CONJURE
MAGAZINE

Inside...

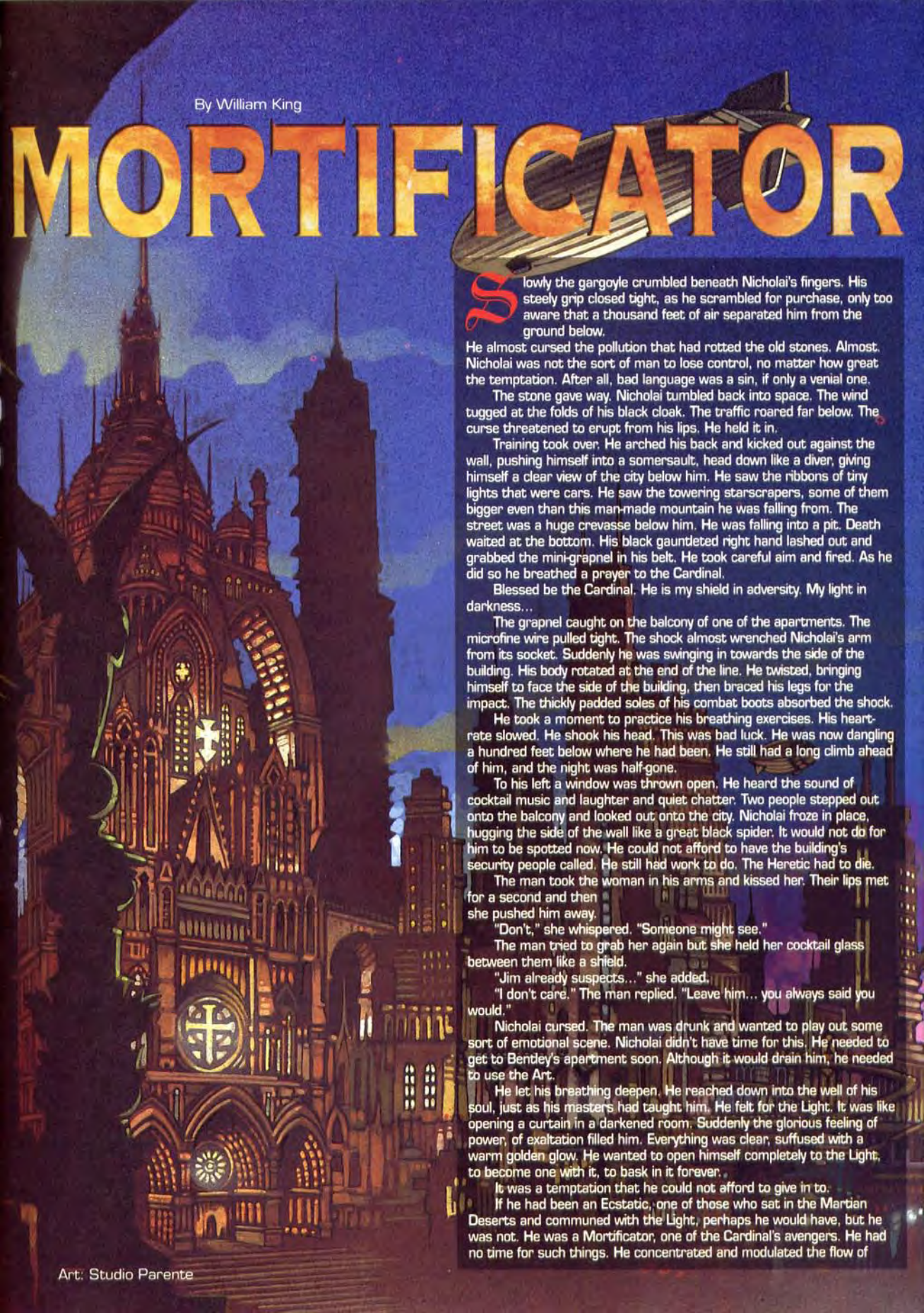
- Guess the Card Contest
- Dixie's Review
- Sim City Unearthed
- Whispering Woods Review
- Who's Watching "Illuminatti"?

$4.95 USA

MARCH / APRIL 95 ISSUE THREE

By William King

MORTIFICATOR



Slowly the gargoyle crumbled beneath Nicholai's fingers. His steely grip closed tight, as he scrambled for purchase, only too aware that a thousand feet of air separated him from the ground below.

He almost cursed the pollution that had rotted the old stones. Almost. Nicholai was not the sort of man to lose control, no matter how great the temptation. After all, bad language was a sin, if only a venial one.

The stone gave way. Nicholai tumbled back into space. The wind tugged at the folds of his black cloak. The traffic roared far below. The curse threatened to erupt from his lips. He held it in.

Training took over. He arched his back and kicked out against the wall, pushing himself into a somersault, head down like a diver, giving himself a clear view of the city below him. He saw the ribbons of tiny lights that were cars. He saw the towering starscrapers, some of them bigger even than this man-made mountain he was falling from. The street was a huge crevasse below him. He was falling into a pit. Death waited at the bottom. His black gauntleted right hand lashed out and grabbed the mini-grapnel in his belt. He took careful aim and fired. As he did so he breathed a prayer to the Cardinal.

Blessed be the Cardinal. He is my shield in adversity. My light in darkness...

The grapnel caught on the balcony of one of the apartments. The microfine wire pulled tight. The shock almost wrenched Nicholai's arm from its socket. Suddenly he was swinging in towards the side of the building. His body rotated at the end of the line. He twisted, bringing himself to face the side of the building, then braced his legs for the impact. The thickly padded soles of his combat boots absorbed the shock.

He took a moment to practice his breathing exercises. His heart-rate slowed. He shook his head. This was bad luck. He was now dangling a hundred feet below where he had been. He still had a long climb ahead of him, and the night was half-gone.

To his left a window was thrown open. He heard the sound of cocktail music and laughter and quiet chatter. Two people stepped out onto the balcony and looked out onto the city. Nicholai froze in place, hugging the side of the wall like a great black spider. It would not do for him to be spotted now. He could not afford to have the building's security people called. He still had work to do. The Heretic had to die.

The man took the woman in his arms and kissed her. Their lips met for a second and then she pushed him away.

"Don't," she whispered. "Someone might see."

The man tried to grab her again but she held her cocktail glass between them like a shield.

"Jim already suspects..." she added.

"I don't care." The man replied. "Leave him... you always said you would."

Nicholai cursed. The man was drunk and wanted to play out some sort of emotional scene. Nicholai didn't have time for this. He needed to get to Bentley's apartment soon. Although it would drain him, he needed to use the Art.

He let his breathing deepen. He reached down into the well of his soul, just as his masters had taught him. He felt for the Light. It was like opening a curtain in a darkened room. Suddenly the glorious feeling of power, of exaltation filled him. Everything was clear, suffused with a warm golden glow. He wanted to open himself completely to the Light, to become one with it, to bask in it forever.

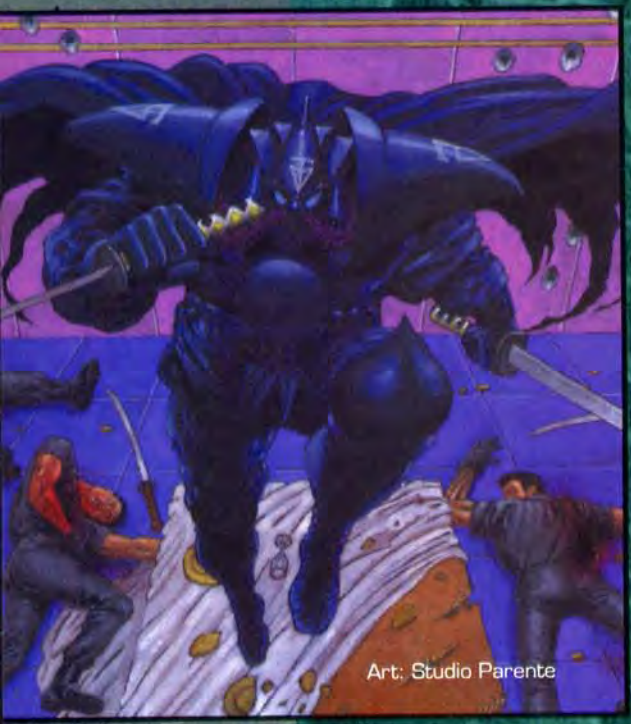
It was a temptation that he could not afford to give in to.

If he had been an Ecstatic, one of those who sat in the Martian Deserts and communed with the Light, perhaps he would have, but he was not. He was a Mortificator, one of the Cardinal's avengers. He had no time for such things. He concentrated and modulated the flow of

Art: Studio Parente

DOOM TROOPER

Light, directing his power outward towards the man, touching the man's mind. For a moment he almost merged with him. He felt a sense of revulsion. Drunken lust, and other more complex emotions filled his mind. Then thoughts and memories flickered through him. The man's name was Rudi. He was an engineer for Imperial Aerodyne. He



Art: Studio Parente

had a wife and two children and he had no intention of leaving them. He thought Sarah had a lovely body but she was too stupid for him. Good for a night in the sack though.

"But Sarah, you know I love you..." he heard his/their voice say.

He saw Sarah waver. She smiled a little. He reached out and stroked her forearm. A little wave of desire passed through him them. It was time to end this, Nicholai thought. He felt a surge of confusion pass through Rudi's mind, as he sensed Nicholai's thoughts. Nicholai exerted his will and gained control over his/ their vocal chords.

"Sarah, you are a foolish slut!" he said. Sarah's face went pale. Her mouth opened slightly. The glass of red wine slipped from her fingers and smashed on the balcony. "Return to your husband! The Cardinal is watching you! You will be judged!"

The pain of Sarah's slap tingled through his/their features. She turned and stormed back into the room. Drunken shock and fear passed through Rudi's mind. He hoped she wasn't going to make a scene in front of his wife and Jim. Nicholai let him go.

He watched Rudi go back into the room.

"Sarah. Come back. I don't know what came over me."

A feeling of righteous satisfaction filled Nicholai. Marriage was a sacred institution. It should not be taken lightly. Rudi had sinned. Now he must atone. It was only right.

Nicholai pulled himself arm over arm up the rope. He wasn't even breathing hard by the time he reached the next balcony. Bentley's apartment was just ahead.

Nicholai slid the steel prybar into the crack in the door. He had already neutralised the alarms, just as he had been taught to. Quietly he eased the door open. There was a crack as the flimsy lock gave way. Well, no-one really expected burglars this high up. No-one expected anyone to be able to bypass Imperial's fabled security systems so easily. No-one had expected anybody like Nicholai.

He adjusted his mask, and ran through a last set of pre-combat checks. Nightsight lenses—fine. Rebreather—fine. Flash protectors—operational. He did one last check on his weapons. His blade was over his shoulder. His dagger was in his boot. The micro-grenades were in his belt beside the gas capsules and smoke bombs. He unholstered his Punisher pistol. He had decided that Bentley would die by the bullet.

Carefully he slid inside, stepping from the flower-filled balcony into a darkened living room. He heard a voice. The silenced Punisher in his hand swivelled automatically in the direction of the noise. He froze into silent immobility, listening.

It was a woman's voice. She was laughing.

"Its all right, George, I'm just getting some more wine..."

"Hurry back. Leona and I are waiting." The second voice belonged to a man. It was deep and confident with the cold haughty accent of Imperial's corporate aristocracy. It belonged to Bentley. Nicholai was familiar with it, from the Directorate's phone taps. The two women complicated the matter. He had no desire to slay innocents.

He smiled feralty beneath his strange black mask, remembering one of the Directorate's most widely held dictums; there are no innocents. Slowly he shook his head. It was not part of his duties to judge the women. It was not for him to sort the wolves from the sheep. It was his duty to cleanse the world of the Cardinal's enemies. He had no desire to kill them unless they too were Heretics.

Bentley deserved to die. He was one of those who belonged to the unspeakable cults of the Dark Apostles. He had betrayed the Cardinal's Light and all of humanity, and sold his soul to the Darkness for power. The Second Directorate knew all this. The Inquisition had been watching Bentley for some time,

ever since the attack on the Imperial Chemical Institute's Biowarfare lab. That raid could only have been carried out with inside knowledge. Heads had rolled, but no-one in Imperial had suspected Bentley, the lab's head of security. ISC-4 were too proud to think that one of their own carefully vetted agents could be a Heretic. Either that or the rot went deeper and further than anyone guessed.

Perhaps not. Who would suspect Bentley?

His record was impeccable. Studied at Paxton Military College. Served ten years in Imperial Special Forces. Wounded twice in action against the Dark Legion. Awarded Her Serenity's medal for gallantry after single-handedly clearing a Dark Legion bunker complex. The only survivor of his unit. Gold Clearance from ISC-4. Five years blemishless service at Imperial Chemical Institute. A man whose vices were known and approved of.

Single. A womaniser. Drinks regularly but not to excess. No known drug habits. His description could apply to any of Imperial's upper security echelons. No-one would suspect him except the paranoid,

Art: Studio Parente

devious minds at the Second Directorate.

The woman entered the kitchen in the adjoining chamber. Nicholai reached for the Light, willing her not to see him, hoping that the Heretic was not sufficiently powerful as to sense his use of the Art. The woman walked past, staring right through him. She was naked, a tall feline girl with long tawny red hair and a dancer's lean and sinewy body. Sweat glistened in tiny beads on her body. She smelled of recent carnal sin.

The phone rang. The bell startlingly loud. He heard Bentley speak.

"Richter? Is that you?"

Nicholai could not make out the other's response.

"Of course, this is a sealed line. Cleared by ISC-4 itself."

Another mumble.

"Yes? It went well." Bentley laughed. "You're dead? Excellent."

Nicholai's heart raced. Richter. There was a name he had not heard in a long time. There was a name he had hoped never to hear again. This changed things. He could not simply grant extreme purification to Bentley. He needed to find out what the Heretic knew. Richter was an Apostate, a rogue Brother, and one of the most dangerous men in the Solar System. No-one knew this better than Nicholai. He had once been Richter's pupil.

Be calm, he told himself. It could be coincidence. There must be thousands of Richter's among Luna's teeming billions. It could easily be one of them. Some instinct told him otherwise. A trail he had lost long ago was becoming visible again. He listened eagerly but the conversation seemed to have come to an end. He heard the faint ring as Bentley put the receiver down again.

"Well, that's all done." Bentley said. "Just a couple of loose ends to tie up. Sorry about this, Leona. It's been fun."

There was the sound of a muted struggle and the crack of bones. Nicholai recognised the sound. He'd heard it before many times. It was the sound of a neck being broken, of vertebrae snapping.

Bentley spoke again. He wasn't even breathing hard. He was a powerful man in the prime of his life. "Tracy, could you come here? I'm afraid I have some bad news."

Nicholai knew it was time to act. The girl was turning. Her mouth was open a little. She was puzzled by the noises she had heard but she didn't yet suspect that her death waited in the other room. Nicholai stunned her with a blow to the lateral nerve cluster. He caught her body and lowered it silently to the ground. Pistol in hand he vaulted through the open bedroom door, taking the scene in at a glance.

A woman's naked body lay on the bed. Her neck was bruised and her head lay at an odd angle. She was the identical twin of the woman Nicholai had left on the kitchen floor. Bentley was reaching into the open drawer of the dresser beside the water bed. He pulled out a silenced Aggressor Pistol and swung it to bear on the doorway. He was a big dark-haired man. His naked body was very muscular.

"What the..." He cursed, seeing Nicholai's dark-garbed form.

"Cursing is a sin, brother," Nicholai told him. Bentley was quick, very quick. Nicholai was faster. He pumped a shot from his Punisher through Bentley's forearm. Flesh parted. Something splintered. To Nicholai's surprise Bentley didn't go down. He smiled, then leapt at Nicholai with a speed that was inhuman.

Nicholai had no time to dodge. He briefly caught a glimpse of the slime-oozing innards of Bentley's forearm. There was no bone and muscle there, just traces of strange bio-organic machinery.

Necrotech, Nicholai told himself and shuddered. Bentley had been implanted with Necrotech, the evil, magical technology of the Dark Legion. Nicholai pulled the trigger of the Punisher three times in succession. The bullets tore into Bentley's chest, an even, neatly spaced grouping round the heart. Bentley didn't even slow down from the impact. A bad sign. The stopping power of a Punisher was legendary.

Bentley landed on Nicholai, his hands grasping for the Mortificator's throat. Nicholai didn't try to oppose him. He rolled with the force of Bentley's leap, landing with his back on the thick plush carpet. He threw Bentley into the wall and rolled back to his feet.

Art: Studio Parente

Bentley smashed hard into the wall, the impact brought down one of the old paintings of Martian desertscape. He came right back at Nicholai, without even pausing for breath. The power and resilience of his body was amazing. Nicholai hammered out at Bentley's solar plexus. Although Nicholai was capable of breaking stone with his bare hands, the blow didn't even slow Bentley down. Inhumanly strong fingers closed on Nicholai's throat. The Mortificator felt his neck-guard begin to give way.

He brought his thumb up and thrust it into Bentley's eye-socket. There was a moment of resistance as his thumb dug into the jelly than an awful sucking sound as the eye came free of its socket. Bentley ignored this and kept on squeezing. The tempered and purified steel of Nicholai's armour started to groan and give. The assassin knew he had only moments to live.

In one fluid movement he tore his blade from the scabbard. Its razor sharp edge descended on Bentleys wrist, severing the hand. Nicholai sprang back free of the madman's deathgrip. Green fluid pumped out of the stump. The hand spasmed and then began to crawl away, scuttling about on its fingers

"I will make you beg for death," said Bentley. "and once you die, you will realise that worse was waiting."

like a huge and horrible spider. An insane grin twisted Bentley's ruined face. Something cold and evil glittered far back in the empty eye-socket. Through the holes in Bentley's chest Nicholai could see translucent pipes, filled with odd brownish liquids. Bentley had only the use of one hand now. It was partially ruined by the bullets Nicholai had put through his forearm. Great cable like sinews moved as the fingers flexed.

"I will offer your screaming soul to Algeroth. He will devour it and you will spend all eternity repenting your defiance of him." Bentley's voice was altered now. It sounded deeper, less human. As he spoke, air escaped from his lungs, wheezing through the holes in his chest. Nicholai aimed his sword straight at Bentley's heart. He concentrated all his force behind the blow. It was perfect. The sword slid through the Heretic's chest and emerged from his back. Bentley still came on. Nicholai twisted the blade to no visible effect, then the force of Bentley's advance tore it from his hands.

He ducked beneath the Heretic's grasping hand and sprang back into the living room. He remained calm, considering the situation from every angle. Bentley seemed unstoppable. Bullets barely slowed him. The loss of limbs hurt him not at all. Perhaps Nicholai could blind him. He lashed out again, his clawed fingers tearing at

Art: Paul Bonner

Bentley's one remaining eye. The Heretic understood what he was doing and twisted to avoid the blow. His return kick send spasms of agony through Nicholai, he felt ribs give way as if they had been hit with a steam-hammer. Stars danced before his eyes. He almost blacked out.

"I will make you beg for death," said Bentley. "and once you die, you will realise that worse was waiting."

Nicholai willed himself to move. He rolled to one side as Bentley tried to stamp on his recumbent form. A leg sweep sent the Heretic crashing backward into the radio set. Glass flew everywhere as the valves exploded. Shards pattered off Nicholai's armour like rain. Swiftly Nicholai flipped himself to his feet. The noise would bring the building's security people. They would be able to tell at a glance that Bentley was a Heretic.

Of course, they might just kill him for being an obvious intruder too. That was if he could stay alive until they came.

The pain from his fractured rib slowed him. If only he could find a moment to use the Art, he could heal himself. Bentley wasn't going to give him a moment. He was coming forward again.

"I will eat your heart as my master will eat your soul", he said.

Nicholai looked for an opening and saw none. Bentley came on like a juggernaut. Nicholai wheeled back, vaulted over the couch and saw the recumbent body of the girl. She was an innocent then, he thought, suddenly glad he had not killed her. Otherwise why would this monster want her dead.

There are no innocents, the words of the Directorates dictum rang back in his head.

He was standing in front of the veranda window now. A plan flickered through his mind. He waited for Bentley to rush him again. His timing would have to be perfect. He was never going to get a second chance.

Bentley rushed at him, arms outstretched, a lunatic grin etched on his features. Nicholai grabbed him, heaved and twisted, throwing him just as he had been taught in the training rooms, using all the force of his opponents rush against him. Bentley crashed through the window and out over the veranda. His body slammed into the barrier. Nicholai's blade still protruded from his back. Nicholai moved, kicked him in the back as hard as he could sending him over the edge.

Instinctively Bentley made a grasp for the railing using the stump of his right hand. He had no fingers to reach with. He dropped out into space, legs and arms flailing, still screaming curses at the Mortificator. The street rose to meet him.

Nicholai went back into the room, to check on the recumbent girl. It was going to be a long night.

DOOM TROOPER

Something cold and evil glittered far back in the empty eye-socket. Through the holes in Bentley's chest Nicholai could see translucent pipes, filled with odd brownish liquids.

EXTREMELY LIMITED EDITION PAIR OF DOOMTROOPER™ CARDS OFFER!

A limited edition pair of Doomtrooper cards based on the Mortificator story by Bill King is being offered—FREE OF CHARGE!

No purchase necessary. The first 9,000 people who send us a request in North America will have their cards sent to them via first class mail, for free! In Great Britain, the first 1,000 people who send us a request will have their cards sent to them for free, as well. Due to the limited availability of this incredible offer, we can only send one pair per household. Don't hesitate, this offer is a first come first served offer.

This offer applies only to residents of North America and Great Britain. Employees of the Imperial Corporation, members of The Brotherhood and their immediate families are not eligible for this offer.

In North America send your request to:
Heartbreaker Hobbies
P.O. Box 105
Folsom, PA 19033

In Great Britain send your request to:
Gamecraft
A16 Gardners Row
Liverpool, L3 6JT
ENGLAND

Copyright © 1995 Target Games AB. All Rights Reserved. Doomtrooper, Mutant Cronicles and all character names and the distinctive likeness (es) thereof are Trademarks of Target Games AB

DOOMTROOPER

By: Richard Brown and Joe Leuzzi

The collectible card market is starting to mature. There are many signs that indicate this: a growing number of card games available, the number of players increasing, and larger companies such as Marvel joining the fray. But I think the arrival of Doomtrooper is a sign that the industry is here to stay. A refreshing, challenging game with excellent production values. We're entering an era of quality with the quantity.

Doomtrooper is the first collectible card game around a science fiction background. Based on the world of Mutant Chronicles, it portrays the struggle between the forces of Good (The Doomtroopers) and Evil (The Dark Legion) in a power-armor laden future. You play cards representing your heroes and their titanic struggle for control of the destiny of mankind.

Doomtrooper is sold as a deck of sixty cards with boosters of 15. The cards themselves are beautiful; a rival to those of Jyhad. Excellent artwork and well laid out card designs make it the most professional release in awhile. The only change I'd make would be to add the artist's name to the bottom of the card, to give them credit for a job well done.

Each card represents either a warrior, or some object to help in the struggle. Each warrior has a point value that represents his influence on final victory. The game is won by killing (let's say terminating) enough warriors to accumulate 25 or more points (called promotion points). Although pretty bloody game in concept, the blood is all abstract. To aid a warrior in his duty you can assign equipment, use spells (called "arts"), or use special cards to affect play.

Each player builds a deck of 60 cards, and starts off with five "destiny" points. Here's one of the neatest concepts of the game: each turn a player gets three actions. An action can be used to bring a warrior into play by spending destiny points equal to his or her value. Or you can attack, equip, or use your arts. Also, you can meditate as your action, and gain back one destiny point. Certain cards also affect the number of destiny points you have. This becomes critical since certain art cards require huge amounts of destiny points to power them. Different corporations are represented in the game; warriors fight for a corporation and have allegiance for the corporation. Everyone is against the evil Dark Legion, and the Brotherhood control the manipulation of energy called arts. Strategy is built by focusing on a corporation and building a deck around it and its' special cards.

Play itself is fast and simple. Each warrior has a SHOOT (long range) and FIGHT (hand to hand) attack value, as well as an armor value. When a warrior attacks he declares whether its SHOOT range or FIGHT. Each warrior compares his opponents attack value to his armor. If it is equal or exceeds it, that player receives a wound. Two wounds and the warrior dies, and his opponent's controller gains promotion points equal to his value.

The tiny rulebook gives to sets of rules: Beginners and Standard. This is a nice feature I'd like to see in future games. The beginners rules are an easy way to get an introduction to play. The standard rules add all the chrome that adds finesse to your strategies. One caveat about starting the game: The starter decks are terrible play decks. One MUST tune a deck to really get a feel of how the game really plays. They are at or below par with Magic starters. Do yourself a favor and buy a couple of starters and some boosters.

The only real negative I have with the game is that really powerful characters seem to dominate the game. If you get behind early in the game, it can be very difficult to catch back up. Not as bad as other games, but it can be frustrating to a beginner. Aggressive play is rewarded in Doomtrooper. He who hesitates has lost the game.

DOOMTROOPER

Do we like it? At first I have to admit that we did not. In one game with starter decks we had a stalemate where I had over fifty destiny points and Joe was nearing forty with no action in sight. We were really frustrated with the game until we built decks as opposed to playing with the starters. Tuned decks played like a completely different game. It has the same kind of tension and focus that Magic has. It now held our interest.

We give it two thumbs up, with the hope that more games of this quality are coming down the pike. Other players in our area seem also to appreciate it. Sales of the cards has been brisk. Do yourself a favor and buy into the game early. I think this one will be a keeper.

Doomtrooper™ is one of the newest releases to hit the collectible trading card market. With so many new card games coming out now it is hard to keep them all straight in your head. Certain ones are sure to have a following while others will fall by the wayside and into the garbage cans.

Doomtrooper has the start to be one of the card games that will last. After reading through the beginner's rules and playing a couple of games we realized that this would be a game we would continue playing for a while. This was the fist time I have seen a game with an introductory type of rules system. These beginning rules helped us learn the game and peak our interest as to what the advanced rules will hold. Many games come out with rules that are so inarticulate that trying to learn and play everything at one time becomes nothing but frustrating. When a game reaches this point it definately loses something and is usually set aside, while all players go back to playing something they know how to play . Doomtrooper is one that my friends and I did not set aside and have not since we started playing it. The game is set in the world of the Mutant Chronicles, which pit humankind, corporations and Brotherhood, against the evil forces of the Dark Legion. After attempting to play with a couple of starter decks, which in any game is impossible, we were given a box of boosters to attempt deck construction and get an actual feel for the game. By chance I was given the good half of the booster box which contained two Positive Karma cards and one Negative Karma card. We found that these cards definately give an advantage to the user, especially if your opponent has neither in their deck. We both built our decks based around a mixing of the different corporations and large powerful Doomtroopers and Dark Legion characters. In my deck I tended not to put a character in the deck with less than a three value, and by the time I was done tuning it there were only a couple of those left. Playing with tuned decks definately changed the look and feel of the game. The cards played very smoothly together and spells ,known as art cards, were able to be cast. Many times these spells did nothing but save my opponent's life. We were both hoping to utilize some of the mission cards because these looked like they could have a definate impact in the game. Sadly though we were unable to use them due to a shortage of correct fortifications that were needed to complete the missions. I have since seen what some of the missions can do and by being able to play them on a Doomtrooper or specifically on another player themselves, these cards will definately add to the game. Doomtrooper itself held our interest while playing and will remain a game we play for some time. The cards themselves are printed on a very nice card stock with art and pictures that are very well incorporated with the theme of the game. I definately give this game the tapped rating (which means you should run out and buy this game right now.)

DOOM TROOPER

COLLECTABLE TRADING CARD GAME

DOOMTROOPER...

the Techno-fantasy collectible trading card game. In Doomtrooper each player utilizes his available warriors representing The Cartel and The Dark Legion to do battle against the forces of their opponent. Warrior cards are placed on the table to form squads of Doomtrooper or Dark Legion warriors.

Warriors gain Promotion Points through combat, completing missions and other means.

The first player to earn a pre-determined number of Promotion Points before their opponents wins the game

- 337 different cards in the 1st series
- Starter decks come with a rule book and 60 cards (45 common, 13 uncommon, and 2 rare
- Doomtrooper "Necropaks" Boosters– Expand your decks and build up your arsenal of rare cards with these "Necropak" Booster Packs! Each booster contains 15 cards (11 common, 3 uncommon, and 1 rare).

HEARTBREAKER™