

IOCANE* Powder

***Invasive Operations (Clinical, Advanced Nano-Engineering)
(TL 11)**

It typically comes in powder form; why, yes, it can be fairly said that IOCANE powder is odorless, tasteless, dissolves instantly in liquid, and can certainly be programmed to be among one of the more deadly poisons known to Man. It can be programmed to do a lot of things, in fact. That's sort of the point. Each dose of IOCANE Powder is programmed to duplicate the effects of any drug or poison known at TL9 or below. Changing the 'load' on a dose of IOCANE Powder requires a Complexity 6 computer (this would be a high-end supercomputer at TL9, and a cufflink-sized computer at TL11) and the right program. \$150 per dose, LC 4: it's supposed to be regulated, but getting a permit for use on primitive planets is dead easy.

Most interstellar cultures find Tech Level 11 the sweet spot for really satisfying interference with 'primitive' cultures (like, say, 21st Century Earth's): TL9-10 cultures find that messing with the natives is just a little *too* dangerous, and TL12+ ones don't find the process sporting at **all**. Being able to have just enough danger to make the whole thing

spicy, while still being able to turn on a force field at need, is really the optimal meddling solution. At least, for the meddlers.

IOCANE Powder is part of that meddling; the nanobots that make it up are only really detectable at TL11, and the drug or poison the Powder produces are indistinguishable from the 'real' thing anyway. It's an espionage tool, really; obviously people can assassinate targets with it, but they can also heal the target's cancer, give them hallucinations, slow down their aging, make them talkative and cooperative, or a host of other things.

There are only two real problems with IOCANE Powder. The first is that each dose is single-use (this is a deliberate design choice, in order to minimize the chance of a nanotech Gray Goo scenario). Once it's activated in a human bloodstream, that's it. The second problem is that the Powder cannot be used on anyone from a TL11 civilization; the target's own medical nanotechnology will automatically detect the interlopers, and disengage them. The medical community makes it a point to keep that particular immunity up to date and widely disseminated, too.

...What's that? Well, I suppose that one *could* say that they've spent several years building up an immunity to IOCANE Powder. I'm sorry, but is this some sort of classical allusion?

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