



## Into the Night

From onyx to obsidian, black gems have new allure

FROM TOP John Hardy necklace, \$7,500. Mikimoto necklace, \$13,000. Stephen Webster cuff, \$14,500, Maxfield. Chopard ring, \$22,670. Chanel Fine Jewelry ring, \$29,700. See Shopping Guide for more details, page 110.

**F**ashion insiders have long favored all things black, and with charred furniture and inky manicured nails now soaking up the spotlight, black baubles couldn't be far behind. Slightly sinister yet intensely seductive, black gems are white hot.

Gleaming dark jewels first made their mark when Queen Victoria, mourning the loss of her beloved husband Prince Albert (but unwilling to grieve bijoux-free), commissioned the crown jewelers to create entire parures, hair ornaments, cameos and even buttons—all out of carved jet. A trend was born and the beau monde of the late 1800s clamored for noir.

Then in 1926, Coco Chanel's "little black dress" brought black back into the light of day, and Cartier's black gems became de rigueur with the dazzle of geometric Art Deco designs.

Today, black diamonds and sapphires are once again casting a spell. Penelope Cruz and Jessica Biel's stylist Cristina Ehrlich loves "their mysterious opulence, leaving you wondering what they are." Set in blackened gold, these sparklers can be found in spindly leaf twinings on delicate cuff bracelets or encircling their colorless cousins. Used by designers as far flung as David Yurman to JAR in Paris, black diamonds are affordably luxe. But, if provenance is a priority, the world-famous 67.50-carat Black Orlov diamond will make a dramatic, if ominous, statement. The cushion-cut stone, reportedly stolen from the eye of the idol Brahma in India and once belonging to Catherine the Great, recently sold at Christie's, curse and all, for a mere \$352,000.



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP Neil Lane for De Beers necklace, \$120,000. Verdura earrings, \$3,875, Neiman Marcus, Beverly Hills. Cynthia Bach bracelet, \$12,500, Neiman Marcus. Tiffany & Co. earrings, \$3,500. Tony Duquette brooch, \$44,000.

Many of these delicious dark gems also hail from the sea. Black coral and pearls, strictly for the adventurous, can range from a soft dove gray to deep India ink. A perfect symmetrical orb, a delicious baroque nugget or dramatic spiky twigs, black pearls and coral are the signature of a woman comfortable in her own skin.

A host of other stones can naturally evoke the color of a midnight Egyptian sky. Look for shimmering tourmaline, glassy obsidian and the fiery black opal. For something a tad softer, try stormy moonstone, spiritual jade or gleaming hematite. Rich with history while cutting a swath on couture runways, black jewels are being burnished to new depths. Create a stir and cross over to the dark side. **DAWN MOORE**