

VECTIS SEVENTEEN SIXTY-NINE

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TABLETOP ADVENTURES

Life as an adventurer is frequently not all it's cracked up to be.

Before the gold and glory comes violence, bloodshed, frustration and misery. (The key, of course, is ensuring as little as possible of any of these is your own.)

Some may choose this path, but others have it thrust upon them. Nowhere is this more apparent than the island-city of Vectis, off the coast of Chalcedon.

What happened?

NEW YEARS DAY, 1769: the city of Vectis, of the Greater Chalcedon Republic. You stand outside the hall of guilds with a dozen of your peers. You have all heard rumours of your guilds' disbandment. The doors are sealed; the lights are off. One man, desperate for answers, throws a brick through a stained glass window. There is no response from within.

In time, you learn your guildmaster was assassinated. Rumours abound regarding the Etherium's involvement, but nothing is proven. Without your guild's security and resources, other unions get the best of the cities' trade. You are left with less... comfortable work.

Six months later, you have assembled to consider your options. Of the dozen that gathered in front of the hall, you are the last still in this city, alive. The barman brings your drinks, then lingers, palm outstretched. To your embarrassment, you realise you don't have enough. What do you do?

Most of the nation has been plunged into economic depression. More than 1000 craftsmen have lost their jobs. Many of them roam the streets, living in shacks cobbled together from junk. The guildmaster's granddaughter was last seen living in a hovel in Lavender Park.

Members of the Etherium frequently take what few jobs remain - and aren't taking on new members.

With so many clever but desperate folk on the streets, crime is at an all-time high. For the right sort of individual, that means opportunities...



THE LORD OF COIN FINDS THE HIGH GUILDMASTER'S CORPSE
Sgr. Button, 1782

RUNNING IN VECTIS

Why Vectis?

Vectis might be a good fit for your gaming group if:

- You're starting a new campaign in a big city;
- You're looking for less dragons and dungeons, more intrigue and twisting alleys;
- You want steampunk, but not *too* much steampunk;
- You want to start your characters at rock bottom;
- Some (or all) the players want to incorporate crafting into their gameplay and back-story;
- You need some inspiration for your 'noir fantasy' game.

What system to use

I've been using *Into the Odd*. I'd also recommend *Dungeon World*, *Lamentations of the Flame Princess* or any other old-school fantasy RPG should work too.

With a bit of homework, I expect this setting might be appropriate for games of *Blades in the Dark*.

GETTING STARTED

Explain the situation

Read or summarise the inset info on page 2 to your players. (Even better, get one of them to read it aloud.)

Make your characters

Create characters using the system of your choice. (Suggest the party could all be former guild members, but don't insist.) For ex-guildies, ask a few of the following questions:

- What was your former trade?
- Did you know the guildmaster personally?
- How long had you been a member?
- What happened to those that tried restarting the guild?

If you're using *Dungeon World*, you could suggest new players start at level 2 and take the *Guilisman* compendium class right away (see later.)

Get playing!

Play the bartender. Highlight how frustrated he/she is with penniless guilders. **Encourage the party to plan, fight, or craft their way out of their financial difficulties.**

SCUNSTEAD APARTMENTS

You're paying a paltry sum to live in Scunstead Apartments, a shabby block in the gold-and-jade district east of the old guild hall. 75 coin a week between you nets a cramped studio that you think was once a spacious bathroom.

You pay your coin to a priest of Mareth, who collects on behalf of one Violet Yunger. If you don't have the rent, you'll be thrown out by a pair of burly goons. (There's a 4-in-6 chance they were ex-guildsmen, likely blacksmiths.)

Alternatively, you can all spend a day before your rent is due sweating in Yunger's workshops in the basement. This work is back-breaking, illegal and demeaning - but it might beat being homeless.

Who lives next door?

- A man in the process of auctioning his buxom wife to the highest bidder. There's a 2-in-6 chance the wife is a faerie or vampire.
- An stable-handler formerly of the Brow and Dove Inn. After the inn burned down the ostler was blamed, and has been destitute since.
- An iridescent bronze dragon, the size of a housecat. He's too small to hoard gold, so he hoards pennies instead. (Every night, the dragon will steal a total of 2d6-2 coin from his neighbours.)
- An alchemist and former guild member who is polite, but reveals little. His or her father is a prominent member of the Etherium and may have planted their child in the apartment for their own purposes.
- A pit fighter whose glory days are long behind them, but saved little for retirement. They can often be found wading in the canals after dark, illegally fishing or dredging for lost treasures. (You'll frequently hear the sound of their damp, heavy footsteps as they ascend the stairs in the early hours.)
- An elderly watchmaker who lost everything when the guild of craftsmen fell. He spends his days in bed or on the steps, drinking and staring at his nimble hands.
- A young preacher of Saint Mirka, from distant Mirkasa. She dresses in furs all year round and doesn't speak common very well. There's a sword twice her height strapped to her back.

What are they making in the basement?

Bricks of a rare alloy made from a mixture of tin, saltpetre and treated human skin. Yunger intends to implant one of these bars in as many properties as possible, to ward off demonic possession.

Great vats of what appears to be molten gold, but if allowed to cool will turn into common lead. (Several “workplace accidents” have led to a number of mysterious lead “sculptures” appearing around town...)

A new strain of coffee laced with a etheric catalyst designed to make it highly addictive.

Voltaic coal - the rendered corpses of earth elementals, broken down and exported to Mirkasa. (The gnomes are known to buy the stuff at a high price.)

Powdered devil-bone. Not the most uncommon of materials, but Yunger’s selling in bulk...

A miracle cure for gout, poor breath, and the bends. (Actually just a mix of powdered leeches and donkey fat.)

Unpleasant jobs

The duke of Ferol’s prize pugs need walking; unfortunately their main route was recently taken over by the Gabbiani.

Entering a strange contest, “*Go Johnny Go Go Go Go!*” the rules of which are poorly understood. It involves a mad dash through the streets. At certain seemingly arbitrary times, knives are drawn by onlookers.

Helping smuggle a cache of sweetleaf into Vectis via canal barge, after dark. (Sweetleaf is a dangerous and very illegal narcotic.)

Doing some menial, backbreaking work for the Etherium. If you can swallow your pride and keep your head down, you might get the chance to investigate the organisation.

A charismatic but undisciplined former guildmate intends to **petition the courts** tomorrow to release more information on the guilds’ closure. A show of force by yourselves may help his case, and you’re not sure he’ll survive the event alone regardless.

A rich domestic client will only take on ex-guildsmen for his work. His TV (or fantasy equivalent) is on the fritz, and you’ll need to explore the estate cellars to fix the issue. Mareth only know what’s down there...

WHAT'S ON THE STREETS OF VECTIS?

Roll 2d6 during the day. Roll 1d20 after dark.

1-6 Ministers of Mareth

Mortal members of the national cult, armed with scythes and cudgels. Their faces are always hidden by bird-like masks. They want to *convert others* to their faith. Will not tolerate the Etherium, whose views on spiritual energy are considered heresy of the first order.

7-9 Former guildsmen

Your former colleagues, fallen on hard times. Armed with whatever scraps they can find, but probably not as well as you. They want to *claim your works* and pass/sell them off as their own.

10-12 Gabbiani

A huge mutant strain of seagull that has stabilised over time into a distinct sub-species. Each one is about the size of a small horse. Their beaks are oversized and serrated - they use them to saw through bones and tough meat. Once simply a nuisance, their numbers have gotten out of hand recently. The Etherium's efforts at containment seem to have only summoned more of the things. They only want to guard and expand their (alleyway-sized) nests.

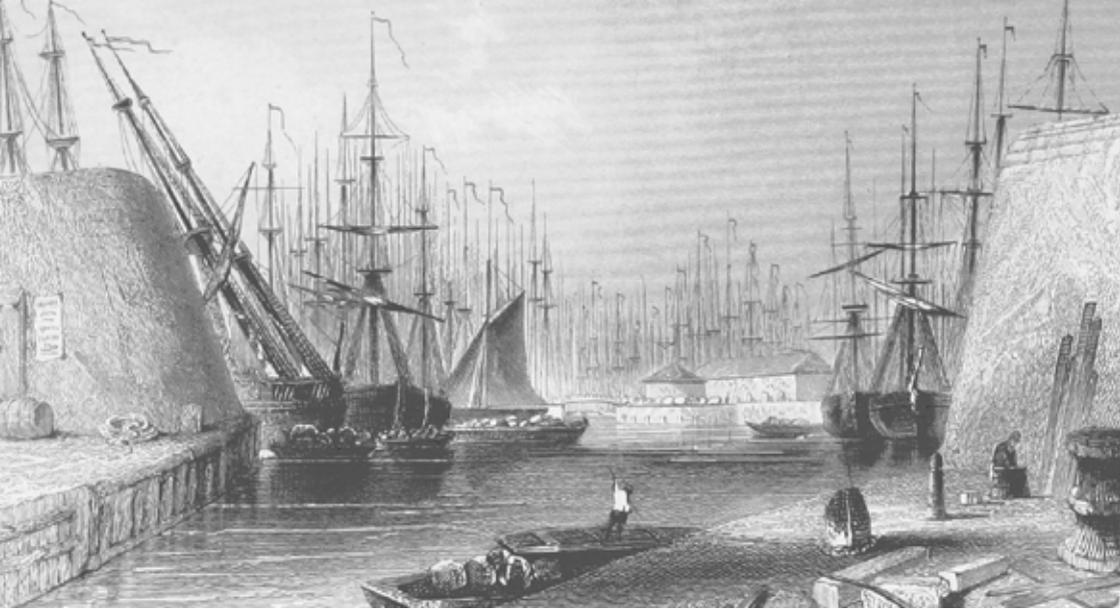
13-16 Confounded Devils

Demons, summoned through accident or design, usually by someone belonging to (or looking to impress) the Etherium. They want to return home, which is usually best done by striking a fast bargain with a mortal. A devil can be petitioned for a single favour if their true name is learned and whispered aloud.

A devil's appearance and abilities typically reflect the last mortal to feel anger towards them and are thus always changing. Freed from the mortal plane, their extra-planar forms are glimpsed in nightmares by those who know their true names.

17-20 Apprentices to the Etherium

Hooded figures wrapped in thick silk and bright leather, with random attributes and equipment. They move and talk as humans. They want to *avoid suspicion, or remove bystanders*. If their flesh is exposed to cold air, it is prone to becoming brittle and shattering like glass.



WHAT GOT DREDGED UP LAST SUNDAY?

A devil trapped in the body of a whale for seven times seven years. It's about ready for a new vessel, but is unable to transfer to a body that can't breathe underwater.

A sentient school of fish, collectively aiming to enrol in the etherium. The loss of one of their number represents the loss of roughly 14 seconds of memorised spells, which depending on the rest of the spell could be vital. It wants to prove itself ready for school.

The corroded hull of a trawler from Xi. Stuck to it's remains were some lime-green barnacles, that lashed themselves to the first innocent bystander they could. They've begun to multiply. (Hot steam is the best way known to remove them.)

A coiled, writing mass of trunks and tentacles. It says it's name is Hydrax Oon, formerly of the green abyssals. It seeks asylum from it's former masters.

Terrance Fosset, a renowned fisherman who his wife claimed was lost at sea. He was washed up with no memory of his former life, only brief violent flashes of what sounds worryingly like an attempted murder.

Seventeen dead sharks. Each one shows the signs of ether-dust poisoning - tell-tale streaks of silver in the eyes and extremities.

VIALET YUNGER

A human woman appearing to be in her late fifties, although in reality much older. She had “the devil” excised out of her in her teens. It shows.

Her skin is bone-white and thin; her hair lank. Her gaze is always focused just behind you, like she’s staring at your ghost. Her voice is quiet and raspy. Her mouth is tight and cruel, like her purse. She dresses well, but her fashion sense is about three decades off.

Her experience with possession left her scarred, psychologically. Filled with fear and resentment, she wants to dominate others the way the devil dominated her.

Since her “experience”, her bodily fluids have more in common with lithium. (Lithium is corrosive, and gives off toxic fumes if mixed with water.)

She is rarely seen in public at all, and when she is she is always accompanied by her coterie (see below) as well as 1d6+1 well-armoured bodyguards.

If threatened: Yunger will threaten to use her wealth and contacts to see the players blacklisted by the courts and the church. (The first is a bluff; the second isn’t.) If still threatened, she will call for her guards.



If ignored: she will continue about her business; namely making a lot of money by treating her tenants like slaves while simultaneously forcing them to work on her illegal operations.

If her piper is or forced to stop playing, even for a moment: She will turn hysterical and fly at whoever’s responsible in a made rage.

If she can’t hear the pipers’ tune for more than about a minute: the entity *Edimmu* will return and re-possess Yunger, tripling her strength and health and setting her lithium blood on fire.



GM! Remember...

Everything is broken.

There's not enough to go around.

Everyone has a price.

When your players provide the opportunity...

Set off an ambush.

Further a rival's grand scheme.

A magical construct goes rampant.

Highlight the downsides of being poor.

Something vital is overlooked.

A rival acts directly.

A neglected part of the city crumbles.



A Priest of Mareth

The Priest is an ordained minister supplied by the church in return for a generous annual gratuity. He sometimes collects the rent, and is the one to ask if there's a problem with the apartment. Generally, he is the "public face" of Yungers' affairs, which is ironic as he never shows his face in public. He wants to conduct Yunger's affairs with a minimum of fuss.

This is actually the third priest to work with Vialet. The first was pulled to pieces by a mob of tenants; the second lasted less than a year before the piper's music drove him to suicide.

If threatened: will summon his guards, possibly by magical means.

If ignored: will continue seeing to Ms. Yunger's affairs, including throwing out unpaying residents.

A Hollow Piper

The piper is a soulless being that does not need to eat, breathe or sleep. It constantly plays an erratic tune on it's piccolo. It wants to continue to play it's song near Violet, 24 hours a day.

Although Yunger is not seen in public often, residents may well hear her piper if she's nearby.

If threatened: will do nothing.

If ignored: will continue to stay within earshot of Ms. Yunger and play it's tune continuously.

The Song

Any devils in earshot will attempt to cover their ears or escape beyond the tunes' reach for as long as the song is played. If the tune is stopped for any reason, for any length of time (even to take a breath) the effect ends immediately.

While normally the song loops indefinitely, there is a rarely-heard introduction. (Any player attempting to re-create the song's effects will need to play this introduction, too.)

COMPENDIUM CLASS: THE GUILDSMAN

When you dedicate time to tinkering in a workshop on interesting gadgets, you may take this move instead of your normal options when you level up:

Craftsman of the Guild

When you want to create an interesting, unique piece of technology, describe it to the other players. Every object has a LOOK, a PURPOSE and a FLAW. The GM may ask you more questions about the object, answer them as best you can.

The GM will tell you one primary element and one or more secondary elements you will need to make your object. Elements are ingredients like metals, hides, bones, powders, gears, reagents or chemicals. They may be mundane or magical. (For example, an ice pistol may require some metal as the primary element, then gunpowder and magical snow for the secondary elements.)

Elements may be found in the wild, scavenged from Dungeons, or stolen from the corpses of your enemies. (If you are unsure where to start looking, *Spout Lore*.)

When you have (at least) your primary element and several uninterrupted hours in your workshop, roll...

- +STR if the thing is mostly forged, like a sword or shield;
- +DEX if the thing is mostly constructed, like a gun, watch or special tool;
- +INT if the thing is mostly programmed or summoned, like a relic or familiar.

On a 10+ the ingredients are used and you've made what you wanted.

On a 7-9, it is less effective or the flaw is worse (GM's call.)

On a miss, the object is a failure - you use the elements, you don't create the object and your workshop will need to be repaired before it is used again.

If you don't have all the secondary elements, a result of 10+ counts as a 7-9 instead.

The GM may tell you creating the object is impossible without fulfilling one or more of the following criteria:

- Upgrading or repairing your workshop
- Spending longer on the project (weeks, months..)
- Getting the help of another group or individual
- Securing a very particular component
- Risking significant harm



Once you have taken Craftsman of the Guild, the following count as class moves for you:

Learning Process

When you successfully create an object in your workshop, mark XP.

Cautious User

When you fail to create an object, you only expend one element, of your choice.

Reinforced Workshop

When you fail to create an object, your workshop will no longer needs to be repaired.

Prototype

If you use twice as much of the primary element, take +1 forward to your craftsman roll.

QUICK-START RULES

ROLLING DICE

When you attempt something risky, roll 2d6 and add an attribute modifier. (The GM will describe the risks before you roll, and pick which attribute to use.)

A 10+ means it happens, without complication. A 7-9 means it happens, but not quite as you would have hoped. A 6- means you mark experience and the GM describes what happens next (you're probably not going to like it.)

Dungeon World

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MAKING A CHARACTER

You have a name: perhaps Aventail, Bascinet, Morion or Schynbald.

You have six attributes: STrength, DEXterity, CONstitution, INTelligence, WISdom and CHARisma. Each has a score and a modifier. Assign these scores to your stats, in whichever order you like: 16 (+2), 15 (+1), 13 (+1), 12 (+0), 9 (+0), 8 (-1).

You start with hit points equal to your constitution +6 (usually, at least 14.)

You deal D6 damage. You start with an old blade and shortbow, a handful of arrows (3 ammo's worth) and leather armour (+1 armour.) You also start with 5 rations, 5 *adventuring gear* and coin equal to your charisma +6.

You have an alignment. If you fulfil your alignment at least once per game, you get bonus experience at the end. Pick one of the following statements to describe your alignment:

- *"I will defend those weaker than me."*
- *"I will defeat a worthy opponent."*
- *"I will spur others to significant, unplanned decisive action."*

Finally, you have a homeland. Or if you prefer, you don't, and you get this move:

At the start of a session, the GM will ask you about your homeland: why you left, or what you left behind. If you answer, mark XP.

A WORLD IN CONFLICT



The world is an ever-changing thing. Today's monsters are tomorrow's trophies; nations rise and fall, and no king rules forever. But never forget the actions of a single adventurer may one day change the fates of nations.

Several decades ago the mountain gnomes sought asylum in the hinterlands of **Mirkasa**, home of backwards farmhands and devout templars. While gnomish technology and pious discipline have made this nation greater, threats from beyond and within continue to harass it's people.

***If you grew up in Mirkasa**, then when you are struck by lightning or magical force, hold 1. Spend hold, one-for-one, to deal +hold damage.*

When an army from Chalcedon invaded the **Green Scar**, the entire island nation rose up to drive them out. But despite their best efforts, the rainforests burned. Most of the land's former glory is lost; the land's magic has been all but exhausted and many of it's gods are dead.

***If you survived the burning of the Green Scar**, you start with FAITH equal to your wisdom. You may spend 1 faith at any time to turn a 6- result into a 7. Faith cannot be recovered; when it reaches 0, what remains of your gods is lost with it.*

The sands of **Umberto** are brutal, mysterious and beautiful. It's said there are more ancient terrors beneath the sands than anywhere else in the world, and it's people are constantly vigilant against suspicion from without and demonic incursions from within.

***If you grew up in Umberto**, you count as a "place of power" for the purposes of the move Ritual. Be warned: taking full advantage of this may risk your physical, mental or spiritual well-being.*

Chalcedon was a green and pleasant land, now in the midst of an industrial revolution. Fog-shrouded factories sprawl across the landscape, spewing raw etherium into the atmosphere. Foppish nobles bicker over politics and status, while the downtrodden mutated workforce plot revolution.

***If you grew up in Chalcedon**, then choose an element: earth, wind, fire or water. You are resistant to the harmful effects of that element, but weaker to it's opposite.*

MY THANKS

To my munificent patrons, who helped make this possible:

Aaron Merhoff, Acritarche, Alex Davis, Alex Norris, Alexander Grafe, Amy Stringer, Andrea Parducci, Bay, Ben Rosenberg, Benjamin George, Bruce Curd, Charles Wotton, Chris Patterson, Chris Sakkas, Christopher Giles, Christopher Weeks, Dane Ralston-Bryce, Donna Almendrala, Eduardo, Eric Boerman, Felix, Gozuja, Hani Musallam, J. Walton, James Stuart, Jeremy Riley, Jeremy Strandberg, Joe Barnsley, John Bogart, Jonathan Spengler, Justus Goldstein-Shirley, Kenji Ikiryō, Kevin, MapForge, Marco, Marcus Flores, Martin Deppe, matt greenfelder, Matt Kay, Matteo Casali, Matthew Caulder, Matthew Klein, Max Perman, Michael Prescott, Michael Raichelson, Mike Burnett, Oleg Krapilsky, Olle Wilhelmsson, Rafael Rocha, Robert Rees, Roland, Ryven Cedrylle, Schubacca, Sophia Brandt, Spenser, Stefan Dziewanowski, Stephanie Bryant, Tim, Tim Jensen, Tim Reed, Tom Miller, Tom Sambles, Zane Dempsey, Zane Gunton

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Writing, editing, publishing & layout by Joe Banner.

Public Domain Art: [flickr.com/photos/britishlibrary/](https://www.flickr.com/photos/britishlibrary/).
Fonts are Droid Serif & Raleway, SIL OFL 1.1.

Dungeon World by Sage LaTorra & Adam Koebel, CC-BY 3.0.
Into the Odd by Chris McDowall.

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