

Intrigues of the Good and Decent Citizens

1. Army Rebellion

The City Barracks house over a thousand armed young men, who spend months on end playing cards and holding repetitive drills. This mix of testosterone, boredom and weaponry is obviously as explosive as gunpowder. Certain smart military men know exactly what lights this mixture: promotions for some hated Officers, a little delay in salary payments and persistent suggestions, that local girls prefer the fat wallets and acrobatic reputations of German mercenaries. Now one only has to sit back and wait for the town to erupt in flames and bloodshed, as loyal, veteran Regiments have to be rushed in to battle the insurgents in the streets. Any plans for foreign army campaigns are put on ice until the mutiny has been suppressed. After the mayhem, the King goes on a rampage among the Top Brass of the Army, who lose their jobs and privileges. Certain smart military men are available as suitable replacements.

2. Police Informers

The Special Branch of the Krakow City Guard is widely feared and proud of its nickname "Gangsters with Badges", although badges are usually only pinned on their raincoats after the arrests. Their common tactic is "thrashing the chaff", whereby large numbers of petty thieves, street hustlers and black marketers are rounded up, thrown in the dungeons and "given the Treatment". Suffering legally approved Grievous Bodily Harm, these weak characters are only too keen to loosen their tongues. They reveal names and schemes of much larger fish in their ponds, for which the frying pans of the law are always on the fire.

3. Internal Combustion

Where many brave knights have failed, a young shoemaker invents a way to slay the Wawel Dragon. He kills a lamb, guts and fills it with a mixture of sulphur and tar, then sews the animal back up. At night, he puts the stuffed lamb in front of the dragon's cave. The next morning, city dwellers are woken up by a mighty blast on the banks of the Vistula. After devouring the Spicy Lamb, the fire-breathing Dragon has tried to quench its unbearable thirst at the River. The creature's stomach exploded, leaving no trace of the foul beast. The shoemaker is handsomely rewarded by the King, marries a princess in the Cathedral and will spend the rest of his life eating mutton and embellishing his heroic story.

4. The Night Watch

In response to the rising rate of burglary and street robbery affecting their business and peace of mind, several powerful Guilds combine their resources to hire some muscle and steel. They soon find the right man to establish and lead their Night Watch: a pale, dark haired Transylvanian mercenary, named Count Jacula. The Count recruits several dozen shady foreigners, dressed in black and armed with long rapiers, to patrol the streets at night. The Night Watch soon acquires a fearsome reputation for stealth, cunning and ruthless violence among the criminally employed. Silver crosses and garlic become essential items in the burglar's satchel.

5. Black Death

Hundreds of rats, arriving on a river barge, disappear into town across its mooring lines. Unfortunately, they carry the Plague virus from distant, ravaged lands. An old Grain Merchant, unconcerned with vermin control on his ships, provided passage into Krakow for these deadly passengers. But the real causes of the resulting tragedy are the crowded, squalid living conditions of the poor and a widespread belief that prayer and penitence, rather than public health measures, could rid the town of this deadly epidemic. Within weeks of Black Death arriving, the dead have to be collected daily. Churches and graveyards go into 24-hour service, as they become the centre of remaining public life. The people bury their dead and pray for deliverance.

6. Peasant Revolt

Although blessed with fertile soils, healthy animals and reliable rainfall, the peasants working the fields around Krakow have miserable lives. Land rents for small plots are exorbitant, while King and Church expect their heavy Dues. Local noblemen, who usually have big egos, cash flow problems and a band of hired thugs, impose additional taxes. Squeezed and mangled, most peasants barely manage to feed their families. But even poor and illiterate folk have their limits of tolerance. If properly incited and directed, peasant masses can coalesce into a formidable army. Suddenly, thousands of burly, aggravated farmers take their grievances, hayforks and torches to the keeps and castles of their oppressors. Major bloodshed and pillaging erupt all over the countryside.

7. A Live Stock Market

At first, the Live Stock Market concept introduced by the Rural Capital Association seemed like a suitable way to provide much-needed capital to the farming communities. However, it soon degenerates into a festival of speculation and manipulation. Once the Live Stock Market starts dealing in unborn calves, horse-for-ass swaps and half-chickens with interest calculated in future eggs, honest peasants are taken for proverbial rides all the way. The only Stock that thrives is that of the Capital Association itself, while many peasants suddenly find themselves one head short of a cow.

8. Leper's Home

The Aristocratic Ladies of Good Charity use their connections and mobilize taxpayers' money to build a Leper's Home on the outskirts of the Slums. The home is fully manned and operated by austere East German Nurses, leaving the lepers in safe and firm hands. The Ladies have a little self-interest blended in with their charity work, of course. Their daily strolls and shopping trips will no longer be disturbed by the smell and croaking of the wretched lepers.

9. A Royal Occasion

Once in a while, Royalist Associations convince the King and his family to stoop down low and expose themselves to the Public. The weddings or state funerals of famous, rich or military characters are rare occasions for the King to leave the safety provided by three feet of masonry of Wawel Castle, which normally separates him from reality below. The poor masses throng the streets to catch a glimpse of the Royal Procession, the waving banners and shining armour of the Royal Guard. And instead of seeing an old, brutal ruler who exploits, oppresses and ignores his people without restraint, the masses go home delighted by the spectacle, discussing Princess Mirella's new pearl and ruby necklace. The Secret Societies are disgusted by these events.

10. Annual Trade Fair

The Guild of Traders and Merchants organizes the famous Annual Trade Fair of Krakow, which attracts a massive public and commercial interest. The squares and streets of the town centre are filled with colourful stalls and excited customers for a week. The crowds marvel at the street artists, farm competitions and traditional folk dancing. Next to the traditional joust and archery contest, there is a large wooden Ferris Wheel, built by convicted prisoners at no cost. The Guild Chairman supplied timber for this death trap from his termite-infested leftover stock. The Organising Committee rewarded him handsomely for his investment, which it will easily recover from members of the public, who are suicidal enough to take a ride.

11. Public Executions

Incensed by a spate of violent robberies and deadly tavern brawls around Krakow, the Instant Justice Coalition successfully petitions the King to hold public executions at Wawel Castle. These events replace the private hangings in the Castle's dungeons, through which the death penalty was previously administered. A wide range of killing machines is installed on the high banks of the Vistula: blocks for beheadings, stakes for impaling and scaffoldings for hanging. The Public Executions soon become a major event on the Krakow calendar and everyone benefits. The convicts benefit briefly through a greatly improved last view of the world, as well as receiving public acclaim for their final appearance. The audiences increases its knowledge of human anatomy and receives an unmistakable message about the King's sense of Justice. Members of the Instant Justice Coalition sell beer and sausages at the events to raise funds for their Anniversary Dinner.

12. Arranged Marriages

Wealth and Marriage go together like a horse and carriage, a popular rhyme goes. While marriage does not create wealth, it is certainly a powerful tool to share and preserve wealth among the ruling class. The Prosperous Liaisons Wedding Agency serves the dual needs of reproduction and accumulation for the elite of the Province. They survey, advise, mediate, arrange and do the budgets for many successful power and property deals, camouflaged as marriages. The proud products of this Agency are spectacular public weddings, blessed by Bishops. Sad by-products are miserable merchants' sons and duke's daughters, locked for life in loveless homes and abusive relationships.

13. Crime Must Pay

Tired of chasing top criminals, who can afford to buy the best judges and hire the most lethal assassins, the City Guard decides to take a different approach. Dirty deeds may be hard to prosecute, but dirty money can be traced, taxed and used to pay compensation to the victims of the Underworld. City Guard Special Branch descends on the brothels, taverns and shops owned by the city's wealthiest gangsters in the good company of the King's Tax Collectors. The Crime Bosses, who are used to ordering cold-blooded murder without blinking an eye, are left gasping for air, when faced with the paperwork and percentages of the Tax Man.

14. Military Rule

Persistent rumours of assassination plots, popular unrest over tax increases and the threat of potato shortages after a failed harvest raise tensions in Krakow to dangerous levels. Civil Defence Militia roam the streets, adding to the turmoil and violence. After unknown gangs attack a City Guard Station at night, the King's Advisers propose to take drastic measures. Military Rule is introduced, which involves a massive army presence on the streets, the suspension of basic civil liberties (which were very basic already), night curfews and price controls on basic foodstuffs. It also gives the Army a free hand to arrest and imprison suspected Enemies of the State, for example people who fail to pay appropriate bribes at Army checkpoints.

Intrigues of the Monks and Mystics**15. Omen of Betrayal**

The Nasty Old Crones are famous figures on the streets of Krakow. This small band of hags roams the town with overloaded push-carts, accompanied by black cats and a heinous smell. One evening, they demand to see Commander Haug at the Cavalry Stables to deliver a tidings: Evil is afoot, dark Stars are heading for a collision and an Omen will be sent before dawn. The Commander sends them off with a polite nod and some copper pieces. Several hours later, when Haug is playing chess with a Lieutenant, a violent thunderstorm sweeps across the town. Suddenly, a lightning bolt strikes the room and throws both men from their chairs. After they recover from the shock, they stare at their chessboard. The white King lies splintered and several surrounding pieces are scorched. Haug realises his liege is in immediate danger, gathers a band of trusted men and gallops off to Wawel Castle.

16. Fire and Brimstone

Leading members of the Krakow Church are worried by a decline in religious zeal, as evident in falling church attendance and Sunday offerings. An angry Bishop publicly calls on the Lord to rain fire and brimstone upon the Anarchists, who attract crowds of unbelievers to their dens near the Harbour. A group of young, devout monks sets out for the harbour, amply supplied with torches and flammable liquids, to assist the Lord as his willing instruments.

17. Number of the Beast

Bible scholars in Krakow decipher the secret of Satan's Number 666. Based on unconfirmed reports from unreliable sources, which claim there are more than six hundred Angels of Hell in their Horse-Riding Club, the scholars draw major conclusions. They warn that the Angels, who use cuss words liberally and dress unconventionally, are the Devil's Servants. Exactly how a few hundred hairy men, riding big horses, sharing ugly women, drinking beer and sleeping in their own vomit could succeed to bring about Satan's Rule requires more study, obviously. Regardless, the Church insists they must be reined in immediately. Local parishes in the Province organise vigilante groups, who set out after Sunday prayers to ambush the unconfirmed Devil Worshipers.

18. Inquisition Reigns

Inspired by the meanest verses in the Holy Book, the previously proverbial battle between Good and Evil is taken to the streets of Krakow. A Church Inquisition is set up at the Cathedral, meeting daily to identify and pass judgements on the devil's minions. Normal government matters at Wawel almost grind to a halt. Apparently, Satan usually targets the poor and ignorant, who bear the brunt of the persecution. Hermits, hunchbacks, old crones and the mentally feeble are prime victims. Defenceless, they face arrest, torture and forced confession to unimaginable crimes in the Inquisition cells. A solemn and fearful atmosphere descends on the town.

19. Saving Souls

The Fair Sisterhood of Endless Temptations descends on the town! This female religious order, famous for their legendary beauty, will try to bring the Wicked to their Fold. Their mystical and irresistible chants, gracious processions and bright eyes behind purple veils wash over the smelly streets and smoke-filled taverns, sweeping all before them. Philanders, drunks and gamblers throw themselves at their feet, beg for forgiveness, promise to attend Sunday mass and donate generously to the Church. The innkeepers and whore-masters stare at their empty establishments. These Sisters are bad for business.

20. Prophecy of War

It starts with worrying portents, such as a flight of 13 ravens over Wawel Castle and the sudden, hasty departure of the Nasty Old Crones. Then the most revered of the Kings' Elders tells the tale of his horrific nightmare: War is Coming to Krakow! In his Vision, legions of foreign warriors on swift steeds streamed across the plains, pillaging and burning homesteads. He saw the fumes of war and sunlight sparkling off massed armies; he heard the cries of rage and metal clangs of battle. The King calls his trusted advisors, visionaries and spirit mediums to the Castle. After heated debate, a state of emergency and general mobilization are announced. The town fills with evacuees, rumours and fear, while the Castle is at the mercy of a few trembling old men and their next night of fevered dreams...

21. Fortune Tellers

The Royal Family has some very superstitious members. As a result, there are comfortable lives, handsome rewards and indoor plumbing available to those with manipulating skills, eccentric looks and heavy foreign accents. Such characters flock to the Palace in droves to tell old wives' tales, fake spirit possessions, cast bones and offer visions. Some impress the rich of gold and weak of mind, who populate the Palace, earning access to a life of comfort and gluttony. There are also risks: if they meddle in the wrong affairs, it could end in the removal of their busy tongues. The King has his own Seers, who do not appreciate supernatural competition.

22. Alternative Medicine

The Slums are an unhealthy place to live at any time, but this year's massive outbreaks of dysentery, typhoid and cholera (popularly known as The Running Curses) are particularly severe. Communal latrines and public hospitals are overflowing into the cramped alleys. Traditional medicine relies solely on bleeding the sick and applying hot towels. These measures fail to stem the tide of human suffering. Quacks, faith healers and herbal doctors rush into the ready market. Herbal potions, pinpricking, magic chants and leeches are applied to the sick, providing them with variety and entertainment, if not cures.

23. True Blue Magic

A rickety blue-painted wagon rolls through South Gate, heralding the arrival of The True Blue Magicke Bande. Their front man is Myron, an outrageously dressed and socially awkward wizard. He is supported by two cheerful French midgets, named Ludo and Vic. The Bande rents premises and starts trading as True Blue Magicke Mystery Shoppe in Coppersmith Street. They sell love potions, supernatural advice, magic tricks and treats to an impressed audience. They specialise in Protection Curses and Gadgets, which protect persons and premises against robbery, burglary and extortion. Many rich merchants invest in True Blue security, which provides some nasty surprises for members of the Thieves' Guild. Their Board agrees there could soon be a laboratory explosion in Coppersmith Street.

24. The Afterlife

Nothing works the magic of Christian religion like solid proof of the Afterlife! One morning, a young priest, serving at a monastery near Krakow, is found lifeless on the banks of the Vistula. Apparently a drowning victim, he is carried to the monastery in an ox-cart for burial. The corpse suddenly returns to life when the cart hits a bump in the road. The priest tells the Abbot of his miraculous experience: Saint Peter had asked him, if he had accomplished God's work on Earth. The priest answered that there was so much left to do: watering the flowers, transcribing sacred texts and feeding the hogs. Saint Peter told him return to earth, put on some dry clothes and continue the Lord's work. Unsurprisingly, the young priest finds that his days of watering flowers are over. He becomes a prize asset and travelling celebrity for the Krakovian Church.

25. Holy Warriors

The King and Church decide to commit several units of Krakow's finest troops to distant, epic battles in defence of the Christian Faith. To fund the troops' new uniforms, their transport and upkeep, the Churches have special prayer meetings, while the King hosts a number of Sponsored Dinners. For weeks on end, the Holy Warriors practice and parade in and around the city, creating a festive atmosphere. Everyone is proud of these fine young soldiers, who will soon have the opportunity and privilege to spill vast quantities of their blood in direct service of Gods Will.

26. Papal Visit

The Pope announces a planned visit to Krakow! The Church starts meticulous and detailed planning for this event: where his Holiness will walk, sit, eat, sleep, pray and relieve himself. A special design for an arrow-proof Glass Coach is made, which will enable the Pontiff to travel around in a safe, comfortable and rather humorous manner. Given average life expectancy, travel time from Rome and the Pope's busy schedule, this will definitely be a once-in-a-lifetime experience for most Krakovians. A massive commercial effort is required to supply believers with the widest possible range of beer mugs, plates, towels, tea pots and night bowls printed with the Pope's name, picture and dates of this historic visit.

27. Witch Hunting

Once every few years, the madness of Witch-Hunting breaks out in Krakow, often related to power struggles in the Holy Church. Some contenders wish to remind the people of God's Wrath, while accusing their opponents of failures in Vigilance and Leadership. After Witch-Smellers and Evil-Seekers are called in, a deadly combination of smart propaganda and brutal terror is unleashed upon the masses. Old women, the dumb, deaf and cripple, pet lovers, people with bad hairdos and reputed Men-Friends are prime victims for the inevitable sequence of public trials, outrageous "evidence" and burning at the stakes. The victim's ability to die by fire is usually interpreted as proof, that their souls are saved from Eternal Hell. This is a source of consolation to the crowds of spectators.

28. Fleecing the Flock

Prominent Bishops approach the King with a complete set of designs, cost estimates and blessings for the construction of a splendid new cathedral. This will raise the profile of the City and Kingdom all the way to the Vatican and even Beyond. A major campaign to raise funds is agreed, which the King promises to "vigorously support". Special new taxes on farm produce are levied, while groups of monks travel the countryside to raise further voluntary contributions. They are accompanied by the King's Men-at-Arms, who understand "vigorous support" as license to intimidate, rob and beat up the peasantry. Many must suffer on earth for the Bishops to reach towards the heavens.

Intrigues of the Secret Societies

29. Acts of Defiance

The Drama Queens, a group of playwrights and artists with ties to Atheists Anonymous, travel the town and countryside performing a Morality Play called "Other Truths". Drawing large audiences in every town tavern and village square, they expose the shady property deals of the Church, the moral degradation and lavish lifestyle of the Bishop. The Morality Play transcends from Art to Reality, when the Actors question the excessive confiscation of produce and cash from the peasantry in the name of Cathedral construction. Comparing the Church to wolves in sheep's clothing, the Play arouses deep resentment.

30. Flower Children

"Free love, public nudity, loud music, smoking grass and an immediate end to Witch Hunting" are the subversive ideas spread across town by passionate youths known as Flower Children. The groups of chanting, hugging, smoking and unconscious youngsters strewn across every town square evoke genuine sympathy among the population. The Church Elders wisely suspend their Witch Hunts, confident that the remaining witches will be easier to detect in the heart of winter (when most of the youngsters are likely to be indoors playing dominoes).

31. Heretic Verses

At first glance, it is just another Epic Poem sung by minstrels in squares and taverns all over town. But after gaining huge popularity, "The Copernicus Code" becomes a source of heated debate and religious controversy. The Poem weaves an unlikely yarn of riddles, puzzles and betrayal, in which it proposes that the Freemasons protect the secret history of Julia Christa of Nazareth. Who was the oldest child of Joseph of Nazareth and his wife Mary, born under unusual circumstances involving three Kings and a donkey, nearly 15 centuries back. Who had a nasty little brother called Jesus, who made quite a Name for Himself using many of Julia's credentials. The Poem's popularity and challenge to Catholic fundamentals forces the Vatican to public condemnation, while the Pope refuses to visit the city, where such blasphemy is sung on every street corner. The King, equally incensed, orders the arrest and public execution of its anonymous poet.

32. Advertising

It starts with a simple signboard for Grandma Litvinov's Olde Cake Shoppe, but once the Artful Advertisers realize the full potential of their gimmick, the floodgates open. Street corners, vacant lots and tall buildings are covered with signs, banners and billboards urging the public to spend their coins on all sorts of products: from Pig Intestine Wearables ("Go Ahead Punk, Make My Night!") to Laundry Soap ("White Elephant - Active Granule Pearls"). As competition for the attention of the customer intensifies, the adverts become increasingly graphic and vulgar. Gambling dens, all-night taverns and Comfort Houses use the new medium to good effect. The Church is appalled by this public assault on morality.

33. Class Struggle

Karl Markov is a bearded, passionate middle-aged man with many ideas. Especially about the inevitability of change in the social order, which will destroy the rule of the aristocratic families, liberate the masses from the yoke of serfdom and reduce the Church to a mere puppet show. Under his rallying cry "Paupers of the World Unite", he agitates for revolution and draws crowds of poor labourers and peasants waving bright red flags. His popularity dismays the Ruling Class, who plan for Karl to have a nasty and fatal accident, which involves the swallowing of a heavy beard.

34. A Depression

A shady Secret Society known only as the Economists spread rumours of financial instability among traders and shopkeepers. They whisper words like volatility, depression, market corrections and budget deficit. The merchants start panicking, although they have no clue what these terms could mean. In fear of losing their shops to the "market corrections", traders start hiking their prices. Soon there is chaos in the markets, where ordinary folk pay a heavy price. A relatively heavy price, compared to asparagus, that is.

35. A Stellar Truth

The Amateur Astronomers' Society captures the hearts and imagination of many ordinary folk in the Slums. They gather in groups around Stellar Looking Pipes, a fantastic Italian invention, which provide amazing views of the night skies. The Astronomers teach and excite their students about the Universe, in which they naturally start questioning their own place. The poor ask and debate many important questions about Creation, Heaven and Little Green Men, who may be suffering equally cruel injustices under tyrannies in distant galaxies. During the day, they collect their garbage and sell their fish with newfound pride and confidence, after which they hurry to the evening Gatherings with great anticipation for a cloudless night of existential observations. Giving people knowledge and room to ask questions is indeed dangerous science.

36. Rocket Science

The brightest minds among the Vegetarian Dining Club set out to develop a Rocket to fly to the moon and collect enough Green Cheese to destroy the Cheese Makers Guild, which they accuse of price fixing. After months of design and experiments, the first large rocket makes its maiden flight from the banks of the Vistula. What should have been a major success turns to tragedy, when the missile hits and sinks the passing Royal vessel Fearless. Impressed by the carnage, the Army captures the scientists and locks them up in the Army Headquarters, where they can "continue their promising work in a secure environment". They are observed and guarded closely by armed Military Advisers, with whom an inspiring conversation about cheese storage or recipes for horseradish soup is impossible.

37. Martial Arts

The Four Brothers Secret Society, a tight-knit organization with just four members, invests its entire family capital to establish the Krakow Army School of Defence Studies. Located in the cellars of the Barracks, they start teaching young officers the art of warfare. Their curriculum is based on the combat experience of eldest Brother Lech, who crusaded all across the Arab world. Although not very profitable in the short run, the Military Academy offers excellent long-term opportunities: developing into Four Hundred Brothers, trained as elite Special Forces, in key positions across Krakow's Royal Guard. A few years from now, the King might unknowingly find himself on a distant hunting trip guarded only by a dozen trusted, deadly assassins.

38. River Legends

A small group of elderly fishermen, led by an enigmatic figure known as the Ancient Mariner, use the river taverns to tell the legends of the Vistula. They fascinate their large audiences with ancient tales about The Fog of Death, The Blind Ferryman and The Creature in the Shallows. Told after dark in the smoke-filled ale-houses, these stories terrify the patrons, touching their primeval fears of darkness, ghosts and nature's mysteries. Christian religious beliefs are unhinged by these powerful Pagan legends. Even grown men are trembling with fear to go out into the dark, especially on windy or misty evenings. They prefer to order another beer and wait for the safety of numbers leaving the tavern together. This quite suits the Mariners, as they receive a cut from the evening's takings.

39. Illuminati

Led by their mysterious Grand Mistress, the Illuminati are the most powerful of all Secret Societies in Krakow. Totally secretive and closed to outsiders, little is known about this age-old Cult, who are sworn enemies of the Catholic Church. The Illuminati allegedly reject all material wealth, worship Satan and engage in Pagan Rituals involving human sacrifice and open-air orgies. Mere whispers of their latest activities and growing influence send Church Leaders into convulsions. They know their flock of faithful cannot be trusted to resist such tasty fodder.

40. Angels of Hell

The Angels of Hell Horse-Riding Club makes no attempt to hide members' identity. They ride huge war-horses, grow extravagant volumes of body hair and openly wear the emblem of the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse. They gallop down forest tracks and country roads in small bands: marauding, vandalizing public property, loitering with intent and disturbing the peace. These are indeed Rough Riders, viewed by ordinary folk with a mixture of fear, loathing and fascination. Less known is the secret side to the Club. Under the pretence of horsing around, Angels are involved in serious crimes: cattle rustling, arms dealing and illegal brewing. At their Horse Club Waterholes, they gather to drink beer and plan even bigger crimes: kidnapping for ransom, bank robberies and prison breakouts. Fortunately, most plans are forgotten by dawn, when the Angels wake up with hellish hangovers, smelling of horse dung, stale beer and vomit.

41. Anarchists

The Order of the Secret Brethren of Mortal Freedom (where occasional scuffles break out over the spices in this week's Secret Dish) spreads Chaos Theory among the masses. They claim there is no Good and no Evil, no Heaven and no Hell, no Sin and no Salvation: the only natural state is Chaos. They organize nocturnal debates in ale-houses near the Harbour. These usually end in chaotic arguments and barroom brawls, lending further credence to their theories. Even members of the Royal Household allegedly attend these gatherings: partly out of intellectual curiosity, but mainly because they rarely get a chance to join a bar fight in their official capacity.

42. A Palace Coup

Several prominent members of the Royal Family have fallen under the spell of Secret Societies. Count Vistula, the King's uncle, is said to be a high-ranking Nihilist, which is not surprising since he rules nothing but a dull stretch of the Great River with limited potential for barge tax collection. Princess Ludomila The Heavy (known in her childhood as Little Ludomila Of Cakes) is a Big Rider in the Angels of Hell Horse-Riding Club. Carefully moving their pieces on the chessboard of power, the Societies start an elaborate plot to drive the King out of power and into insanity using slow-acting poisons, illusory ghosts and extreme levels of work-induced stress. Like chess, this game is not for the faint-hearted: heads can roll at every move. Vistula risks getting a close look at the bottom of his River, while Ludomila could find herself suddenly loosing the weight of her pretty head.

Intrigues of the Underworld

43. Ox Cart Bombers

Military Rule seriously reduces the cash flows and operating space for the Crime Syndicates, who respond with their own ruthless brand of warfare. They can always find a few young and ambitious gangsters, volunteering to drive a cartload of barrels to the Barracks or a City Guard Road Block. They are not told about the gunpowder inside or the purpose of the long, trailing fuse. Their youth and ambitions will soon go up in smoke, together with their destinations. This deals a serious blow to the forces of law and order.

44. Dirty Laundry

As long as living memory cares to remember, the Harbours have provided a full range of prostitution services along a stretch of quays, popularly known as Wet Fish Lane. When information is leaked that the City Guard plans to move against these establishments, the pimps and madams quickly relocate their trades to the Slums. They hide the brothels under the name and cover of laundry services. Clothes are washed for a small fee downstairs, while the customers have their intimate needs serviced upstairs. The Guard is thoroughly fooled, as their Quarter Master even contracts "Madame Lolita's Sponge and Lather" to wash all its uniforms.

45. Vicious Rumours

Spreading ignominious rumours about the rich and famous is a popular pastime anywhere, but the Krakow Underworld has refined it into a system of terror. The harbour bars and coach way stations in the countryside are used to launch and perpetuate rumours of adultery, corruption, sexual deviancy, devil worship and much worse. Eyewitness accounts and compromising pictures are used to spice up the rumours. Spread throughout the town and province, these vicious rumours undermine and outrage Decent Citizens, especially because most of them are true.

46. Regal Dose of Poison

Contracting a Terminal Solution for a member of the Royal Household is a measure of last resort for the Underworld. It carries high risks and is always bad for business. But sometimes, Royal righteousness or a total lack of appreciation of "how we can all benefit" demands the ultimate measure. Only an expert, and preferably foreign, Hired Assassin can be trusted, who will be handed a bag of gold and a fast horse immediately after delivering the service. The use of untraceable poison, followed by bad doctors and a ready successor, is recommended.

47. Street Thugs Rule

Sometimes, the Underworld Bosses are pushed to their limits of tolerance with the society they serve. As a show of defiance against authorities, they instruct their Thugs to orchestrate sudden riots. As hundreds of opportunistic and enthusiastic bystanders join the fray, the town erupts in widespread looting, street battles and chaos. The City Guard is initially overwhelmed, forced to call up reservists and trade its truncheons for crossbows. After massive riots have raged for several days, a semblance of order is restored. The Underworld has proven its point. And Prisons and morgues are unusually crowded.

48. Protection Racket

The business climate in Krakow is harsh. Taxes, Guild fees and shop rents bring financial stress to every honest shop owner. Once the business puts a little butter on the owner's bread, a new threat presents itself. It is every shopkeeper's nightmare: a closing time visit by a few well-dressed, confident and overly polite gentlemen, enquiring about the business and the family's health. They smilingly refer to the store's fire hazards and the poor state of emergency services. They speculate how one's reputation and market share could be irreparably damaged, if a dead body were discovered on the premises. Especially, if that body belonged to the owner. "We will collect our security fee on Monday, so nothing can happen to you", they reassure the shopkeeper, as they stroll out in a cloud of expensive perfume and cheap terror.

49. Grave Robbery

It is easier to rob the Dead than the Living, especially since they don't resist, call the Guard or give evidence in court. Locating the loot and gaining unfettered access to gold-filled crypts and burial sites requires thorough research and planning. But grave robbers are patient men, while their victims certainly don't mind waiting. The victim's relatives, enraged by the sight of ravaged crypts and ransacked tombs, question why God Almighty could not even allow their loved ones to Rest in Peace.

50. An Arms Deal

The Military goes shopping to spend the Annual Defence Budget and the Arms Dealers in the Underworld know there is big money to be made. Escaping from the monotony of endless troop drills, honour guards and Royal buffets, the Dukes and Colonels spend with a vengeance. Fantastic battles against legendary foes are imagined, where victory will depend on cutting edge technologies: the Spanish Hand Cannon, the Unmanned Drone and the War Elephants. These will be utterly useless, but fully paid, during the next peasant revolt.

51. Monks' Temptation

Forcing men of the Cloth to test the strength of their Faith and the weakness of their Flesh is an amusing and worthwhile pastime for criminals. Many victims, after looking inside themselves, or at least inside their frocks, surrender to the temptation of the Worldly Offerings held before them. Next to a good laugh, this provides gangsters with the tools for blackmail and extortion. To protect their dignity and reputation, the guilty sinners have to part with a share of the Church Land Rent or confessions about the Marital Affairs of high-ranking government officials and wealthy families. "

52. Fast Foods

For ages, the towns' taverns and eating-houses have been serving their potato and beetroot soups, stews, bread and lard at the slow pace of the Vistula River. Everyone bought it. Then suddenly one day, the Fast Food Outlets are everywhere. No one knows which evil genius is behind it. But all men soon learn, that hungry travellers can step in and get a bag full of sausage rolls, beef buns and fried potatoe sticks for a few Zlotys. Without having to listen to some drunk's life story and at half the price of a beef stew at the Red Eagle. In public, the townsfolk are all appalled by these noisy places and tasteless food. None admit ever spending a Zloty there, but the places are always crowded...

53. Hired Assassins

Ordinary citizens usually commit murder with kitchen knives or blunt objects in front of multiple witnesses, which usually lands them on the scaffold within a week. Members of the elite must employ less impulsive methods, as they have reputations and interests to protect. Fortunately, the contract killers of Krakow provide Terminal Solutions to the complex problems troubling the rich and powerful. The Assassins have their own Association to improve standards and quality of service, tactfully named the "Guild of Professional Assassins and Innocent Bystanders". They have an unwritten Code of Conduct, Pricing

Mechanisms to avoid cutthroat competition, Skills Development Workshops and a Customer Complaints Procedure. The latter is unlikely to be used much. These ruthless men deliver almost flawlessly on their contracts to both types of Customers: those who pay with their gold and those who pay with their lives.

54. Wawel Dragon

It starts with some missing sheep and cattle, reported by the shepherds working the meadows below Wawel Castle. A real feeling of panic strikes the city, when people start vanishing in the same mysterious way. Then a basket maker, looking for twigs along the Vistula, stumbles upon a cave littered with human and animal bones. On a rock nearby, a huge and fearsome dragon is basking in the sunshine, breathing fire and smoke. The King calls on knights from afar to come and rid Krakow of this foul beast, offering vast lands and the hand of a Princess. Attracted by these spectacular rewards, brave knights hurry to Krakow. Most of them leave on crutches, if they were lucky enough to survive their encounter with the Dragon. Allegedly, the Dragon was brought to Krakow as a pet for the amusement of a powerful crime Lord. When the beast grew too expensive to feed and too dangerous to handle, he told his gamekeeper to leave it along the Vistula, where it "could do no harm".

55. Organised Crime

Krakow holds its breath, when the Heads of the powerful crime syndicates and gangster families meet. These quiet, dangerous men rule the town from Dusk till Dawn and quite a bit in between. When they meet, it is usually to carve up the territory (with big knives), bury some of their differences (in lime pits by the river) or discuss their Corporate Social Responsibility, which may involve major contracts for Terminal Solutions. Prices and market shares of sinful and illegal goods and services are agreed. Some jokers say the Lords of Crime only meet to show off their new jewellery, big tattoos and latest one-liners. But those jokers will often find the price of their preferred sin doubled within the next 48 hours.

56. Campaign Finance

The fever of War grips the City of Krakow, as it readies itself to launch its military might against a sworn enemy or to defend its territory from a ferocious invader. The King warns all citizens that this campaign will demand courage, sacrifice...and obviously quite a load of cash. For glory in battle, the King is ready to deal with The Devil. And the Underworld will gladly play Satan's part, lending money at exorbitant interest rates, enabling the Army to buy 5,000 crossbows at inflated prices from a "recommended supplier". Some are destined to make history in war. Others just make profits.