Shadows Over Skyrim

2021 marks the 10th anniversary of The Elder Scrolls V: Skyrim. The success of that game put my favorite game series into a new spotlight. While some of the past TES games were immensely popular in their own right, Skyrim helped bring the Elder Scrolls into the homes of so many—with a ridiculous amount of re-releases and ports, I imagine it was actually difficult to avoid.

While Skyrim was nowhere near my first Elder Scrolls game, and it wasn't my last, it does hold a special place in my memories. Skyrim rekindled my joy exploring Tamriel in a way that Oblivion failed to capture. There was something different about Skyrim. It had its flaws, and I missed many of the traditional RPG bits that were streamlined away, but I think it was the right decision to make the game as successful as it was. Because of this anniversary, it would mean a lot to me to be able to pay homage to this incredible game in my own way.

Skyrim has always been a perilous place, and the name of this book evokes the dark shadows that obscure the snowy province. Cast from dragons flying overhead. From the impressive giants and their mammoth companions that claim the lands. The long shadows of political unrest. Or the devious creatures of darkness that lurk in long forgotten domains.

Lessons Learned

With Legionnaire's Guide to Cyrodiil well underway, there is time to reflect on what that project has taught me. I'm sure there are still many more lessons to be learned before it's over, but that will be true of any project, always. I've also come to better understand my availability, my risk of burnout, and my drive.

First, let's talk about Legionnaire's. It was a massive project. And that was on purpose. It was intended to be as big or bigger than the Basic Rules and was meant to bring lots of fantastic world building into UESTRPG. Most of the previous projects have been a little dash of lore, some items, and a bunch of monsters. Legionnaire's needed to bring something more. Something that could be used to help DMs build TES games and allow players to build TES characters.

That book provides a whole whack of new subclasses for players to choose. It also gives a bunch of new monsters for DMs to throw their way. And to give the opportunity to build a more TES feeling world, over 100 items and spells are included. World building through mechanics, lore, and physical connections. One of the things I am the most excited about in LGtC is the guilds. Adding some of the most common guilds to the game gives the players something to strive for and inspiration for DMs to pull from. I wanted to add something that had a strong connection to Tamriel, while also providing something incredibly useful for everyone at the table. I hope you enjoy it as much as I do.

This intention is something I can come to understand while I work through something. That purpose wasn't front and centre in my mind when I added the guilds to the books outlined wishlist, it was something that I came to realize as I was writing it. Thinking about what purpose this serves. Why am I writing this? You know, beyond just a cool stat block, or neat feature. And I've learned that something I need to do is to spend the

time up front to understand what my actual goals are (more than just a subject entry) before I reach out to others. I don't know what the best way to do this is, or even a good way, but I know it will be helpful.

I've also learned that editing work is sometimes just as time consuming as writing it in the first place. And that a free-for-all, write what you want style can be very hectic. I still believe that people writing what they want, and what they are passionate about, is a good way to go—especially with a project that relies on volunteer work.

The second thing I've learned in 2020 is how much time I actually have for projects like this. I have a full time professional job that I love. It is very deadline driven, which means when deadlines come, I work as much as needed to finish the task. I'm also the father of a young daughter who is a ton of fun and loves to play. She takes up most of my time, and I like it that way. This ends up with me having around an hour on weekdays of free time, and maybe 3 hours tops on weekends. This is the time I have for writing, video games, GM prep, tabletop gaming. I have to lose sleep to fit in time for game night.

Part of my goals for 2021 is to play a video game that isn't ESO. To watch a movie without working through it. To spend more evenings with my wife, not focused on other tasks. And to not feel guilty for not working on something for 1 day. This means that I don't think I'll have much time at all in 2021 for a whole lot.

I'm really happy with what I achieved in 2020. I put out Enemies of Elsweyr, started a monthly monster creation, and organized,

edited, and wrote for LGtC. I also contracted with a third party company, twice, to make 5e content on DriveThru RPG. One was launched as a successful Kickstarter.

2021 Projects

This year, I have a few projects in mind. Shadows Over Skyrim and Secrets of the Dwemer. I also want to update the basic rules. This is way too many things for me to fit into my schedule. It's too much for me to fit in just to edit and layout.

I'm hoping there will be the same excitement for these projects as there was for Legionnaire's Guide to Cyrodiil. I also want to help empower those that can, do their own editing and layout, to make great looking products. I can help finish these off if needed, or as pet projects for myself.

Thinking a bit more long term, I'd like to put together a Monster Manual, a collection of all of the stat blocks created so far. Another idea is a small book of miscellaneous items. For the provinces of Tamriel, I'd like to see Morrowind come to life. Perhaps a small book on the Clockwork City. I don't have plans for any other province, at least not until they appear in a major release.

Something I'd like to see more of — something that's not just a book of subclasses, items, and monsters — is creating content that is actionable. Stuff that creates value for your games. To make Tamriel feel alive. I'd like to make stuff that provides usable encounters that could be plugged into any game. Or fleshed out NPCs that are more than just a stat block.

All of that is ambitious. And far too ambitious for my time available, so I know I

won't succeed at it, but it is a goal to work towards. But after a thousand words, it might be time to introduce what *Shadows Over Skyrim* could be.

Goal of the Book

Shadows Over Skyrim is intended to be a relatively short book. Somewhere between 50 and 100 pages. I originally was hoping for something around 30 to 70, but after putting together an outline, I realized that the monsters alone would fill those pages. Of course, some of these things could drop out as we get into things. Much of the content included in the book will be inspired by *The Elders Scrolls V: Skyrim* and *Elder Scrolls Online: The Dark Heart of Skyrim*.

Intention. Part of the intention of the book is to fill in many of the items and monsters that are familiar to Tamriel. A quick and easy way to make 5e feel like the Elder Scrolls is to have encounters and rewards that are representative of the world. There is a massive catalog of monsters in TES, and every book slowly whittles away at that list.

Guilds. There are a handful of factions or guilds that exist in Skyrim that are unique to the rest of the Empire. These can help in world building to make Skyrim look different from Cyrodiil or High Rock. In Legionnaire's Guide to Cyrodiil, we created 8 guilds, many of which are well known across Tamriel and familiar to most fans of the series. In Shadows Over Skyrim, I want to handle factions differently. Creating in depth backgrounds, rank systems, and descriptions ends up with diminishing returns when adding more and more guilds. The Companions are very similar to the Fighter's Guild in a lot of ways. As is the

College of Winterhold and the Mages Guild. And the East Empire Company and the Gold Coast Trading Company would have nearly identical mechanics. If a rank system is desired, a GM could make a few clever tweaks for a player to feel connected to that guild. For this book, I'd rather see something that provides lore and goals to the guilds, gives ideas on how to use the existing guilds in its place, and gives ideas for quests and adventures.

Subclasses. Another popular addition to any 5e product is subclasses. I'll come straight out and say I'm not a huge fan of new subclasses. I know that's a hot take. I just feel like there are so many options that already exist, more is not necessarily better. With the Player's Handbook, Xanathar's Guide to Everything, and now Tasha's Cauldron of Everything, there are soooo many options to choose from. For UESTRPG, the Basic Rules gives a few solid choices, and Legionnaire's Guide to Cyrodiil nearly doubles the options. Custom subclasses are also a ton of work to maintain. I am looking at updating the Basic Rules to 1.5 soon. The biggest changes to each iteration has to deal with balancing, correcting, and clarifying subclasses. Not reacting to feedback to many of the classes creates a lot of stress, and if I'm working on revisions to subclasses, that means I'm not working on anything else. Having a stat block with an unbalanced ability, a confusing trait, or a typo, isn't *that* big of a deal. You use it for one encounter and then never use it again. A subclass with those issues makes it unplayable and can ruin a player's (or GM's) fun for an entire game.

I could see, at most, 1 new subclass being included. Something that is well thought

through, with lots of time for feedback and revisions. It would bring something special that is unique to the Elder Scrolls universe, and specifically related to Skyrim or the other content of the book.

Quality. I think the work that has been done in UESTRPG is just getting better and better. I want to make sure that the quality keeps getting better, which means I'd much rather see fewer pages, fewer monsters, and less subclasses, if it means better stuff. Since my free time is less available, it also means I need to make sure that anything that is written is complete and ready to go before it is handed over, so the review and editing process isn't so onerous.

Outline

Like other UESTRPG products, Shadows Over Skyrim will include only canon content, specifically based on T*he Elders Scrolls V: Skyrim* and *Elder Scrolls Online: The Dark Heart of Skyrim*. The following is a general list of the intended content. Adding to or removing from the list is open to discussion, but there are plenty of options provided.

Introduction

estimated 4 pages

The introduction will include lore about Skyrim and what makes it different from the other provinces of Tamriel. It should highlight its culture and history, along with its connection to the other provinces.

Within the introduction we could include survival tools, like Cold Weather mechanics or other usable rules, similar to the introduction to *Monsters of Murkmire*.

Guilds

estimated 12 pages

Guilds of Skyrim could include the Companions, the College of Winterhold, Vigilants of Stendarr, and the Dawnguard (vile).

Introduction. Each would include an introduction that is three to five paragraphs long, which would detail the guild's history and goals.

Characters. One short paragraph to describe how a character would fit into this guild. What talents would they have, what goals align, and what classes or subclasses would likely fit in.

How to Use. This would describe what guild from LGtC could be used as a template and what sets the guild apart from that template. What a GM or player could do to tweak that template to make it fit with the chosen guild. This would likely be 2 or 3 paragraphs.

Perks. Outline what perks membership with the guild would be available to characters. This would be similar to the patrons in Tasha's Cauldron to Everything. This could include a salary, unique access to information, tools, or equipment, and in rare situations, possibly a proficiency. Use Tasha's as a guide to the power level of these perks. 4 perks, each with their own paragraph, and one or two paragraphs introducing their perks.

NPCs. Briefly describe 6 generic NPCs that would be a part of the guild. These descriptions wouldn't include a name or race, but would give an idea of a type of demeanor, personality, or attitude.

One notable NPC will be included. This NPC will be fully fleshed out with a personality, a purpose, and how they might help or hinder a party. A unique stat block will be created so that GMs can easily include the character into their game.

1 or 2 paragraphs describing the general style of npcs. Each generic NPC gets a 1 or 2 sentence paragraph, while the notable NPC would get a couple of paragraphs to describe them and a couple of paragraphs about how to use them in a game.

Items

estimated 8 pages

There are plenty of items from Skyrim to include. Some are equipment, like weapons and armor, while others are tools or resources. There are even some flavor based items in the list that can help create opportunity for role play rather than power.

Most items only need a description of their mechanics, but the notable Tamrielic artifacts should include a brief description.

- Amulet of Articulation *(Made by TheVileClavicus)*
- Auriel's Bow (made by WanderingSwampBeast)
- Archmage's Robes (made by WanderingSwampBeast)
- Arkay's Sacred Oil (Vile)
- Auriel's Shield (made by WanderingSwampBeast)
- Blackwater Blade (made by WanderingSwampBeast)
- Black Books (All 7) (Sam Bertolli)
- Blade of Sacrifice (made by swampy)
- Bloodcursed Elven Arrow (made by WanderingSwampBeast)

- Bloodskal Blade (*Made by TheVileClavicus*)
- Briar Heart (made by swampy)
- Dawnguard Rune Axe (Made by TheVileClavicus)
- Dawnguard Rune Hammer (theVileClavicus)
- Dawnguard Rune Shield (TheVileClavicus)
- Dragonbane (made by Whistlehunter)
- Dragon Priest Masks (made by MinimanC)
  - Ahzidal
  - Dukaan
  - Hevnoraak
  - Konahrik
  - Krosis
  - Miraak
  - Morokei
  - Nahkriin
  - Otar
  - Rahgot
  - Vokun
  - Volsung
  - Wooden Mask
  - Zahkriisos
- Dwemer miter (swampy)
- Ebony Mail (Guar)
- Frostheart Blossom (Vile)
- Harkon's Sword (made by WanderingSwampBeast)
- Kindlepitch & Fire Salts
- Lord's Mail (made by swampy)
- Mace of Molag Bal (made by swampy)
- Meridia's Brilliance (made by MinimanC)
- Miraak's Staff (made by MinimanC)
- Miraak's Sword (Firstblade)
- Nerveshatter (*Made by TheVileClavicus*)
- Netherroot (claimed by swampy)
- Nightingale Bow (made by Swampy)
- Potion of Blood (by Crimson)

- The Rueful Axe (made by WanderingSwampBeast)
- Ring of Hircine (Guar)
- Ruin's Edge (Vile)
- Sanguine Rose (made by MinimanC)
- Savior's Hide (Guar)
- Shadowrend (made by swampy)
- Shield of Ysgramor (made by swampy)
- Skeleton Key (Guar)
- Staff of Sheogorath (made by swampy)
- Stendarr's Hammer (*Made by TheVileClavicus)*
- Stonemelt Potion (made by swampy)
- Targe of the Blooded (made by WanderingSwampBeast)
- Wabbajack (made by WanderingSwampBeast)
- The White Phial (*Made by TheVileClavicus*)
- Wuuthrad (made by Whistlehunter)
- Zephyr (Made by WanderingSwampBeast)

Monsters

estimated 30 pages

Each monster in this list is to come with several paragraphs of canon lore specific to the creature. Sometimes, when there are multiple versions (like a Frost Giant and a Sea Giant), a generic description is added that is able to describe all versions of those creatures, while separate paragraphs go into detail about the specific talents or culture of the different types. The giants might be pretty detailed, similar to giants from the Monster Manual, whereas a Riekling Harrier might only need a sentence or two to describe them, and a Gloomspore wolf likely doesn't need any additional information.

Note: *Creatures that have multiple types (i.e., Falmer Duskslicer, Falmer Nightprowler, etc.) are showing the existing canon names of creatures intended as inspiration. Not all creatures are expected to be turned into stat blocks—these are provided for inspiration and can be discussed further.*

- Briarheart (made by WanderingSwampBeast)
  - Elk-Eye
  - Wildling
- Chaurus (Made by Juan)
  - Chaurus Reaper (acid bite)
  - Chaurus Hatchling
  - Chaurus Hunter
- Death Hound (Made by EL JUAN)
- Draugr (Made by Juan)
  - Draugr
  - Hulking Draugr
- Dragon Priest (Made by EL JUAN)
- Falmer (Made by juan)
  - Gloomlurker
  - Battlerager
  - Duskslicer
  - Icecaster
  - Nightprowler
  - Shaman
  - Warmonger
- Gargoyle (Made by Juan)
- Giants
  - Giant (WanderingSwampBeast completed)
  - Frost Giant (WanderingSwampBeast completed)
  - Sea Giant (WanderingSwampBeast completed)
  - Undead Giant (WanderingSwampBeast completed)
- Gloomspore
  - Gloomspore Wolf (Made by Juan)
  - Gloomspore Senche (Made by Juan)

- Hagraven (WanderingSwampBeast completed)
- Mammoth
- Miraak (MinimanC)
- Nereid (made by Crimson)
- Nixad
- Riekling (Made by Juan)
  - Riekling
  - Riekling Skysplitter
  - Riekling Harrier
- Riekr (Made by Juan)
  - Riekr
  - Riekr Mender
  - Riekr Tempest
  - Riekr Wildling
- Shade (made by Crimson)
- Shade Colossus (made by Crimson)
- Shellbug (WanderingSwampBeast completed)
- Sinmur (giant undead?) (WanderingSwampbeast completed)
- Skeletons (made by Nevaero i guess)
  - Bone Hawk
  - Bone Wolf (turns prey into zombies if they die? / frozen?)
- Sovngarde Hero (ghosty) (made by swampy)
- Spiders
  - Frostbite Spider (made by swampy)
  - Venomspit Spider (made by swampy)
- Spriggan (*LGtC*)
  - Burnt Spriggan (WanderingSwampBeast completed)
- Stone Husk (made by swampy)
- Troll (Made by Crimson)
  - Frost Troll (Made by Crimson)
  - Armored Troll (Made by Crimson)
- Vampires (Claimed by juan i guess)
  - Blood Knight (Made by Juan)
  - Blood Scion (Made by Juan)
  - Nighthollow Vampire (Made by Juan)
  - Vampire (Made by Juan)
  - Vampiric Bear (Made by Juan)
    - Vampiric Sabrecat (Made by Juan)
- Voidmother (made by Crimson)
- Void Rot (Made by Juan)
- Wisp (*LGtC*)

Miscellaneous Creatures

estimated 3 pages

Miscellaneous creatures usually are pretty self explanatory and only require stat blocks without descriptions. Some of the more unique, or more interesting creatures could have 1 or 2 sentences to describe them.

- Bear Cub (CR 0) (renamed badger)
- Tusked Bristleback
- Chub Loon (made by Whistle)
- Direwolf
- Elk
- Great Bear (made by Whistle)
- Horker
- Husky
- Rabbit
- Sabrecat
- Vale Deer (made by Whistle)
- Vale Sabre Cat (made by Whistle)

NonPlayer Characters

Similar to miscellaneous creatures, most of these won't require descriptions. Some of the more unique, or more interesting npcs could have 1 or 2 sentences to describe them.

- Alchemist (Made by Juan)
- College Acolyte (WanderingSwampBeast completed)
- Companion (Made by Juan)
- Dragonborn (claimed by swampy)
- Forsworn (made by swampy)
- Greybeard (made by swampy)

- Jarl (WanderingSwampBeast completed)
- Reachman (completed by WanderingSwampBeast)
  - Briarheart
  - Reach-Witch
  - Witchblade
  - Reachman
  - Vateshran (Reach lore keepers)
- Sage (skald lorekeepers?)
- Skald (WanderingSwampBeast completed)
- Stormcloak Vanguard (stormblade and snow-hammer made by EL JUAN)
- Thalmor Soldier (made by swampy)
- Thalmor Agent (made by swampy)
- Thalmor Justiciar (made by swampy)
- Vigilant (Made by Juan)

Items of Consideration

These are additional items that exist in Skyrim that could be created for the item list. There are a ton of items, and I'd love to include them all, but limiting the page count gets in the way.

- Aegisbane
- Ahzidal's Armor
- Ahzidal's Ring of Arcana
- Akatosh's Talon (TheVileClavicus)
- Amulet of Bats
- Ancient Helmet of the Unburned (TheVileClavicus)
- Angi's Bow
- Armor of the Old Gods
- Blackguard's Armor
- Bloodscythe
- Bloodthorn
- Bloodthirst
- Bolar's Oathblade (made by swampy)
- The Bond of Matrimony (Ring of Mara) (Vile)

- Borvir's Dagger
- Bow of the Hunt
- Champion's Cudgel (made by swampy)**
- Darkcap Mushrooms
- Deathbrand Armor
- Diadem of the Savant (Made by Mini)
- Divine Amulets (Amulet of talos and such, made by swampy)
- Dragon's Oath
- Dragon Priest Dagger
- Drainblood Weapon
- Drainheart Weapon
- Drainspell Weapon
- Dwarven Black Bow of Fate
- Eduj
- Firiniel's End
- Froki's Bow
- Gauldur Amulet (TheVileClavicus)
- Ghostblade (made by (swampy)
- Glass Bow of the Stag Prince
- Gloomreach Mushroom
- Gloves of the Pugilist (made by swampy)
- Helm of Yngol
- Hoarfrost (made by swampy)
- Horksbane
- Ironhand Gauntlets (made by swampy)
- Karliah's Bow
- Kyne's Token
- Locket of Saint Jiub
- Nettlebane
- Nightingale Blade (made by swampy)
- Nightweaver's Band
- Okin
- Poacher's Axe
- Predator's Grace
- Red Eagle's Bane (made by swampy, also made Fury as the same item)
- Ring of Bloodlust
- Ring of Instinct
- Ring of the Beast
- Ring of the Erudite

- Ring of the Hunt
- Ring of the Moon
- Rundi's Dagger
- Saarthal Amulet
- Soulrender
- Staff of Tonal Dissonance
- Stormfang (made by swampy)
- Sunhallowed Elven Arrow (made by swampy)
- The Longhammer
- The Woodsman's Friend
- Trollsbane
- Tumblerbane Gloves
- Valdr's Lucky Blade (modified luck blade, minus the wish prosperity?)
- Visage of Mzund (Vile)
- Windshear

Conclusion

After looking at the outline again, this project looks incredibly ambitious. There is a lot to look at, and a lot can be pared back. It could end up including only one faction, and a couple dozen monsters and items. It all depends on time and support.

One way to help this project be successful and timely is to empower creators and those who are ambitious to build 'finished' looking content in homebrewery or other similar apps, or even a well put together google doc. This can help share content with the community quickly. And makes their work less reliant on me and my lack of time.

At the end of 2020, I've been having two content drops each week. I would like to continue having weekly content posts, but twice a week might be a bit too much for me.

How to Get Involved

Want to help out? Let me know! Join the Discord. Let me know what you're interested in. You might be really good at putting together stat blocks, but not really interested in lore and descriptions. Or perhaps you're the opposite and love the idea of writing lore exclusively. Maybe you want to flex your editing muscles or just want to see cool stuff and provide feedback. Need more direction to understand what is expected? Reach out and let me know. I want to do better at giving honest feedback and direction. See something you like? Leave a comment on the doc to reserve it!

And as always—this is a hobby for me. I am not a professional content creator. I don't manage RPG product creation. I don't really know what I'm doing, so if you see something that can be improved, reach out and let us know!

Feedback and Review

The best way to get feedback on content is by posting in the discord. There are a few dedicated members of the community that can be relied on for feedback. I have been pretty absent in this role, but I'm hoping to get better at it by managing my time better and not biting off more than I can chew.

Google Doc Use

Each contributor will be set up with a folder where they can create and share their content. A master file will be created where completed works will be put together.

There are also voice channels available in the discord. I would love to put them to use

more frequently and meet with writers and contributors, or have contributors talk with each other and hash things out. Text works great for a lot of things, but often talking things through can go a long way.

–Teluusa

What's Next

All in all, 2021 is already another ambitious year. I have a few projects in mind. *Shadows Over Skyrim* and *Secrets of the Dwemer* are the two new books, with an updated Basic Rules in the works, at the same time as finishing up the massive Legionnaire's Guide to Cyrodiil. I'm hoping to work on the outline for *Secrets of the Dwemer* soon, which will be a much shorter booklet. The two will tie in nicely with each other, given the connection to Skyrim.

March marks the first year of Monster of the Month, which will get a small booklet that will include all of the stat blocks created over that time.

Longer term plans, which were mentioned above, include *Villains of Vvardenfell*, a Morrowind themed book, and *Terrors of Tamriel*, the compiled monster manual.

There is no shortage of things to do. There are also some side projects happening by other members of the community that will likely show up this year. One is a compilation of various races and another is a big book of magic with new spells, subclasses, and mechanics. Very cool stuff.

Well, I'm starting to feel overwhelmed. I'm looking forward to another great year in Tamriel and hope you stick around for the journey.

Suggested Inclusions

- Alduin the World-Eater
- Alik'r Warrior (Made by Crimson)
- Ash Creatures (Guardian, Spawn) (made by swampy)
- Dawnguard (2 types, made by swampy)
- Dragons (ancient, elder)
- Durnehviir
- Grahl (Made by Crimson)
- Harkon
- Karstaag
- M'aiq the Liar
- Plague bear/wolf
- Psijic Monk (Made by Crimson)
- Skeletons (Bonemen, mistmen, wrathmen, boneyard keepers)
- Snowrays
- Snow Elf Knight-Paladin (Made by Crimson)
- Snow Whales (Made by juan)
- Snow Wolf (Made by el JUAN)
- Udefrykte (Made by Crimson)
- Vampiric Senche-raht (Made by juan)
- Giant Matriarch (Made by juan)
- Half-Sea Giant (Made by juan)