-powers by exposure to meta. They might be young people, closet drug-users, party goers "spiked" with meta without their knowledge and so forth. They could also be unwilling subjects of the DNAscent process (like many *Iron Age* characters), the same process that gave RIOT their powers. In this case, they could be looking for clues about who transformed them and why, assuming they escaped from the GrantCo lab before they could be brainwashed, but also before they could learn very much.

If some players want different kinds of characters, you can combine this approach with some independent heroes investigating meta production and distribution in Freedom City, with all the heroes teaming up when they converge on the drug production lab, as in **New Team**, previously.

## MODERN ADAPTATION

If you have a modern-day Freedom City campaign and still want to run *Bad Medicine*, you have a few options in adjusting the adventure to take place after the *Iron Age*.

The first is to simply transplant the elements of the adventure into modern Freedom City. After all, the Labyrinth is still around and GrantCo is still involved in creating DNAscendants and designer drugs. You can either use RIOT as described, or replace them with modern incarnations created by GrantCo (maybe clones of the originals) or a new group of modern villains. Mercenaries like the Power Corps (*Freedom City*, page 175) work well for this.

The other option is to run a parallel adventure: start off with a "flashback" where the players run *Iron Age* characters (such as FORCE Ops, or other predecessors to their modern heroes) tracking down leads in meta production. Then jump forward to the present, with the modern heroes finding leads suggesting someone is producing meta (or a similar designer drug) in Freedom City once again.

# META-RAIDING

Once you've decided how the heroes get involved in the adventure (see **Getting the Heroes Involved**), the story begins at a meta lab in the Freedom City Greenbank neighborhood they've been able to track down and are about to raid. Read the following to the players:

*From the outside, the building looks just like plenty of the run-down former industrial warehouses in the Greenbank area: windows covered or boarded up, brick and concrete walls covered with layers of gang tags and markings. Still, from your vantage, you make out a few telltale signs: faint light leaks out around the window coverings and fresh marks show the doors have been opened recently. Your contacts told you someone was using the building as a makeshift lab for making meta, and it looks like they were telling the truth.*

Allow the players to come up with their own plans for getting into the building and dealing with the criminals inside. The interior of the warehouse is mostly open space, with a few old packing crates and barrels. There's a second story catwalk overlooking the floor below, with a receiving office on the first floor and a manager's office on the second, along with an employee locker room and break room. The ceiling has an old tracked cargo hook that still works, controlled from the catwalk.

The heroes can come in through the front door or the back loading dock, or they can break in through the windows; assume any hero can kick in the door or smash through a window so long as they've got a positive damage bonus. (Otherwise, it would be quite embarrassing for the hero and player.) Naturally, super-powered heroes may have other means of entry, ranging from passing right through the walls to teleporting inside. Let the players use their imagination, awarding them with hero points for a truly dramatic entrance.

## NEW THUG CITY

The criminals in the drug lab consist of a technician (Scientist archetype, *M&M*, page 229) and eight thugs (Thug archetype, *M&M*, page 229) armed with submachine guns. There's sufficient drug paraphernalia in the warehouse for even the corrupt FCPD to take the criminals into custody, assuming the heroes leave any for the cops to arrest.

The thugs' response to the heroes' arrival is to try and kill them, while the lab tech (a weaselly fellow named Milo) tries to escape with a briefcase of papers and materials. The thugs are not especially capable combatants, although they may try and use combined attacks (*M&M*, page 155) and similar tactics against the heroes if the opportunity presents itself.

This encounter should be a fairly easy one for the heroes and an opportunity for them to show off and engage in a bit of ultra-violence against some criminal scum. However, you can introduce a few complications into the fight to add variety and give the players some hero points. Possibilities include:

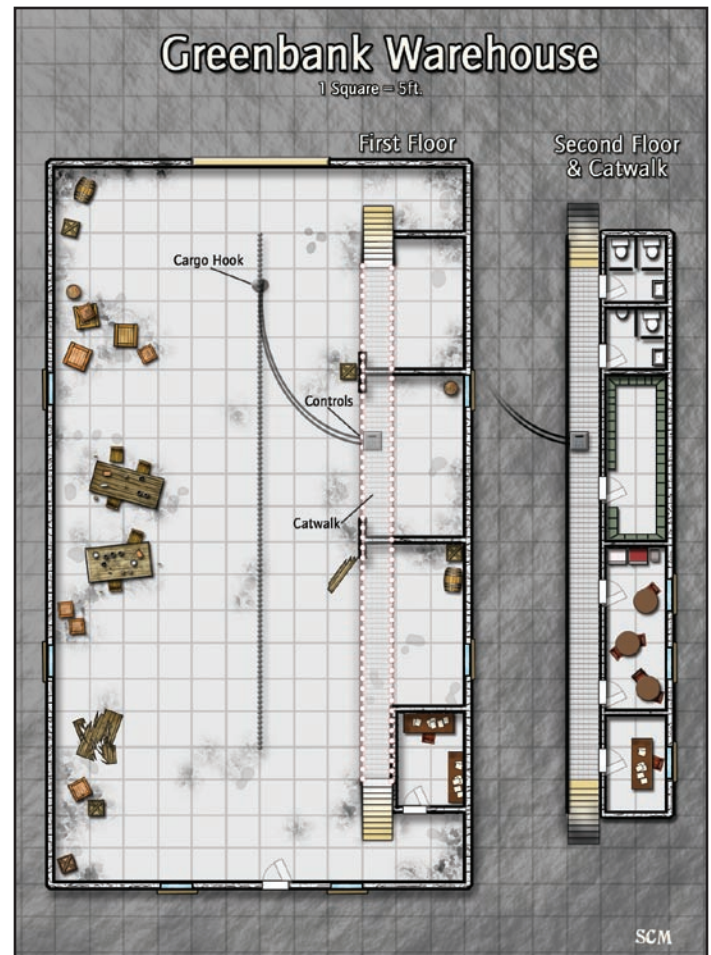
- Milo or a thug uses the cargo hook on the ceiling to grab a hero who doesn't have any movement powers.
- The fight tips over a Bunsen burner and some volatile chemicals, causing a sudden fire.
- Milo throws a flask of chemicals at a hero, getting a lucky shot and causing an unexpected reaction.
- One of the desperate thugs takes a shot of meta and gets lucky, gaining a temporary set of powers, including Enhanced Constitution and Strength 12, Leaping 3, and Super-Strength 3, making him much more of a threat. If you *really* want to give the heroes more of a challenge, you can even pump the thug up to the Hulking Brute archetype (*M&M*, page 216), perhaps even creating a recurring villain for your series.
- One of the criminals stumbles upon a hero's weakness or vulnerability and gets in a surprisingly effective shot.
- Milo could initially get away from the heroes and lead them on a chase through the streets and alleys of Greenbank, either on foot or in a nearby car, depending on how complicated you want to make it for them to stop him.

## RUNNING DOWN THE CLUES

The primary goal for this investigative scene is for the heroes to find out about Kyle Harrison's involvement in the production of meta so they can go after Harrison. There are a number of ways in which the heroes can learn this information, described here. Adapt these general guidelines to the flow of the heroes' investigation.

## INTERROGATION

Assuming the heroes left any of the people at the drug lab alive and conscious, they can interrogate them to find out more information. The thugs don't know much of anything except that they're paid to guard and transport the goods.



Milo, on the other hand, can direct the heroes to the information found in the following section; all it takes is a successful Intimidation check versus the lab tech's Will save (which is only +3) and he spills what he knows. Telepathy and other powers may also extract the information.

## REACH OUT AND TOUCH SOMEONE

A successful search of the drug lab (Search check, DC 15) turns up a scrap of paper with a Freedom City phone number (555-1012) and the initials "K.H." scrawled on it. If heroes trace the number (either via contacts they might have or with a DC 20 Computers check), they find out it's a residential number for a "Harrison, Kyle," with an address for a high-rise apartment in Parkside.

They can also simply call the number and try to get information out of Harrison. This requires a Bluff check against Harrison's Sense Motive check result, modified depending on what information the hero tries to get. Simply getting Harrison to confirm his name or address is an unmodified opposed check, assuming the character uses a reasonably plausible cover story. Getting him to admit to any involvement with the meta lab is considerably more difficult (+10 to Harrison's Sense Motive check) unless the hero has a means of posing as one of Harrison's contacts, which lowers the increase in DC to +5. (Harrison is still wary when dealing with his criminal contacts.)

## GLASS HOUSES

Eventually, the heroes will piece together the clues to track down Kyle Harrison and his address. (If they don't, feel free to help them along, or encourage a player to spend a hero point for some useful inspiration in the right direction.) If all else fails and the heroes simply don't pick up on the clues or refuse to investigate them, they can hear about RIOT showing up at Harrison's place and head over there to intercept them. Whatever the case, when they go to check out Harrison's Parkside apartment, read the following:

*The Parkside address belongs to a high-rise apartment building overlooking Liberty Park. The building soars some thirty floors from the street, a sleek pillar of glass and steel. A doorman and some discreet private security in the lobby keep out any unwanted visitors, although you bet they're not paid to deal with the likes of you.*

Unfortunately for the heroes, they're not the only ones in Freedom City looking for Kyle Harrison. GrantCo knows the executive has leaked information to his supplier, and they've sent RIOT to remove Harrison from the picture so they can start cleaning things up. See **Chapter 5** for details about RIOT and their abilities. They think Harrison is a "corporate leech" responsible for spreading his poison on the streets and that they're doing "justice" by removing him, not knowing the idea comes from the Labyrinth and serves GrantCo's interests.

You can use the reporter archetype (*M&M*, page 228) for Kyle Harrison's game stats, changing the Profession skill specialty to "business administration." The building's doorman is the Butler archetype (with a different Profession skill) while the hired security in the building can use the Thug archetype (*M&M*, pages 226 and 229, respectively).

### GETTING IN

Getting into the apartment building can be straightforward or complex, depending on how the heroes approach it and how stealthy they wish to be.

- The most straightforward approach is flying, climbing, or otherwise reaching the outside of the apartment on the fourteenth floor and breaking in. The windows are simple Toughness 1 glass and fairly easy to break, although breaking in sets off an alarm, alerting building security and the police. The windows don't open, so the only way through is to break them or to use powers like Insubstantial or Teleport to bypass them altogether. It is possible to disable the alarm circuits before breaking in with a Disable Device check (DC 25).
- From the inside, the heroes have to get past the security guards in the building lobby, who check to make sure visitors are expected by a building resident. Use the police officer archetype (*M&M*, page 228) for the two guards. The heroes can try to sneak past them (check Stealth against the guards' Notice bonus of +5) or bluff their way past them (check Bluff against the guards' Sense Motive bonus of +5). Various powers can obviously make it easier to bypass the guards. Handle these situations as they arise.
- The door to Harrison's apartment is locked (Disable Device check, DC 25, to bypass it). The door itself is Toughness 3 wood. Simply knocking on the door will bring Harrison over to see who it is, but it requires a successful Bluff check (versus his Sense Motive bonus of +7) to get him to open the door, considering the circumstances.

### COMPLICATING MATTERS

The events of this adventure are fairly straightforward: take down the meta lab, track down Kyle Harrison, fight RIOT, and either rescue Harrison from them or pursue them and trigger their trap. If you want, you can further complicate matters by introducing factions interested in meta and Harrison or vying for control of Freedom City and its underworld, using the material from **Chapter 5**. Some possibilities include:

- **The Yakuza:** The ambitious Yakuza is looking for a foothold in Freedom City and meta is an excellent opportunity for them. They might send a squad of ninja (*M&M*, page 227), possibly led by a Evil Ninja archetype from **Chapter 4**, to recover Kyle Harrison or existing samples of the drug and its formula.
- **The Mob:** Likewise, the Freedom City Mob has an interest in the production and sale of meta; it's cutting into their illicit drug business, so they either need to stop the supply or control it for themselves. An up-and-coming Mob boss might try to get control of meta, or Augustus Roman's gang could take interest in it. Some Mob enforcers or more powerful mercenaries could complicate things.
- **The Fearsome:** For some extra super-criminal activity, have Silverback and the Fearsome take an interest (see **Chapter 5**). Silverback might even recognize the telltale signs of GrantCo involvement in the drug's production and try to use that information to his advantage. Keep in mind the Labyrinth sees and hears everything the leader of the Fearsome does, and they might try and manipulate the whole situation to their advantage.
- **The Government:** Finally, the Freedom City government has to be considered in any criminal activity in the city. Mayor Moore or his underlings might want to try and control the supply and sale of meta themselves, or at least cut a deal with whatever faction does control it to look the other way in exchange for a cut of the profits. On the other hand, if the city administration senses weakness, they'll go for a quick collar to score public relations points for "cleaning up the city's streets" in their ongoing "war on drugs." This could get Commissioner Alquist and the POF-SWAT team involved, and they're not going to like vigilante heroes getting in their way.

## CONFRONTING HARRISON

When the heroes have a chance to confront and interrogate Harrison about the production of meta, they'll need to either bluff or intimidate the GrantCo exec into telling them what he knows. Encourage the players to roleplay the interrogation, giving them bonuses for good roleplaying and clever interrogation techniques. If the heroes also save Harrison from RIOT, give them a hefty bonus (+5 or more, depending on circumstances), especially if they imply they could always hand him back over to the people trying to kill him....

The interrogation is an opposed check of the hero's Bluff or Intimidate skill and Harrison's Sense Motive skill (+7) or his Will save (+3). It shouldn't be overly difficult to get him to crack, especially if the players have a hero point reserved for this purpose.

Once they get him to talk, the heroes can essentially learn all the information given in the **Adventure Summary**: Harrison works for Grant Conglomerates, and meta is based on something GrantCo researchers have been developing. He sold the formula and some samples to his dealer to pay off the mounting debt from his own drug habit. Harrison doesn't know why GrantCo is developing the drug, but he's fairly sure the company is involved in some shady dealings. He doesn't know the truth about things like the Labyrinth or the DNAscent project, but he is aware the company is engaged in a lot of "genetic research."

Once he talks, Harrison is also more than willing to cut a deal with the authorities in exchange for immunity or protective custody, assuming the heroes are willing to turn him over.

## I PREDICT A RIOT

At some point, RIOT shows up at Harrison's place to kill him. Exactly when depends on the flow of your adventure and how this scene plays out; if the heroes are casting about aimlessly or not pursuing clues, RIOT is there as they arrive just in time to prevent Flag-Burner or Armorine from delivering the killing blow to Harrison.

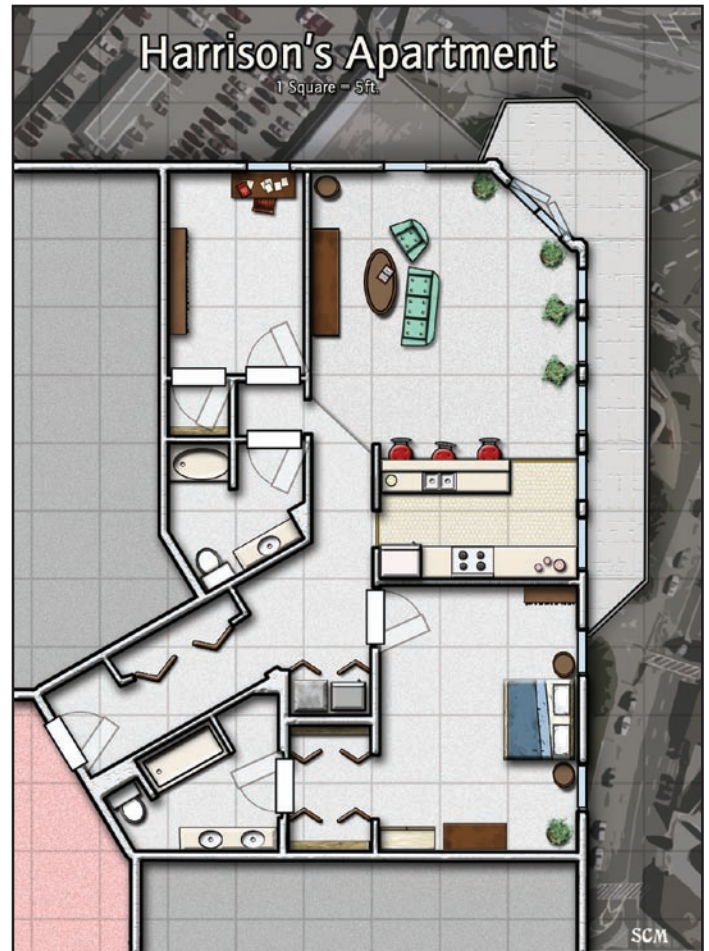
On the other hand, if the heroes are diligently following the clues, they can find and talk with Harrison and uncover what he knows before RIOT comes crashing into his apartment. If things lag during the scene—the heroes have trouble getting into Harrison's place, or the interrogation doesn't go well—that's a good time for a confrontation with RIOT to shake things up.

Regardless of when RIOT makes their appearance, it's certainly a setback for the heroes: award them each a hero point, since they're going to need it!

RIOT's primary objective is eliminating Harrison, but they'll make sure the heroes are out of the way first. Ideally, they want to nab Harrison and get away, giving them time to make a proper spectacle out of his "execution," but if things go wrong, they'll try to take out the heroes and kill Harrison on the spot.

Play up the running fight through the high-rise apartment building, using the scenery and setting to full effect and adding as many complications as you like. A few things to keep in mind:

- The windows are Toughness 1 glass. Interior doors are Toughness 3 wood, while interior walls are Toughness 5 wood and sheet-



rock. Remember that electrical wiring and plumbing run inside the walls, offering opportunities for broken pipes and wires.

- While Harrison's apartment is spacious, it's still going to get crowded fast with two super-teams slugging it out! Characters can get knocked through walls into neighboring apartments or out windows to a fourteen-story drop.
- The building has plenty of innocent people in it, providing opportunities to endanger civilians or rescue them. It can range from the comic relief of a hero crashing through a wall to land in the middle of somebody's dinner table or snuggly movie night on the couch, to members of RIOT seizing hostages as a bargaining chip to use, or simply tossing people out of windows as a distraction.
- RIOT's various powers (notably Flag-Burners incendiary powers and S.D. Ivan's cold powers) inflict collateral damage. Odds are the heroes have some collateral damage potential themselves. This can result in things like the building catching fire or suffering severe damage. A *lot* of damage to the building might compromise its structural integrity, threatening to bring the whole thing down! It's left for the GM to decide exactly if or when this happens, but it makes for a very dramatic distraction or opportunity for RIOT to get away. The villains might even damage the superstructure deliberately for this reason.



- Building security might respond to the fight (although they might also be smart enough to stay out of the middle of a super slug-fest!). Likewise, the Freedom City PD's POF-SWAT squad might respond to reports for a fight between capes in Parkside. You can have either or both show up in the middle of the fight for added complications.

## RIOT CONTROL

The two most probable outcomes of the fight are that the heroes defeat RIOT or the heroes lose and RIOT gets away with Harrison.

If the heroes win, Harrison gladly surrenders to them and tells them whatever he knows in exchange for his continued safety. He'll surrender to the police if left to his own devices, or the heroes can turn him over if they're so inclined, assuming they don't just off him themselves for being such a low-life and infesting the city with a new drug problem.

If the heroes lose, RIOT takes Harrison and disposes of him elsewhere. You can offer the heroes the opportunity to try and track them down to arrange a rematch if you want to extend the events of the adventure. Otherwise, the trail ends here, and the heroes have to wonder how it is RIOT found Harrison so quickly and what their real interest in the affair was (laying the initial clues to bigger things involving the Labyrinth and Taurus' plans for Freedom City).

If the cops don't show up during the fight, they arrive shortly after it's over, meaning the heroes have to either make a quick exit or take on the Freedom City PD, since their vigilante activities are illegal under the Moore Act. They can leave Harrison or any members of RIOT behind for the cops to find, although they learn later that RIOT escaped police custody (with some covert help from their Labyrinth masters, of course) and are still at large.

## CONCLUSION

If the heroes did well in the adventure, award them each a hero point. You might want to give them an additional point if they hit all the points of the adventure: keeping Kyle Harrison alive and essentially cutting off the source of meta in Freedom City.

The trail of the meta supply largely ends with Kyle Harrison. Grant Conglomerates quickly brands Harrison a rogue and criminal element acting entirely on his own (which has the additional merit of being true). They quickly bury any evidence of illegal activity of their part and leave Harrison holding the bag, whether he's dead or alive. If he didn't survive, so much the better, as it makes it easier to lay the blame for everything at his feet.

GrantCo does its best to clean things up and take their research back, but it's difficult to put the genie back into the bottle, and the heroes may find themselves dealing with meta and similar spin-off drugs for some time until they manage to eliminate the trade in it entirely. Depending on how things went, they could also find themselves the targets of RIOT, Grant Conglomerates, or the Labyrinth if they threaten their larger plans. If some or all of the characters gained their powers from exposure to meta, the villains might want to capture them for study in order to replicate their origins.

## FURTHER ADVENTURES

If Kyle Harrison survives the events of the *Bad Medicine*, the heroes may be able to convince him to testify against Grant Conglomerates in exchange for reduced charges against him. In that case, Harrison will need protection from company-hired assassins (possibly including RIOT again) in the time leading up to the trial. GrantCo will try to frame Harrison as a corrupt executive selling legitimate company research to drug dealers (which is essentially true, except for the "legitimate" part). At best, Harrison's testimony will bring down a division of GrantCo, and certainly won't threaten the Labyrinth, since Harrison knows nothing about it.

Heroes may continue to investigate GrantCo, leading to efforts to throw them off the trail or simply put them out of the way. Their investigation might even dig up connections to bigger illegal operations, touching on the periphery of the Labyrinth itself. Alternately, they might focus their efforts on the illegal drug trade, bringing them into further conflict with organized crime in Freedom City, and allowing you to use the crime-lords in **Chapter 5** as adversaries in your series.