



DANCING IN THE RUINS

~Credits~

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A Shadow of the Demon Lord, Godless: A World of Fire and Blood Adventure for Novice Characters

The Grand Fleet of the Party King has come to town, promising a life of plenty and unlimited pleasures for those permitted to join. But of all the desperate petitioners, the Party King takes only a lucky few. And even these soon find that life in the Grand Fleet holds more terror than pleasure, as plenty in post-Cataclysm comes at a high price.

Dancing in the Ruins is an adventure for novice characters. In it, they seek to unravel the mystery of the Grand Fleet after the Party King's ship breaks down. The group completes the adventure after they bring answers back to the waiting masses.

This adventure was written for use with *Godless: A World of Fire and Blood*, which presents a post-apocalyptic setting for *Shadow of the Demon Lord*. You can run this adventure as a sequel to *In a Pig's Eye* or to *Last One Standing*, or after some other starting or novice adventure. If you want to run this adventure in Urth or a different setting, you might have to make some modifications to fit the story into your world.

Background

For as long as anyone can remember, the legendary Party King has come to town once each year. He leads an armada of boats of all sizes, known as the Grand Fleet, which carries revelers in the throes of a never-ending celebration. Ropes, nets, lengths of pipe, and more lash the boats of the Grand Fleet together, all ultimately tethered to the Party King's flagship, a huge converted oil tanker called the *Glis*. The *Glis* acts as a giant tugboat, pulling the mass of smaller ships behind it.

At each stop, the Party King allows one small group to join his flotilla for a year. For most, this is a golden opportunity to escape a life of misery and fear, to join a community that seems blessed with happiness and plenty.

All who would join are given a chance to petition the Party King, making their case for why they should be welcomed into the Grand Fleet. The Fleet's only condition is that all members must leave after a year of sailing, when the flotilla returns to their home settlement.

The Inevitable Dark Secret

On the day the Cataclysm struck, nearly all of the crew of a giant oil tanker called the S.S. *Tropez* were killed instantly. The many rats living on board, however, survived and quickly mutated to a state of extraordinary intelligence (for rats, that is), enough to continue to operate the ship. They enslaved the few remaining crewmen to maintain the ship and make repairs the rats were not smart enough to perform.

Not too long after establishing their reign, the rats discovered strange irradiated plants were growing in the great oil hold on the bottom deck of the ship. The rats didn't much care for them, but they were perfect food for the crewmen-slaves, who found them both delicious and addictive. There was only one problem: they inevitably induced fatal radiation poisoning in anyone who ate them for too long, after about two years.

Still, the rats were overjoyed, because while they had no use for the plants themselves, the feces the crewmen left behind after digesting the plants was as delicious and as addictive as the plants were to the humans.

The sickness winnowing away the humans forced the rats to find new humans to eat the plants and process their leaves and stems into excrement the rats so mightily craved. They quickly hit upon a plan to create the false persona of the Party King and his

Grand Fleet, who would feast on the plants while the rats gorged on their defecation. It was a ridiculous plan, full of flaws and holes, but for a bunch of mutant rats, it was pretty creative.

Renaming the *Tropez* the *Glis*, the rats set their plan into action. The Party King himself is just a marionette, a dummy operated by five rats inside the limbs. People who join the fleet are given plenty of free food, though the plants can only support so many people at a time, and the rats harvest and eat what the people leave behind in the public toilets. The rats are so addicted that they are unable to save any for later, but so far, their incredibly convoluted, grotesque system has worked.

Getting Started

Dancing in the Ruins is set in Isolon, the ruined city introduced in the starting adventure *In a Pig's Eye*, but you can set the adventure in any settlement on any major body of water. At this point, the party are likely well known around Isolon. Rumors of the Grand Fleet's life of leisure might be enough to entice the player characters to join up and grateful locals might even suggest they petition.

In addition, a local mechanic named Buck Bloom offers the group one piece of salvage of their choice to discover what became of his beloved daughter Gedney. She joined the Grand Fleet when they passed through last year but did not disembark as expected when they arrived this year. He gives them a photograph of her.

The Grand Fleet

The Grand Fleet includes a large and varied cast of characters. Statistics boxes are included only for characters with whom the group might fight or have an extended encounter. If needed, use characters from *Godless* or *Shadow* to represent other major non-player characters.

The Party King's Footmen

The Party King's will is done by footmen wearing his livery—a formal, somewhat military-looking version of a jester's motley. The footmen are made up of all races and genders—all know some version of the truth that the Grand Fleet is run by mutated rats. For various reasons, they don't care. Some are too addicted to the food, others are loyal to the rats, and the others are just happy to have any kind of living post-Cataclysm.

Use the stats below in combat; roll a d6 to determine a footman's weapon.

FOOTMAN

DIFFICULTY 10

Size 1 human

Perception 9 (-1)
Defense 13 (leather); **Health** 16; **Insanity** 1d6; **Corruption** 1d3
Strength 12 (+2), **Agility** 11 (+1), **Intellect** 9 (-1), **Will** 9 (-1)
Speed 10

ATTACK OPTIONS

1. **Axe** (melee) +2 with 1 boon (1d6 + 2)
2. **Bat** (melee) +2 with 1 boon (1d6 + 2)
3. **Sledgehammer** (melee) +2 (2d6 + 2)
4. **Pistol** (range 25) +1 against Agility (2d6)
5. **Crossbow** (range 30) +1 (2d6)
6. **Shotgun** (range 15) +1 (2d6)

Father Henderson

Father Henderson is a rotund, jovial older man who worships a strange deity called he calls Revel, a god of parties and hospitality. He has a handful of followers. He tries gently to convert anyone he meets, and if he drinks enough and feels comfortable, will admit he thinks the Party King is an angel or avatar of Revel. He has been in the Fleet for about six months.

The Breeds

Thomas and Mary Breed, and their daughter Victoria, are a friendly, extremely religious family just trying to survive in the hellscape the world has become. They joined the Grand Fleet two months ago and are thrilled at their luck. Thomas especially loves to eat twice as much as anyone else. David Porter, a friendly young man who is courting Victoria, accompanies them.

The Grubb Brothers

Two dwarfs, Morton and Brondin Grubb, offer their mechanical knowhow to all members of the Grand Fleet. No one asks them to help aboard the *Glis*, though. They have been in the fleet for about eight months.

Jacin Harper

Jacin Harper is very ill. At some point, he was a handsome, muscular young man, but now he has wasted away almost to nothing, despite eating as vigorously as anybody else. He tells strangers he has been in the Fleet for almost a year, but those he trusts learn he didn't leave when he should have and has actually been sailing for over eighteen months. He joined, originally, out of curiosity, hoping to learn how the Fleet operates. Characters with medical experience will recognize his illness as advanced radiation poisoning.

Snooping Around

On board the Fleet, the characters can snoop around and might pick up a few clues as a result.

The Food

Just about anyone the group meets in the Grand Fleet is happy to share some of their food, of which they

have plenty, though it is all the same. The Party King's footmen distribute three large meals a day from the *Glis*.

The food is delicious, probably the best anyone has ever tasted. It's a soft, tofu-like substance served in squares, light gray with perhaps a greenish tint. Characters with the appropriate expertise can recognize it as definitely made from plants rather than meat.

At each meal, any character who eats the food must make a Strength challenge roll. A failure indicates the character experiences an overpowering need to defecate. Luckily, there are numerous outhouse ships for public use throughout the flotilla and any member of the Grand Fleet can direct them to the nearest facilities.

Outhouses

Six outhouses scattered through the fleet are available for passengers. The outhouses follow a simple design, with an opening wide enough to fit a small person descending into darkness. Each is sanitary and fresh-scented.

Descending an outhouse shaft takes one to a long, damp tunnel, large enough for a person to move hunched-over. The tunnel leads underwater towards the *Glis*. The tunnel is also surprisingly clean, other than 1d6 rats (as tiny animals with the climber and swimmer traits) scurrying back towards the *Glis*.

The tunnels let out in area 11, the hold, of the *Glis* (See "Aboard the *Glis*," on page 4).

Questions and Answers

The group might have many questions for the people they meet. Here are the usual answers given for the most common queries.

Gedney Bloom

Whenever the characters show someone Gedney's photograph, roll a d6. On a 1 or 2, he or she recognizes her as one of the Party King's footmen. Jacin Harper remembers her and says she joined the footmen because she was eager to help the Fleet.

The Food

Everybody loves the food. They eat it constantly, always with excitement and vigor, and happily offer it to others. They don't think anything is wrong with it.

Sickness

Most people feel fine; if anything, people in the Fleet certainly appear to be healthier than just about anyone else in the rest of the post-Cataclysm world. Jacin Harper has noticed that people seem to start feeling sick right around or just before the time their year with the fleet is up. The Grubb brothers suggest the group speak with Jacin, if they haven't already.

The Petition

When night falls after the Fleet arrives in a community, it is time for the Petition, when hopefuls gather to find a place in the Party King's court. Not long after people gather, the Party King appears on a balcony lit by spotlights at the stern of the *Glis*, in the company of six footmen armed with shotguns. All the people of the Grand Fleet go to hear him speak and watch the petitions. The Party King moves with an awkward, jerky stiffness as he beseeches the crowd for silence, then calls all petitioners forward to present their cases.

Petitioners

The petitioners gather on an empty, flat-bottomed boat below the balcony and take turns making their pitch to the Party King. If you wish, use some of the petitioners described below. The crowd reacts dramatically to all petitions and cheers on their favorites.

If the group wishes to, they can make a petition as well, in any way they see fit. You can use social attack rolls to determine their success, or simply judge their arguments and abilities compared to the other petitioners. The Party King is especially interested in people who seem loyal or subservient, hoping to groom them to become footmen.

Rhetor: If you have run *Last One Standing* and Rhetor is alive, he sees joining the Grand Fleet as his chance to get away from the Merchant Cartel.

Arthur Pembroke: This ramshackle mechanical man is broken down in body and soul. He begs for an opportunity to seek salvation.

Da Joiks: These three goblin entertainers (one juggles knives, one breathes fire, one sings badly) came from beyond Isolon to petition the Party King. They claim that their antics will keep the Grand Fleet constantly entertained.

The Breakdown

At the end of the petitioning, the Party King announces the winner, who might or might not be members of the group. With his decision made, the Party King dramatically throws a big switch to power up the *Glis* and begins the process of carrying the Grand Fleet to its next stop.

Lights come on, engines roar, music plays—and then suddenly, it immediately dies. The lights burst, the music is cut short, and there is silence. The crowd is stunned for a moment before a hubbub breaks out.

The Party King himself immediately retreats inside his ship. One of his footmen announces everyone should return to their homes or boats and that things will be back to normal soon.

Four footmen block every entry point to the *Glis* (see “Aboard the *Glis*,” to the right).

The Next Day

No breakfast is served and the hungry, addicted people of the Grand Fleet are getting restless. Roll or choose a few events from the table below as the day goes on.

At noon, the winner of the previous night's petition is called aboard the *Glis*. If this is the group, see **Invitation** below. If not, those called up do not return, and the group is called aboard at nightfall.

If she learns that the party intends to board the *Glis*, Victoria Breed begs to be taken along. She is brave and curious.

d6 Developments

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1 | David Porter rushes to the party in a panic, asking them to retrieve an engagement ring he lost down a public toilet. |
| 2 | A fight breaks out between two groups, one accusing the other of hoarding food. |
| 3 | Father Henderson asks the party for help finding two of his followers, who have disappeared. |
| 4 | Thomas Breed begins having terrible withdrawal symptoms from his addiction to Fleet food. |
| 5 | Someone notices the Grubb brothers are missing; apparently they went aboard the <i>Glis</i> to offer their assistance. |
| 6 | Jacin Harper is discovered with almost all the meat eaten off his bones; all signs point to rats. |

At this point, the strict defenses of the night before have been removed from the *Glis*, and the group finds it much easier to get aboard if they choose to. Now just one **footman** guards the entry points.

The group can board the *Glis* in three ways: via the outhouses, by sneaking aboard, or by invitation. Taking the tunnels from the outhouses puts them in **area II**, the hold. Sneaking aboard most likely puts them on the top deck or the balcony around the bridge.

Invitation

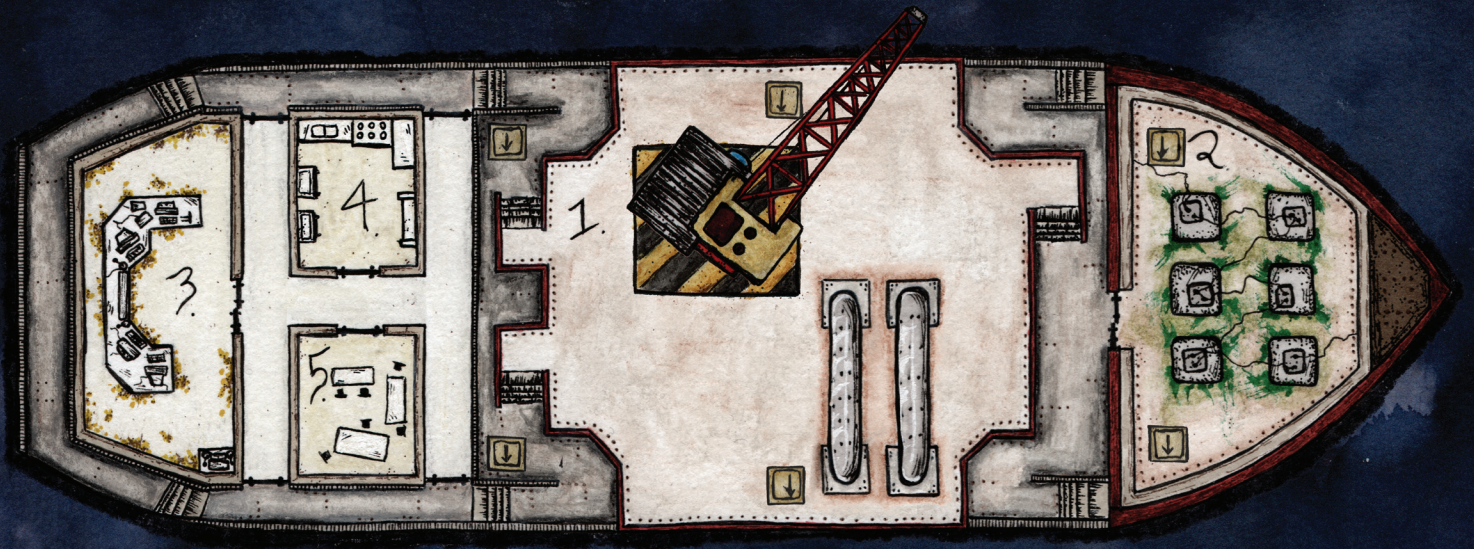
If the party is called aboard, a group of four footmen escorts them to **area 2**, the solar array and battery room at the front of the ship. They roughly demand to know whether the group can repair them. The solar panels are very obviously ruined and the batteries leak acid. The footmen are then called away on some urgent business, and order the group to repair the array on pain of death.

Aboard the Glis

Any time the group moves from one area to another, roll 1d6. On a roll of 1, they are discovered by a patrol of two **footmen**.

1. Top Deck

The open top deck of the *Glis* features a raised section in the middle with a huge loading crane, which is still operational. Two **footmen** patrol the top deck in a continuous loop.



2. Solar Array and Batteries

The raised prow of the *Glis* carries an array of solar panels, all shattered and covered with filth. In the room below are six colossal batteries leaking acid. It is all beyond repair. There are two hatches leading down to area 9.

3. Communication Room

The comm room is abandoned, and features an excess of rat droppings among the electronics. One piece of electrical salvage can be scavenged here.

4. Kitchen

The kitchen is abandoned, but shows signs of being in heavy use until recently. One meal of food can be salvaged from the remnants here.

5. Footmen's Mess

This room of tables and chairs is also abandoned, as all the footmen are patrolling the ship.

6. Party King's Chamber

A dozen rats and four **footmen** attack anyone who enters this chamber. (The rats fight as two **animal swarms** with Intellect 9.) The pieces of puppet that make up the Party King are scattered here among general filth and refuse. The rats here are the masterminds of the plan, and can explain it in detail if properly persuaded.

7. Footmen's Quarters

These twelve identical rooms with bunk beds are home to the footmen. They are empty, but can be sacked for money, uniforms, etc. Any room has a 1 in 6 chance of containing 1d6 cp.

8. Sick Bay

The Grubb brothers and Father Henderson's two followers are here, all strapped to examination tables. Still awake, they suffer the attentions of 3 **footmen** who chop them up while a dozen rats look on. The rats command the footmen to capture and cut up any intruders. (The rats fight as two **animal swarms** but with Intellect 9.) Characters coming onto this scene must get successes on Will challenge rolls or gain 1 Insanity. Morton Grubb is missing both legs and Henderson's men both have only one arm. The rats are eating the meat as it comes off the victims. One dose of medicine can be salvaged here.

9. Batteries

More batteries, also in terrible repair, fill this room. One of them has enough juice to recharge smaller batteries at a rate of 1 point per hour.

10. Grow Room

Rats in tiny patchwork radiation suits bustle around this room in a panic, which holds a massive hydroponic operation producing all the Grand Fleet's food. The operation is shut down because of the failure of the *Glis*. This is an area of low-intensity

radiation (see *Godless*). These rats are too busy to bother with intruders unless provoked.

11. Hold

This large chamber has a few very small mounds of excrement in the middle, with rat guards doling it out to a horde of hungry rats coming in and out from area 10, the grow room. A small booth along the eastern wall is the lost and found, where a vain, greedy rat handles all objects found amongst the feces, including David Porter's lost engagement ring. The six outhouse tunnels lead here; roll to see which port characters come up from if they enter the hold via a tunnel.

12. Pump Room

This room is broken down and red with rust, but a piece of mechanical salvage can be scavenged here.

13. Engine Room

Three **footmen** work in a panic here, unable to get the ship going again. One of them is Gedney Bloom. All three are hostile to interlopers but can be talked down, especially if the characters tell Gedney her father is looking for her. The footmen were stationed here because they are the rats' least loyal footmen. One gallon of gas can be salvaged here.

14. Nest

This room is teeming with rats in the hundreds. They attack and try to devour anyone who enters their nest. (They fight as 10 **animal swarms**, but with Intellect 9.)

Ending the Adventure

The adventure ends when the group finds any missing persons and unravels the mystery of the Grand Fleet. How they handle the news is up to them.

If the characters keep it secret, more fights break out within the Grand Fleet as the food-addicted people get desperate and panicky. By morning the *Glis* is burning and the Fleet is in total disarray.

Assuming the group announces the news, most members of the Fleet ask to join the players' community, but some want to keep the party going, as shown on the following table.

If Alive. . .

Father Henderson	makes it his mission to begin growing the food again as worship of Revel
Thomas Breed	is driven mad by his withdrawal
Mary & Victory Breed	wish to join the community
David Porter	stays with Victoria, though, if she dies, he wanders off into the wastes
Da Joiks	try to take over the <i>Glis</i>
Arthur Pembroke	allows his battery to run down
Grubb Brothers	keep wandering
Gedney	returns to live with her father
Rhetor	goes back to his old life