



Midnight Emporium : Floating Black Market Exposed

BY GEORGE LU - 2 HOURS AGO

Night City Today can now confirm the existence of the long rumored floating black market known as “The Midnight Emporium”. For nearly a decade, rumors have circulated of a cargo freighter that periodically drops anchor just over the horizon. Mobsters, elite fixers, decadent corps, and anyone with a surplus of euros and a deficit of morals are invited to bid on merchandise not just rare and exotic, but so scandalously illegal that even Night City’s notoriously corrupt fixers won’t touch it.

Acting on an anonymous tip, Night City Today confirmed, by way of orbital photograph, the presence of an armed cargo freighter ten miles northeast of the Night City Harbor. Orbital imagery shows a Bell-Boeing V22F cargo helicopter on deck at 2:35 am. Forty-five minutes later ground spotters observed just such a craft approaching the city from the direction of the ship, carrying a single cargo container. It touched down somewhere in the vicinity of the hot zone, then returned the way it came without the container.

The ship, a freighter bearing the name Kum Song VI, remains anchored in international waters outside of Night City. As discovered by our friends in Asia, the Kum Song is registered in Korea. Her declared route has her departing from Okinawa two months ago and due to call in Manzanillo, Mexico, in thirty-five days. One must wonder what other ports the ship is calling at; no ship so badly damaged as to require so long to cross the Pacific would be considered sea worthy.

When reached for comment, Night City PD spokesperson Lucy Wellmont had the following to say. “Our jurisdiction does not extend to international waters. We do not seize cargo from ships not docking in Night City as doing so would

clearly be an act of piracy under international law. If any citizen has definite information about contraband entering Night City we encourage them to contact the Night City Police.”

What can be so illicit that Night City’s own smugglers, bootleggers, and schemers would miss the opportunity to make a dishonest euro? What would can be so scandalous that people whose wealth shields them from city law enforcement would be willing rub shoulders with actual sailors? As long as Night City law enforcement is willing to turn a blind eye to what happens outside its harbor, we may never know.

RadVac3

Domier-Bauer is pleased to offer RadVac3, the latest breakthrough in radiation protection. Humanity has not evolved to handle background radiation at modern levels, but you can! With RadVac3 you can be confident that you are protected from hot particles lingering in the atmosphere and from radioactive byproducts in your drinking water.

RadVac3 may be covered by your corporate insurance plan. Ask your employer’s health care manager about it today! Those without insurance should inquiry about Domier-Bauer’s payroll deduction plan.

Let Domier-Bauer give you a helping hand and upgrade your lymph nodes today!

Initial treatment is €7,500, and requires 72 hours of in-patient medical observation. Yearly booster costs €2,500 and requires only 24 hours of medical observation. RadVac3 does not eliminate the need to wear a filter mask when out of doors; Domier-Bauer encourages everyone to always practice basic outdoor safety.

The Job

A few hours after the screamsheet about the Midnight Emporium hits the data terms, the characters get a call from a fixer they know, who offers them a job if they will come to the docks and bring their gear.

This is a straightforward recovery operation. Take the little rubber boat out after dark, pull up beside the big cargo ship waiting at the given coordinates. Use the grapple guns to climb aboard and find the client's missing package. You're looking for a medical transport case; white with a red cross. It's fragile, so you are going to need to lower it gently over the side back to your boat. €20,000 for the unopened package. *Do not open the case.* The client is insistent about this, and says they'll know.

If you're feeling lucky, I have other clients that would pay for the cargo manifest. The real manifest, the one that tells which containers hold the interesting cargo.

Be quick, choomba. That screamsheet ran because the Emporium has pissed off the wrong people. There will be blow back, and you don't want to be on the ship when it arrives.

The character's contact provides them with an inflatable boat, equipped with a silent, electric outboard motor. Also provided are a pair of grappling guns; shotgun like devices that fire a magnetic grappling hook trailing a carbon fiber line that can be detached from the gun and hitched to a harness and winch rig. There is also a single pair of night vision goggles. Provided the characters leave after dark, and do not use any lights or otherwise draw attention to themselves, they reach the Kum Song VI without incident.

The Midnight Emporium

The Kim Sung VI, home of the Midnight Emporium, is a mid-sized container ship from the turn of the century. It is currently anchored fifteen miles off shore from Night City, in international waters. The ship has turned off its running and bridge lights, making it difficult to spot at night.

Arrival

Behind you, Night City is a brilliant beacon of multi-colored lights blazing into the night. In front of you, there is only darkness punctuated by the occasional patch of stars glimpsed through the cloud cover. The nights is silent except for the soft purr of the boat's electric motor. Then, behind you, the unmistakable roar of an AV engine. It passes far overhead, a cluster of blinking red safety lights against the black.

For the next thirty minutes your boat speeds into the night, as AV craft occasionally pass overhead. Then one of those craft suddenly switches on its landing spot light. The light sweeps forward, illuminating the prow of a ship stacked high with cargo containers. For a moment the AV hovers over the ship, and then the light is blocked as it descends to the deck. A quick glance at the your GPS confirms that you are now a half-kilometer from your target. As the engine throttles back you check your gear and prepare for arrival.

When the characters arrive the Midnight Emporium is hosting an auction; offering exclusive contraband to wealthy bidders who have arrived by AV. Most of the crew are in their quarters, relaxing and staying out of the way while essential personal see to their guests. With the attention of the crew diverted it is easy for the characters to sneak aboard using the provided equipment. The characters have time to take a lap around the ship and choose their boarding position. However, there is very little to be seen from water level and in the dark.

Exploring the Ship

Most of the ship's lights have been turned off, leaving the ship in darkness. Any light brighter than a glow stick will attract immediate attention if it can be seen, but the arrangement of cargo containers blocks line of sight between the parts of the ship where there is activity and its perimeter. Characters who take care to not show any light and keep quiet have no trouble sneaking up on the islands of light where activity is taking place.

Key Personal

The majority of the ship's crew are in their quarters during the auction. Those who are not are occupied with their assigned tasks. The characters

will only encounter people in the areas described in Locations of Interest, or if they deliberately invade the dormitories in the central tower.

People on deck include:

- Six security guards, spread between the bridge, auction, and slave pen. The security guards are low-level solos. All have cyber-optics with low-light enhancement, heavy armor, and heavy sub-machine guns. They are all chipped for English and the martial art Krav Maga at +2. They are posted around the deck, as described below.
- The captain is on the auction floor. He wears a fitted suit that doubles as light body armor. He carries a heavy pistol, and is chipped for marksmanship and Krav Maga, both at +2.
- The first officer is on watch on the bridge. He is wearing an armored T-shirt and an armored long coat. He conceals a short mono-blade under the coat.
- 3 Crew members assisting the auction. Each wears slacks, a white button down shirt, and a bow tie. They carry no weapons, but are chipped for English.
- The two-dozen children described in The Slave Pens section.
- A dozen invited bidders, all in high end clothes that double as light body armor. All wear decorative masks that conceal their faces. They carry no weapons. At the first sign of trouble they flee for the AV craft which brought them to the ship, where their chauffeurs wait for them.

Raising the Alarm

Un-silenced gun fire, explosions, or a guard calling on their radio will send the ship into lock down. Any crew present in the immediate vicinity dive for cover. Crew in other parts of the ship flee the source of the disturbance, and attempt to put a wall of stacked containers between them and trouble. Security goes on high alert, converges on the disturbance, and shoots to kill anyone they do not recognize. Unless the trouble starts on the bridge, the first mate will hit the panic button and lock all the doors on the ship at the first sound of gun fire. With the ship locked down, the doors will open for an authorized finger print. Alternatively, they can be opened using

The Queen's English

None of the crew speak English, Spanish, or Spanglish naturally. However, everyone on deck for the auction has an English language chip slotted into their interface plugs. These particular English language chips are meant for use by people doing complex financial deals with members of England's upper classes. They provide the English language at a +2 level, and include additional vocabulary to cover complex financial instruments. They also include some basic etiquette; anyone using them will know which forks to use for which course of a dinner and how to address various members of English society. They will speak proper "Queen's English" with a faint but noticeable British accent. In addition to English, these chips provide a +1 bonus to Basic Education rolls for etiquette or understanding financial contracts.

an electronics security kit and a Basic Tech check against a DV 12.

The table below gives the number of rounds it takes for security to reach a given location on the ship from where they are originally posted. Guards converging on the bridge move to opposite sides of the bridge tower and take the elevators to the top (60 seconds). If the guard on the bridge leaves, he takes one of the stair cases at a run, arriving in half the time it takes to use the elevator (30 seconds).

Guard Response Time in Rounds

	Bridge	Slave Pens	Auction
Bridge		15	30
Slave Pens	25		5
Auction	30	5	
Lifeboat	15	5	5

Locations of Interest

The base of central tower rests on a platform raised twelve feet above the front part of the deck, in order to accommodate machinery and infrastructure. Stair cases on either side of the ship, fore and aft, lead up from the deck to the platform and the doors into the central tower. Just inside each door is another pair of stair cases lead-

ing up into the tower and down into the bowels of the ship. Next to each stair case is a large freight elevator. The bridge is ten stories above the main deck, at the top of the tower. From the platform to the bridge, or vice versa, is a sixty second elevator second ride. Other levels of the central tower contain dormitories, mess and recreation areas, a gym, and a medical clinic capable of installing basic cyberware. Signs on the ground floor and in the elevators declare which floors these areas are on, and anyone on the stair case outside the dormitory and recreation areas can hear people inside. Below the main deck can be found the engine room, fuel tanks, various machine rooms, and other operational areas of the ship.

The Bridge

The bridge lights are off, but the front of the bridge is covered with large windows overlooking the deck below. The light filtering in from below shows a bank of complicated ship controls under the windows. Chairs, knee high filing cabinets, and desks mark out various work stations for the crew of the ship. Lockers line the walls. In the back half of the room a ratty couch faces the rear wall, where an overhead projector is showing tonight's episode of "You Bet Your Life!".

If the alarm has not been raised, the first mate and one security guard are sitting on the couch watching the vid when the characters enter. The guard jumps to his feet and covers the characters with his gun as soon as the characters enter. If the characters do not immediately open fire, the security guard demands they leave. If they leave, three guards, one from the slave pens and two from the auction, meet the characters when they reach the main deck. If the characters do not leave, the guard opens fire and calls for backup. The first mate dives for cover as soon as gun fire starts, then breaks for the opposite door at the first opportunity.

A character who reaches the bridge controls can take control of the ship. If the lights to the room are turned on, all of the controls are clearly labeled using the correct nautical terms. In Korean. Piloting the ship requires extensive training, but a Basic Tech check against a DV of 15 will allow a character to identify the engine start button and the switch that unlocks the wheel. A character who reads Korean gains a +5 bonus to this roll. Another large red button on the left side

of the console will place the ship in lock down. It possible to lift the lock down by using a security key on a nearby panel. The first mate and captain both have the required key.

Searching the various cabinets and lockers on the bridge will turn up a variety of ship operation and repair manuals, written in Korean. A character searching the area may make a Perception check against a DV of 12. If they are successful, they find an unmarked data chip. If they slot the chip into interface plugs or an agent, they discover it provides the basic skills necessary to pilot the ship without making skill checks for normal operations.

From the bridge it is possible to run the ship's control and data network. See the chart below for the contents of the system. Gaining control of the control node for the helm allows for piloting of the ship without specialized knowledge of ship piloting. It also allows the ship to be placed in or taken out of lock down. Gaining control of the ship's defense system grants access to six surface-to-air missiles siloed in recessed launch tubes in front of the bridge. See Incoming Fire for details. See Aftermath for the value of the real manifest and blackmail material.

Ship Server Contents

Level	Encounter	Ability (DV)
1	Password	Backdoor (DV 12)
2	File: Public Manifest	
3	Control Node : Helm	Engines (DV 12)
4	Hellhound	
5	Control Node : Ship Defense	Control (DV 14)
6	File: Real Manifest	
7	Password	Backdoor (DV 15)
8	File: Sale Records and Blackmail	

Slave Pen

Tucked between the bridge tower and a wall of cargo containers is a chain link cage, twenty feet on a side. Inside the cages two dozen naked children sit, silently awaiting the fate.

If the alarm has not been raised, a pair of security guards stand watch over the children.

The cage is secured with a simple pad lock. It can be opened with a key carried by one of the

guards. Alternatively, a lock pick and a Basic Tech check against a DV of 12 will open the lock, as will a well-placed bullet.

The children are both male and female and represent diverse ethnicities from around the world. Most look to be in their early teens although some are younger. The children are unclothed, but each wears a tag secured to a lanyard around their neck. Each tag bears a three digit number, followed by price. On some tags the price has been crossed out and replaced with the word "Sold".

Each child has a pair of interface plugs on the back of their necks. The red and swollen skin around these plugs, and the faint, healing scar at the base of each child's spine show that these modifications were made within the last week. None of the children speak English or Spanish; but one of the guards carries a spare pair of the same English language chips the rest of the crew use.

A dozen cargo containers have been stacked three high across the ship, forming a barrier between the slave pen and the auction area. A ten foot gap in the middle allows for people to pass between the area behind the pen to the auction tent.

The Auction

At the center of the ship sits a small circus tent, a soft pool of light spilling out of its open door. In front of the tent is a small podium. A dozen chairs form a ring around the podium. Behind and on two sides of the tent cargo containers are stacked to block off the rest of the ship.

If the characters reach the auction floor without the alarm being raised, they witness the following.

A dozen men and women in decorative face masks sit in the chairs. At the podium a man in an expensive suit holds a gavel. A man and woman wearing black slacks, white shirts and bow ties scurries from out of the tent. The woman places a vid screen on the podium, and the man places a case bearing a red cross next to it. Emblazoned across the front are the words "Medical Transport". The woman opens the case, showing the audience that it contains something that looks like a chrome football, with a tail. The man connects the "foot-

ball" to the vid screen and the pair rush off stage.

The auctioneer steps forward and flips on the vid screen. For a moment the vid screen shows nothing but white, and then the face of a young man of European descent pops onto the screen. "Who is there? Where am I? I demand to know what is going on!" With the flourish the auctioneer turns the vid screen off.

"Ladies and Gentleman, I present to you Dr. Geoffrey Dulac. For nearly forty years, Dr. Dulac has been one of the world's preeminent geneticists. You may have seen advertisements for his most recent breakthrough, RadVac3, which will be boosting Domier-Bauer's profits over the next few quarters. The opening bid is 3 million euro".



What's in the box?

If the characters search the auction tent, they find a variety of interesting merchandise.

The inside of the tent is well lit, and the interior space has been arranged as a showcase. Merchandise has been arranged so that each item can be inspected prior to purchase. Larger items sit directly on the deck, smaller items are supported by an appropriate stand. Each item is accompanied by a label.

Items on display include:

- Two Arasaka man-portable surface-to-air missiles.
- A rack of servers with external ports that date

them to before the crash, attached to battery power.

- Three potted plants with small, red berries. There are labeled as “Plague Resistant Coca”.
- A chromed, hard backed carrying case bearing the bio-hazard warning label and marked “Chicago”.
- A painting, in a glass display case, identified as Fall Plowing by Grant Wood.
- A ruby studded golden diadem. It is labeled as belonging to “Czarina Alexandra”.

Landing Pads

Dim lights mark out the Kum Sung’s oversized landing pad. A steel platform rises about a foot above the main deck on a lattice of struts and girders. At the center of the platform a Bell-Boeing V22F Osprey cargo helicopter looms out of the darkness. It is surrounded on all sides by a variety of high-end luxury AV craft. Most of the cockpits are dark, but here and there you catch the soft glow of their control consoles or the white light of a cabin light as their pilots wait for their passengers to return.

The AV pad has space for a dozen personal aircraft, crowded around a large central helipad used by the ship’s helicopter. Until the alarm is raised, all parking places are taken by luxury AV-7s. The pilot of each craft is present, and will respond by activating automated security if the characters attempt to hijack them.

Lifeboat

Suspended five feet above the level of the deck by a crane is a lifeboat. Twenty feet in length, it looks to be capable of carrying twenty ordinary people, or perhaps thirty desperate ones.

From the deck side controls it takes 15 seconds to lower the lifeboat into boarding position. Once loaded, a drop button will drop the boat into the water 30 seconds after it is pressed. There is also an emergency release switch which will immediately drop the boat onto the deck. The life boat is equipped with an emergency ship-to-shore radio, an emergency GPS homing beacon, and an electric engine with sufficient battery power to get it to shore from the ship’s current position.

Incoming Fire

If the characters succeed in over powering the crew of the ship, they earn a few moments to discuss their next moves before other enemies of the Midnight Emporium coming calling.

A piercing white light splits the darkness; a drone observing the ship. It sweeps across the deck, lingers on the bridge and then the auction floor, then veers to port and sweeps the side of the ship. As abruptly as it appeared, the light shuts off, once again leaving the deck in darkness. Then, out of the still night, you hear the faint whisper of AV engines, rising in pitch with each passing second.

The characters have 60 seconds before two AV-9 combat aircraft do a low altitude fly by of the ship.

A pair of AV-9s roar overhead. As they pass over the landing pad and auction area the lights there show that each one carries a pair of torpedos slung under its stubby wings.

The characters have 90 seconds while the aircraft slow, drop to only ten feet above sea level, and position themselves to fire from either side of the ship. Two-and-a-half minutes after the sound of their engines is first heard, they each fire a torpedo at the ship. Ten seconds after that, they each fire a second torpedo. After launching both torpedoes, they climb back into the sky and race back to shore.

The AV-9s have enough armor that they are effectively immune to small arms fire. The ship is armed with six heat seeking surface-to-air missiles on top of the bridge. These can be fired by a netrunner in the bridge who has control of the Ship Defense control node. One missile may be fired every round. Alternatively, there is a pair of one shot Arasaka man portable surface-to-air missile launchers in the auction showroom.

Both the ship’s missiles, and the man portable surface to air missiles, can be fired in either manual or auto-target mode. If fired in manual mode, hitting an AV requires a Marksmanship roll. If the characters react fast enough to fire while the AVs are passing over the ship, the DV to hit is 15. Once the AVs have passed the ship and are in firing position, the DV to hit is 20. A missile fired in auto-target mode will automatically score a hit if the target is not taking evasive maneuvers. The auto-

target system cannot establish a target lock on a vehicle taking evasive maneuvers, and will miss if already in flight. The auto-target system will fail to get a lock on a target taking evasive maneuvers, and refuse to fire. A single hit is enough to send an AV crashing into the ocean.

Initially neither AV is taking evasive maneuvers. Once the first missile is launched and the attack resolved, any remaining AVs take evasive action. Thus, if two missiles are fired in auto-target mode, the first will hit and the second will miss. All further attacks will then need to be made using manually fired missiles. Each AV has a pair of chaff charges. If an AV is taking evasive maneuvers they may fire one of these chaff charges to prevent a missile that would hit from striking the craft. If one AV-7 is downed, the other will bug out after it has launched one missile.

Any torpedo launched against the ship will hit, unless the ship is in motion and the AV that fired it is taking evasive maneuvers. If a character on the bridge engages the engines at full power at least one minute before a torpedo is launched, and that torpedo is launched by an AV taking evasive maneuvers, the torpedo might miss. The first and third such torpedoes will miss, the second and fourth will hit.

What happens to the ship depends on how many torpedoes hit it, as described on the chart below.

Torpedo Hit Effects

Hits	Effect
1	The ship shakes, and lists to one side, but does not sink. The ship cannot move under its own power.
2	The ship begins to sink, the deck will submerge in five minutes.
3	The rear of the ship is completely destroyed. The ship sinks in 90 seconds.
4	The bottom half the ship is gutted. The ship sinks in 30 seconds.

That Sinking Feeling

If the ship begins to sink, all remaining crew and security immediately break for the life boat. This includes the fifteen crew members in the dormitories and recreation area, who emerge from the the central tower. The crew are aware that they will need to squeeze to fit all of them on the lifeboat, and will attack anyone else trying to get aboard. They fight with knives, fists, and in

one case a set of rippers. If no security are present at the life boats, the characters can attempt to intimidate the crew with a show of overt force before the fighting begins. Treat this as a face down between the mob and the character who seems the most intimidating. The mob, due to its size, has COOL + REP of 10. If they lose, they scatter to find life jackets. They also scatter if at least three of their number are killed or disabled.

Aftermath

If the ship is intact, the characters can use the ship-to-shore radio to contact Night City Harbor control. Thirty minutes later an armed flotilla from the Santiago nomad clan will arrive to take control of the ship. They bring both a harbor pilot and a tug boat, and are prepared to bring the ship into port. They out number and out gun the characters, but will negotiate in good faith. The harbor master is willing to let the characters take anything they can carry when they disembark, and will offer the party a flat €10,000 “finder’s fee”. She can be convinced to raise the finder’s fee to €15,000, and to offer a 15% cut on whatever the clan gets from selling the cargo. The ship will then sit in the harbor as lawyers, banks, and insurance companies fight over who owns it. The characters cut will eventually total €30,000, paid out over six months as the clan finds buyers for the goods and sorts through the legal mess.

If the ship sinks, Night City Harbor patrol sends a boat to look for survivors. If the characters are in the life boat or the boat they brought, the rescue craft pulls alongside and directs them to a particular slip at the port; radioing ahead so they are expected. Otherwise the characters will need to tread water for 20 minutes before they are picked up.

Back to Shore

Regardless of how they return to shore, the characters are meet at the dock. Even if they where not present to see it, the medical transport case has been opened several times during the night, each time allowing Dr. Dulac’s emergency GPS beacon to be located.

As you approach the shore, you see the flashing red and blue lights of the Night City Police Department. At the dock you are meet by a fully kitted out C-SWAT team. They are accompanied by a severe looking woman in

a dark suit flanked by a pair of heavily armed and armored corporate security guards. The fixer who hired you is standing with them, trying to stay out of C-SWATS way and fidgeting nervously.

“Hey, choombas. Glad to see you made it back. I got worried when I saw those AV-9 heading out. The client is anxious to recover their kidnapped researcher. Good news! They’ve brought cash to say thank you. As soon as they take possession of Dr. Dulac we all get paid.”

It should be clear to the characters that they have no choice but to hand over Dulac. If they promptly hand over the biopod in working order, the corp smiles and starts counting out C-notes for the fixer. C-SWAT relaxes, and thanks the characters for their good work. After the fixer takes his cut, the characters are left with €30,000.

If the characters claim to not be in possession of the case, they and their vessel will be thoroughly searched by C-SWAT. One of the Domier-Bauer goons will produce a hand-held tracking device that can home in on the locator beacon in the biopod; which is operational if the biopod is not in the case. If the biopod is found in the characters possession, then they will be arrested and charges will be filled. If the case is not found the characters will be interrogated as to its whereabouts and released. If C-SWAT searches the characters boat, they seize anything beyond the character’s basic gear. The characters are not charged for any contraband but the phrase “Civil forfeiture” is muttered several times and the characters do not get a receipt for any goods seized. Once the characters are dealt with, C-SWAT either departs or settles in to wait for the Kum Song to dock so they can take any remaining crew into custody. If the children are present, they call the Night City Refugee Commission to come sort out the mess.

Mouths to Feed

If the children reach shore alive by any means the Night City Refugee Commission will take charge of them. The children are sent into a system of orphanages, foster homes, and internship programs as under funded and under staffed city services do the best they can to meet their needs. Word gets around about the characters saving the children, and the character’s REP scores will

increase by one point.

Selling the Loot

If the characters retrieved the blackmail files, those files mostly detail the sale of children to powerful men and women around the globe. If the characters release the files publicly, or turn them over to law enforcement, then over the next few months another dozen children will be rescued from around the globe and one person will eventually go to jail for six months. Alternatively, any number of fixers will pay the characters €100,000 up front for the material; or €10,000 if the material on trafficked children is first turned over to law enforcement.

If the ship sank but the characters retrieved the real cargo manifest from the ship, the nomads that run the harbor will offer €5,000 for it. If the character don’t want to sell, the nomads are also ready to sell them all sorts of expensive equipment so that they may attempt the salvage operation themselves.

Any of the things taken from the auction showcase prove to exceptionally difficult to unload. Most fixers and fences don’t have the connections to sell famous art, bio-weapons, bio-engineered cocaine plants, lost crown jewels, or the kind of nightmares that might reside in pre-Krash servers that have never been rebooted. Taking any of these things off the ship should be seen as an invitation for the Game Master to get creative with what happens when interested parties find out the characters have them.

With the character flush with cash, and with word of their exploits circulating, their landlord will come looking for any back rent owed. Favorite bar tenders will expect tabs to be settled, and other creditors the characters have will come calling.

Credits

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