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JADETECH

black jade

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A Reroll Productions Publication
www.RerollProductions.com + www.Jadepunk.com
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Jadeteck: Black Jade

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First published in 2015 by Reroll Productions.

6885 W. Lone Mountain Rd. #161, Las Vegas, NV 89108

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Nowhere and Everywhere

The moment Shen reached the vault he knew this was a bad idea. Row upon row, shelf after shelf, as jagged ore and dust, in cubes and impure veins, in small glass boxes, black jade, and he could feel it. The very air felt oily and thick against his skin. For once he was glad Alistair and the sailor were not with him. For all that they had been through together, the perils of the wilderness and Kausao's back alleys, held not a candle to the terror of black jade.

Shen slid down an aisle, forcing one foot in front of the other. The monks in the monastery near his village often spoke of serenity, of the pursuit of a peaceful soul, of the perspective these things required. They wrote poetry about it and drew in the sand and shaved their heads and wore simple robes. Be where you are, they would say. It was an easy thing to grasp in the placid repetition of the rice patty. The fall of petals in spring, the early dawn of summer, the richness of autumn and echoing silence of winter, to be among these was not difficult. To be here, where bleeding fingers brushed with a feather's touch and urgent whispers flickered just beyond hearing, was something else entirely.

Shen started to hum, low in his throat. It was a song about the moon, how the moon was a woman and the moon loved the sun. He focused on the words, on the longing of the moon, the separation of night and day. Light and dark, motion and stillness, one foot in front of the other.

There was a sensation like breaking the surface in a thick and murky pool. Shen took a few more steps and turned. The long rows of raw jade stood silent and inert behind him. He shook himself. He would have to cross it to get back, but that was the future. Right now, he was in here.

A few feet away, neatly labeled in a square cubby among a hundred others, lay the cause of his arrest and deportation to that hellish prison in the Tuyangan mountains. An age ago, Shen was simply the smartest, most innovative Jade technician the Four Wind's Trading Company had ever seen. Somehow the skinny Tuyangi farm kid got jade down in his gut. Where others studied and tinkered for decades to grasp a single aspect of a single type, Shen simply knew how it worked. The alloys and refinements he proposed had the potential to propel the Great Nations to unshakable and unending technological, military, and economic dominance.

And then he tried to leave. Worse, he tried to take his papers and ideas with him. Why? It was not the cutthroat corporate politics or bureaucratic backstabbing that bothered Shen. No, it was the black jade. Blue jade was the sea and sky. Green was the earth and that which grew. White was the wind and the morning light. Red was fire and the rumble of waking mountains. Black jade, he told them, was living death and Shen wanted nothing to do with it.

But you couldn't simply leave Four Winds. Not when you were as smart as Shen. Not with everything he had seen. You couldn't kill him either. Someone like Shen came along once in a hundred years. You had to break him and bind him and bend him to your will. A corporation was a machine and every part no matter how important must do its part.

Which was why Shen had returned here, to this vault. The weeks of preparation since his return to Kausao were all about this moment. They had his notes and designs. Everything was waiting for him to return to a desk, docile and apologetic, ready and willing to serve.

Shen smiled as he pulled scrolls off their little alcoves and started piling them in the open space on the stone floor. Some of these were very clever. He had even designed a little automaton in the shape of a dog in his early time with Four Winds. There it was next to the triple concussive red jade shells the Aerish were using on the Ahlmac somewhere across the world and the long range airship engine they used to get there. There was the waterless steam machines rich ladies used to soothe their aching feet, right next to his report on the interaction of black jade and the human consciousness. Shen had broken all the rules back then, and now he was going to break some more.

With a flick, his red jade igniter sent a tiny jet of flame into the tinder dry rice paper sheets. There was a crackle, and then the fire breathed deep. Shen swallowed hard, his chest tight. Years of his life were burning on the floor in front of him. He crouched down. He was here.

A rifle cracked overhead. The guards were late. He had slipped through between shifts, but he knew they would find him. You could not just start fires in people's highest security vaults without someone noticing. Shen smiled and produced a small tin of leather oil from his pocket. On hands and knees he scuttled across to the shelves, allowing the creeping darkness to wash over his sense. Just because he did not like black jade did not mean it did not have its uses.

Seizing a small glass cube of the black powder, he poured it into the tin and mixed it into the leather oil with a finger. Taking his inky black finger, he dabbed both wrists, a location on his right ankle, the left of his neck, and then drew a long line down the middle of his face. Taking his opposite finger, he spread the black jade oil under each eye, across his jaw until it met his ears. A peaceful soul was not the only thing the monks taught.

Suddenly, Shen was nowhere and everywhere. Time stopped. He stood. Behind him his notes hung in frozen flame. A red jade bullet hung in the air next to his head. He flicked it and it spiraled away to his right. Now he was striding through the rows of black jade. In the corners of his vision, black hands reached for him and he could make out anguished voices. He marched on. At the end of the vault, at the top of three low steps, a trio of soldiers stood seemingly frozen in the act of flight. Shen cut between them and down the hallway.

Around the corner, a dozen guards were rushing forward blades in hand, eyes intent, unblinking. Shen hugged the wall and moved on. Ahead of him the doors hung open, mid swing as a dark haired woman in blue pushed through. He brushed past. He found himself in an alley. Alistair was tossing a knife. The sailor was smoking and staring into the street.

Shen wiped the oil off his face and his friends blinked. The sailor swore. "Where did you come from?"

The Tuyangi farmboy smiled. "Here."



Welcome to the Jadetech Series

Jadetech defines the world of *Jadepunk*. It shapes everyday life and allows for a level of technology and understanding far beyond what would otherwise be possible. At its core, jade defies the laws that are considered the normal laws of nature. Any attempt to codify these exceptions to the natural order in any but the loosest of ways has failed. Many philosophers hold that jade—and by extension, Jadetech—is proof that the universe is unknowable in any way beyond the superficial. Others maintain the hope that some underlying principle or series of principles will emerge and explain the jade phenomena with some sort of grand, unified law.

What is Black Jade?

Black jade is many things to many people, and everything to some. Its limits are not fully understood, and even what is understood is only just. Its discovery changed everything. It was a leap forward equal only to the discovery of the mystic properties of jade itself. It binds and connects all things. It has a strange connection to mankind and some have posited that it represents the soul—the central element of the mystic universe.

Black jade cannot be destroyed and cannot be used up, yet there is a very limited supply. It is the rarest of all the forms of jade. It can hold things together and tear things apart. It seems to be connected to time in unique ways, while also relating to one's sense of reality and self. Black jade resonates with human consciousness far more than the more common types of jade. Often those who work it claim that the black jade seemingly aids them in their work; moving and twisting to suit the desires of the maker who works it. Few give the statement much credence, though. Such claims are hard to either affirm or disprove. With black jade, only one thing is for certain—you never can be sure what will happen.

History of black jade

From its inception there had been rumors about the fifth type of jade. Much speculation was placed on this mythical jade and its properties. For over two hundred years this fifth jade was dismissed by the alchemical establishment, sought only by madmen and fools. Were it not for a single Kaiyumi ship landing in the wrong bay, it would still be a mystery. When that merchant ship discovered that bay, the history of black jade and Kausao City became an inevitability.

The history of black jade begins with the birth of Kausao City. Kausao would not exist if black jade were not found within it. Black jade was discovered in the region and is known to be nowhere else in the world. Its presence catapulted Kausao into the world stage and created the four Great Nations.

Secret Black Jade Deposits

Deep in the heart of the lands of the Ahlmac lies a secret. A vein of black jade runs through the jungle hills. The twin royal families have kept this secret on pain of death . . . or worse. While they lack the techniques necessary to harvest the rare material, they know that should it become known to the world at large they will have a war they cannot win on their hands. If the great powers discover this vein, it could spell the end of this fragile peace that has existed since the founding of Kausao.

On the Nature of Black Jade

For over two hundred years alchemists and engineers worked with the various forms of jade. Much was understood, and even more was thought to be understood. The discovery of black jade became a quantum leap in alchemical knowledge of the universe. However, even one hundred years later, black jade still confounds as much as it explains. Currently there are four prevailing theories on the nature of black jade.

The Fifth State Theory

A theory on the nature of black jade that states it represents some fifth fundamental force of the universe. Black jade allows the manipulation of this yet undefined force or matter that exists obfuscated from the observable universe. It was first put forth by a research team in the Aerum Empire who were attempting to explain how black jade can manipulate shadows and time, which should be impossible. Using this as a springboard, they postulate that consciousness is a form of energy that taps into this unknown force.

This theory is often thought to be refuted by black jade's connection to electricity. If it were simply the focus for this new, unidentified force then the explanatory power of the theory is in doubt. Also, this force cannot currently be measured or analyzed in any repeatable way. All that does not explain why building devices using this theoretical model works, especially when dealing with shadow and time effects. Trying to build a device that manipulates electricity with this framework leads to weak effects or faulty devices.

Cosmic Mind Theory

All jade is, in some way, affected by the thoughts of the engineer or alchemist who works with it. This is a known truth about the mystical material and a constant annoyance to those seeking some unified theory of jade. The cosmic mind theory claims that black jade is the residue of the mind. First put forth by Aakil Nejim, an alchemist and cult leader in Naramel, it claims that black jade is directly tied to Casomir, the soul of the universe, and by extension to the souls of every human life—past, present, and future. It states that time is an illusion granted to the material world so that truth can be understood.

Time, in actuality, is occurring simultaneously. Black jade is the material reflection of the soul of the universe and thus binds everything together. Those who use this theoretical construct tend to create very powerful tools, though they can be unpredictable in their power.

Negation Theory

There are those who believe that reality is a lie and that jade puts proof to that lie. Tuyangan alchemists have put a recent theory forward that claims black jade is simply the negation of all things. What a specific piece of jade negates is chosen at the time of creation, whether it is time, distance, incompatibility, life, mind, and so forth. The problems with this theory are many. Primarily opponents point to black jade's incorruptible nature. Black jade does not get used up, and cannot be destroyed in any meaningful way. The theory also has a problem with the electrical nature of black jade, though admittedly there are alchemists who hold that electricity is somehow a negation of some natural order and the same goes for the incorruptible nature of the jade. They claim that it is breaking and negating the laws of the universe in order to remain as it is. Using this framework, alchemists have created some of the strangest effects with black jade. Perpetual motion devices and disintegration effects are the norm in the theorists working in this model.

The Uncertainty Engine

During the meetings of his cult, Aakil speaks of the form of Casomir. He talks of building a device that will give shape to the formless and allow the faithful to speak to their god. His goal is to create what he calls an Uncertainty Engine. A mechanical calculation engine, built entirely from black jade, of such complexity and perfection that the cosmic mind will form within it. This constructed intelligence would be the first of its kind, and be able to think far beyond the scope of a mere human. Or so Aakil believes. Progress is slow, to say the least.

Anima Theory

Black jade is created by the mass death of people—the souls infuse the jade with power. The theory was started by Heijr Nakaya, a Kaiyumi Antiquarian, who had become endeared of the cosmic soul theory and had been doing some research on the history of the Kausao region. In digging through old journals and the few remaining ruins of the ancient city of Kausao he found mentions of mass graves discovered over the first major deposits of black jade. His theory was that black jade is the physical residue of the souls of the dead as they pass into the next world. Only large numbers of the dead all in one location would allow for black jade to form. Currently his view is seen as extreme both by alchemists and antiquarians alike. However, it has garnered some interest as it would explain the seeming connection between black jade and human consciousness.

The Soul Net

Among the wealthy there are a great many panaceas and supposed anti-aging remedies made from a variety of jades and other exotic materials. Most of these have a minimal effect. However, there is a group of engineers working on a device for a group of wealthy industrialists. This project has been dubbed the soul net. The device looks like a dentist's chair with five black jade gems in a great wire helm at the head. In theory, if a person were to get in the soul net, their soul would be captured in the gems and, again, theoretically, placed into a new body. So far no one has had the courage to sit in this abomination. Not only is the soul net a frightening concept itself, but many of those who created it have had dark fates. Three of the engineers committed suicide during the construction, while two others have gone mad and needed to be locked away. They kept screaming about the whispers and shadows that followed them. No one is quite sure what will actually happen when a person sits in it, but all the alchemists and engineers that worked on it fear that someday they might find out.

The Black jade Market

International trade in black jade is political and dangerous; it must be done with great care. With its manifold uses and its limited supply, nations have gone to war over it. Those who enter into the trade lightly chance losing everything. There are firms that specialize in the trade of black jade. Three have controlled the supply of black jade for as long as it has been available: Rothschild & Rhodes Mining, Koa Industries, and Aoyage Materials. For those seeking to sell their black jade, these are the companies they sell to. Trying to get around them can, and has, result in severe responses from the companies. The four nations also each control black jade mines that were nationalized after the founding of the city. This combination has led to miners dreading discovering a vein of black jade. There are no good options.

Refinement

Gathering and refining black jade is hazardous and difficult, and folk have not yet mastered the techniques. Currently there are two methods for refining it. The first requires powdering it and then working it into another jade during the refinement process. While this method is simplest, it can be troublesome to separate the two forms of jade once refinement is complete. The second method is far more difficult. The jade must be heated while in a vacuum. Specialized bell jars and pressurized containers must be constructed to properly treat the material. The dangers are great, though. Many of these devices are prototypes and prone to energetic failure at the most inopportune times. Currently there are a great many people working on new and innovative methods for refining and using black jade.

Quality of Life

Black jade is not a part of most people's lives in any direct way. Aside from its role in the founding of Kausao and the resultant alchemical revolution, black jade has done little to help most folk just going about their lives. However, its nature and the ability to mix jade colors has opened up many new avenues of research. It allows for true wonders like the great flying city of Kinardbal and the Island maker rumored to be in the hands of the Empress of the Kaiyumi. Black jade technology is in its infancy, and it will be years before it is fully understood and incorporated into everyday life.

Complications

Those who refine black jade may go mad—that is the common depiction of a black jade alchemist. While this does happen far more often than it should, there are many black jade engineers and the like who survive, happy and sane, to a ripe old age. However, madness is a serious issue among those who handle black jade. Even in its raw form it is quite dangerous.

Miners working with the material often come down with the Black Ague, called Mad Aggie in the alleys and streets where it is prevalent. Those who suffer from black jade poisoning begin seeing past and future events alongside events happening in the present, like ghosts. They become more and more paranoid as the poison sets in. In the final states they are near catatonic, seeing all time simultaneously, locked in a cage of hallucinatory images and out of sequence events. Up until they reach the final stage, Mad Aggie is curable with the right jade purgatives and treatment. Needless to say, most of the miners who come down with it cannot afford such luxuries.

Black jade is the rarest and most valuable material in the world; an ounce of it can go for vast sums on the open market. If you are openly using black jade people will take notice. In fact often it seems as though the jade draws people's



notice on purpose when in use. People have been killed over a mere ounce of the stuff, open use of black jade is similar to a declaration of one's own wealth and power. Like all wealthy and powerful people, they draw much unwanted attention.

The Doom of Kausao

To those who have become lost in a black jade haze, the future can become an open door. The few who have come back from the brink speak of the Doom of Kausao, but none have had enough of their sense of self remaining to say much more than that. The few who study this phenomenon are aware of a few things, though. The Doom will come after a great war rocks the four nations. Several accounts have claimed that a comet will be in the sky during the Doom. Some of these people in the know have begun a great endeavor. They seek to keep the peace between the nations as a temporary solution, and their long term goal is to breakdown the very concept of nations and wars in order to avert this doom.

Assets

Sa'amo: This is a black jade infused mushroom tea mixed with the tears of the poppy. It is one of the most potent hallucinogens on the planet. Like all black jade enhanced narcotics, this too is highly illegal and controlled. It is known as Black Heaven and Time Shadow among the recreational users. There are those who claim the drug can allow you to see into the future. However it also can grant insight into yourself and your own desires. Most visions had while under the influence of Sa'amo are difficult to remember clearly and often are filled with metaphor and symbolism. However there are those who swear by it and endeavor to push their consciousness further into the void.

Function Aspect: Black Jade Hallucinogen

Features: Aspect (The Future is Now), Aspect (True Insight)

Flaws: Based on the creation roll

How to deal with Prophecy in your game

Prophecy and other types of clairvoyance can become difficult in games. With black jade prophecies the goal is to create further adventures, not to bottleneck the players or destroy the GM's credibility. Black jade can be used to see the future; however, it can also cause hallucinations and other strange side effects. When you are attempting to predict the future, you need to involve black jade in some way, then deal with the ramifications of black jade use. You roll for it like any other overcome or create advantage roll, and whether successful or not an aspect about the future has been created, either by the player or the GM. This aspect will last until the event has occurred or been changed through play. It can be invoked and compelled like any other aspect. When creating this aspect keep in mind the double edged nature of prophecy and leave it specific enough that the players can use it to their benefit and dangerous enough that you can use it to their detriment to increase drama. Also keep in mind that though black jade lets you see the future, it messes with your sense of time. This can mean that you are seeing something that will happen in days or hours, or something that will happen a hundred years from now.

Hope Seed: Refined Cauka Beans covered in chocolate mixed with powdered black jade. This treat for the rich and powerful is a true marvel. When you digest the bean you experience confidence, happiness, and a pleasant calm feeling. It is rapidly becoming something of a secret vice among those in power who feel the stress more than most.

Function Aspect: Black Jade Infused Happy Pill

Features: Focus 6(+1 to all professions)

Flaws: As per the creation roll



Soul Killer: A sword crafted for the Governor by a mine owner seeking favor. This weapon is nearly perfect in design, the result of a team of engineers working together for over a month. It strikes like lightning and seems to improve the skill of the user. It is one of a kind, a weapon and a piece of art. Like all of his trophies, the Governor has never used it. It is said that he placed it in his vault and has never looked at it again. Many thieves dream of breaking into that vault. The sword itself is beyond priceless as a weapon or as a source of black jade.

Function aspect: **Black Jade Straight Sword**

Features: Exceptional(prevents the defender from checking a stress box to reduce the hit), Focus 2(Fighter +2), Harmful 2

Flaws: Situational(Only gain fighter advantage during the first round of combat), Troubling(**Most Recognizable Sword in the World**)

Cost: 3

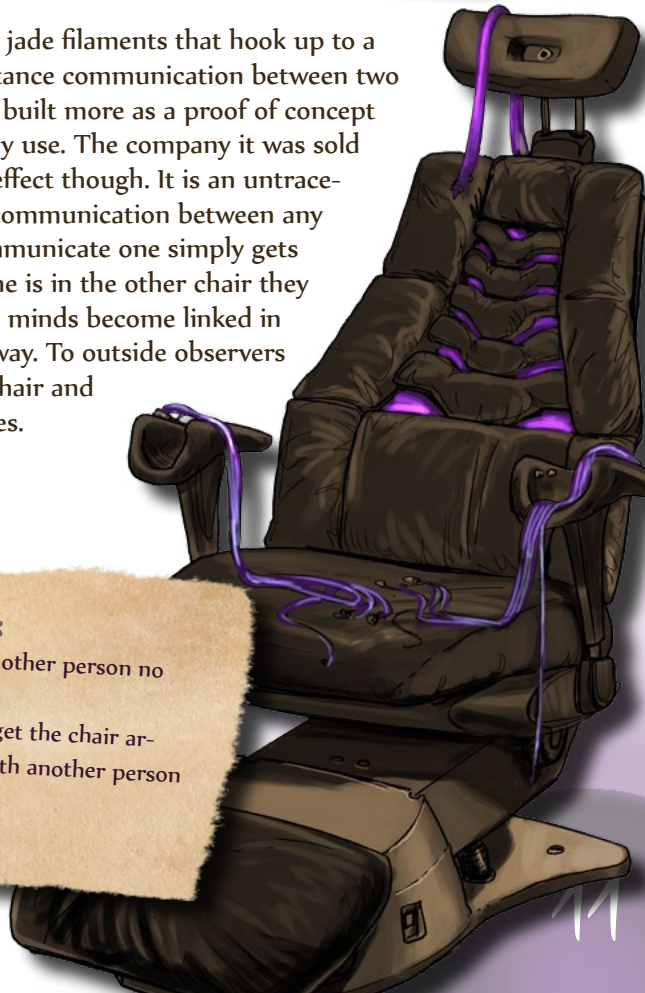
Spirit Telegraph: A chair with black jade filaments that hook up to a person's head, allowing for long distance communication between two different sets of these chairs. It was built more as a proof of concept than as an actual device for everyday use. The company it was sold to have managed to use it to great effect though. It is an untraceable, unjammable, instant form of communication between any two locations on the planet. To communicate one simply gets into the chair and speaks. If someone is in the other chair they will speak the same words. The two minds become linked in a very useful, if somewhat strange way. To outside observers it looks as if the person sits in the chair and holds a conversation with themselves.

Function Aspect: **Black Jade Soul Link**

Features: Exceptional(Can speak to another person no matter the location)

Flaws: Demanding(Takes one turn to get the chair arranged), Situational(can only speak with another person in the other Soul Link)

Cost: 1



Shock Staff: A staff with black jade infused wiring running in complex patterns up and down its length. It can emit electrical energy on either end and was designed to subdue opponents. It was built for the Guard in hopes that it would increase their effectiveness when dealing with non-lethal situations. Currently they are too expensive to mass produce. Eleven were constructed for the Guard to test, and currently those are all that exist.



Function Aspect: Black Jade Stun Staff

Features: Harmful 2

Flaws: Situational (Cannot be used to kill)

Cost: 1

The Stop Watch: Among the wealthy and the elite, disturbing rumors have begun to spread. Rumors of vaults being robbed in seconds. Rumors of wealth vanishing in an instant. All that is left behind is a single crow feather, dyed red. They have taken to calling this thief the Red Crow. In truth the thief is a gifted jadetech engineer named Da-Xia Wen. She constructed a black jade timepiece that allows for her to slightly manipulate time. Most of her legendary feats are due to her innate sense of theatricality and understanding of human perception. The hand-held timepiece can slow time for a fifteen seconds of subjective time. With it, she has robbed the ten richest households in Kausao. She leaves the feather as a calling card and a warning. It represents the crow spirit, who is both a thief and a teacher. She likes to believe that she is stealing to stick it to the rich and powerful, but mostly she steals to enrich herself.

Function aspect: *Black Jade Timepiece*

Features: Exceptional (can instantly enter or leave an area, so long as there is a way in or out), Aspect (*Stop's Time!*), Focus 2 (Explorer +2)

Flaws: Situational (the Watch cannot be used to affect the world, only yourself and what you are carrying), Demanding (requires a +2 Engineering roll to activate), Limited (can only be used once per scene)

Cost: 2

Gravity Negation Engine: While attempting to create a more accurate compass, a minor jade alchemist accidentally stumbled upon a breakthrough beyond his imagining. Using a small amount of black jade infused copper wire, one can cause the device to exert a great deal of pressure against the planet's magnetic field—enough to levitate a craft at a set height off the ground. The plans were purchased by Tongfen, a refining company. They plan on releasing the hover wagon sometime in the next two years.

Function Aspect: *Black Jade Hover Wagon*

Features: Exceptional (can instantly enter or leave an area, so long as there is a way in or out), Sturdy 2 (has two stress boxes), Protective 1

Flaws: Situational (only hovers over mostly flat surfaces), Troubling (*Handles Like a Drunken Ox*)

Cost: 3

JADETECH™



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