

freely in Lolth's Web and is immune to the poison and shearing damage.

**Enhance Spider:** The Arachnid Champion may specially enhance as many spiders as she has prestige levels. This effect is usable only once per day. Affected spiders are willingly and instantaneously transformed into a spider of the next size category and gains +1 to hit for the duration of the effect (2 rounds per prestige level). For example, a 3rd level Arachnid Champion could instantaneously transform three medium spiders into three large spiders for 6 rounds. At the end of the effect, any spider is returned to normal and is not healed of any damage. This effect requires spiders to be present, as the Arachnid Champion may not summon spiders unless she possesses prior divine or arcane ability to do so.

**Greater Spider Emulation:** The Arachnid Champion may imbue herself or a target with a temporary, superior spider-like power for as many times a day as she has prestige levels (though an unwilling target is entitled to a fortitude save at -1 per prestige level). Each effect will last for two rounds only. She may choose from any of the following:

- **Spider Mandible:** She may briefly transform her facial features into a spider-like form and make a venomous bite attack as a medium sized spider, but striking at +3 to hit. She may make attacks as normal with melee weapons but may not cast any spells for the duration. The bite counts as an additional attack at 1/round.
- **Spider Claw:** She may transform one hand into a venomous claw that may make 1 strike as an unarmed weapon per round. Each strike is at +5 base to hit (with damage as a venomous bite attack from a medium sized spider). One hand must be free to enable this effect, and no other attack is possible.
- **Improved Spider Strike:** She may increase her base speed by 20 for the duration of the effect and gains an additional +4 to base attack for any one strike for the duration.

Optionally, the Arachnid Champion may sacrifice a Greater Spider Emulation for a Lesser Spider Emulation of four rounds duration.

**Exalted Spider Form:** The Arachnid Champion may Shapechange herself into the form of a large monstrous spider (*Monster Manual* p.210). This lasts for five rounds and is castable once per day only. In this form, she retains any spell casting ability that she has. Furthermore, she is immune to all poison (or poison like attacks or spells) and has a damage reduction of 3 for the duration.

## The Paganhammer

by Issak Haywood



He trembled as he stood waiting for the heretic. What could make a citizen of the Pale become a heretic – especially one of this kind? The Church was his life. The Church gave him life. And he was not even native to the land.

Reifus knew that one way or another, Kanen was going to face his crimes, for today Reifus had command of twenty-one members of the Church Militant, and he was not going to let the criminal slip away so easily this time.

“You are hereby commanded to come forth and face the crimes you have committed against the Church of the One True Path!”

Reifus knew that this was just a formality, as Kanen would never voluntarily leave his sanctuary. The old farmhouse had been converted over to a shrine of evil, dedicated to Vecna, the once human Emperor-Mage of awesome power that terrorized his own people some millennia ago.

The other members of the Church waited with ease. Kanen was not their first capture, nor was it likely to be their last, and probably not the worst. Some watched with passing interest, as they knew that Reifus’ statement was nothing more than regulation and thus fidgeted as they waited. Janus, on the other hand, watched Reifus’ every move. Janus had sponsored this raid, and any mistake would come back to him. Prior to accepting Reifus’ request for this raid, Janus and the other members researched Kanen and his alleged injustices against the Church of the One True Path. Kanen was more than a common sorcerous heretic<sup>2</sup>, he was a priest to an evil deity, and (the sheer thought of such heresy made Janus and the other members of the Church Militant livid with righteous indignation) Kanen was devoted to no lesser of an evil than the Whispered One himself – Vecna! Thus the raid was not only approved but also given the highest priority.

The members of the Church Militant had already cleared the livestock from the nearby barn and placed many traps in the surrounding area, making secret paths to the doorways and closed windows. Reifus directed the other members to station themselves

around both the farmhouse and barn, with himself and Janus facing the front door. With the traps and Church Militant surrounding the house, Reifus knew that Kanen had no chance of escape other than what his dark god would grant. Reifus stepped closer to the door and heard emanating chants of dark magic from within. He stopped and listened intently. He could almost understand the intonations. As he listened, Reifus imagined something dark erupting from the oerth. *The creature would endanger the lives of his associates. Kanen might escape!*

“I heard chanting,” Reifus informed his compatriots. “He is summoning an oerth elemental, if I understand the words correctly.”

Janus understood what this meant and shouted back to the others, “Careful in the fields, something will be coming out of the ground!” The cries of his fellows told him that his warning was too late. “Damn. This waiting game has got to stop. We don’t know what power he has amassed and is saving, just waiting for us to become exhausted. Reifus, this is your capture, call the order. Have Den stay behind to cover, and Theane to draw the elemental away from the wounded.”



Erupting from the pastures, the Oerth elemental creates a huge distraction for Reifus’ men.

“Call to order!” yelled Reifus, having to be heard over the crushing sounds of oerth being trampled beneath the huge rock and stone elemental behind the house. The Templars and Legates<sup>3</sup> were fighting valiantly with their swords and maces but were on the losing end of the battle. “Den! Theane! Draw that thing away from the others, and keep it busy for awhile.” Reifus knew that with Den and Theane out, both veteran Templars, things were going to be tough, especially with the groans and death throes of his fellows

lying on the ground. "Minly, you must retrieve the injured before that treacherous monster causes any more havoc."

*This was not the way Janus said it should go, thought Reifus. I'll get that demon-spawn bastard if it is the last thing I do.* He looked to his left, signaled ready and was thankful to see the signal returned. He knew that the beleaguered group on the right might not be ready, yet he requested it nonetheless. Confirmation came gingerly, as it appeared that Templar Lenard was unable to fully raise his hand, having come forth from fighting the deadly oerthen force.

At the top of his lungs, Reifus yelled, "In Sashia's name, I smite thee!"<sup>4</sup>

All knew this was his personal battle cry and charged their respective entry points at his order. Janus looked on and forced a smile. With himself not participating (due to both his age and his desire to see Reifus maintain control of the operation), both Den and Theane fighting the ungodly beast, and Minly healing their four injured companions, it was not going to be an easy capture, yet everyone capable of moving towards the farmhouse did so. He hoped that Reifus would make his capture and a name for himself. This was his time. He would be one to contend with later in life.<sup>5</sup> Janus was proud of his protégé.

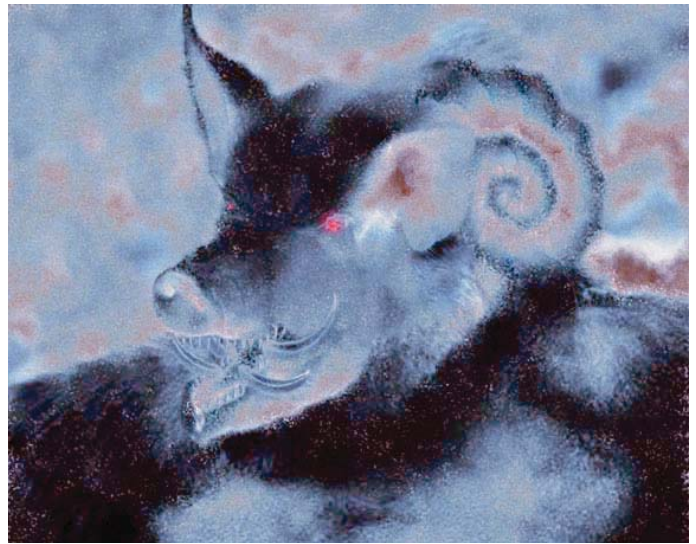
The Legates readied spells, and the Templars raised swords, axes and mauls towards the building as they rushed forward. Reifus was certain of the outcome. He knew Pholtus was on his side. He knew Pholtus had given him this test. He was Nyronnese after all, and needed to prove his faith to the Path.

The house exploded. Flames cascaded up the ancient wooden building as if it were tinder on a bonfire. Guinin, a Legate of some renown, was hit full force in the face by flaming splinters and fell to the ground, writhing in pain. Running forward and leaping over his compatriot and through the flames, Reifus' trousers caught fire. *No matter*, Reifus thought, *I'm protected by the Light of Pholtus.*

In front of him stood a twelve-foot tall demonic looking creature. Looking past the fearsome monstrosity and directly at Kanen, Reifus yelled, "You heathen are in violation of the doctrine as prescribed in the Pietistical!"<sup>6</sup> Place aside your weapons and send this demon back to the Abyss. You hereby face the Question of Pholtus!"

"**Ahh you mortal fool!**" boomed the voice of the demon. "Your faith in your puny god is nothing compared to the power that I hold. I'll torture you and your sister's soul."

Reifus knew this demon was goading him, trying to seduce him from the Path, but how did it know of his dear sister? For no more than that mere second did he waiver, as his fellows came forth, crashing through the burning walls and windows. With mauls and maces swinging, they attacked the foul-smelling demon. Reifus had



*Perhaps not the most pleasant final vision before an eternity of torture.*

been distracted by the fiend for long enough; he was here to capture Kanen. *Let the Templars and Legates deal with this foul beast*, he thought.

His flesh burned. He had forgotten the flames, and now they advanced up his back. The smell of burning flesh was strong in the air, and Reifus did not know if the odor was emanating from himself, those under his charge or as part of Kanen's deadly sacrifice. He saw Kanen standing in the center of a Symbol of Summoning. The Eye of Vecna on the infernalist's black robes began to glow as he concentrated on his summoned demon. Ignoring the pain and flames licking at his long hair, Reifus swung his hammer at Kanen.

Reifus watched his swing go wide; everything stopped, except the pain. "Ahhhhh!" his lips let loose. It was not the wild swing that distracted Kanen. The pain evident in the scream from the Pholtan zealot caused a gleeful smile to crack his lips.

The momentary slip in concentration and confusion instigated by the scream provided the wicked Nalfeshnee<sup>7</sup> the moment it needed. Turning from its dead and dying assailants, the demon pointed one of its huge talons at Kanen, and in its deafening voice, it bellowed, "You! Now you will pay the ultimate price for distracting me from the war of Azzagrat in Demonholme."<sup>8</sup> Pain. Suffering. Torture. Those will be your rewards for summoning me to this shadow-wretched place."

Reifus had to act fast. His friends were down or still outside battling the elemental and the blaze engulfing the house. Little did he believe that this demon was making light or idle threats. Correcting his balance, Reifus' hammer again swung towards Kanen. Like the True Path that Reifus followed, the blow struck true and shattered his nemesis' leg. Kanen crumpled to the ground.

### **The Demon Leapt Forward.**