

The Bloodying of Wintermount

“Don’t you see it, Degis?”

High atop the smooth stone walls surrounding the outer ring of Wintermount, a late afternoon veteran guard peered into the distance, motioned his hand to the cloudless sky, and pulled his companions near. One of them squinted, another nodded absently. The third, a young man named Degis on his first station studied the pointed direction.

“I...I think so, Tael. The light? Orange in the distance, below the dipping sun.” Degis responded excitedly.

“Careful now, it’s odd. Very odd. Don’t get all...” The veteran, Tael, a captain of the Winterspears, was cut off by a shout on the adjacent wall. All four looked and saw another watchman, seeing scope to his right eye. Five more guards gathered around him. Then in unison, they all peered back at the bright ball of light. “It’s growing closer. It’s...red? Red light?” Degis began to shake. Tael turned to him, grabbed his shoulder.

“Degis—don’t you worry. I’ve seen many battles, close and not. The War of the Nine wasn’t kind to many, but still many survived. It matters not what this thing might be.” He pivoted back toward the growing light for a moment but hid his own fear. “We’ll overcome it. It’s likely unkind, but we can thrust that right back with these, eh?” He slightly raised his black-wood spear, the steel head shined in the early evening sunlight. Degis matched Tael’s gaze and his fear faded. He nodded and looked back to the barreling cluster of crackling red in the distance, but now much nearer.

Before Wintermount's folk knew it, the demon was upon them.

The tiny ball of light grew larger rapidly, transforming from a speck to a raging inferno of blood-red flame. As it soared to the mountain-top city a voice like thunder clapped through the sky.

"I, DORGANTHEU, RETURN, VESSELS OF BLOOD AND BONE. YOUR CITY, MINE. YOUR PEOPLE, EATEN. YOUR KINGS, CRUSHED. YOUR GODS?" The roar posed a question as bells began ringing across Wintermount. "USELESS!" Finished Dorgantheu.

Degis trembled momentarily as Tael and his other elders rushed around him. He managed but three words before gripping his longsword tight and charging down the wall's stairs after them: "Protector help us."

Dorgantheu violently soared above Wintermount's walls. The demon thrust crackling spheres of fiendish fire upon the city's defenders, each attack absorbing the death cries of its victims. The spheres cracked and buckled structures they struck, beginning Dorgantheu's destruction across the settlement. Alas, civilian homes and stores were not his focus.

The demon rushed the second-largest building in Wintermount: The High Temple of Ietros. It was already evacuated, along with the greatest structure in the city, the Duke's Castle. As Dorgantheu bloodied Wintermount above, Lord Corin Calgrast plotted below.