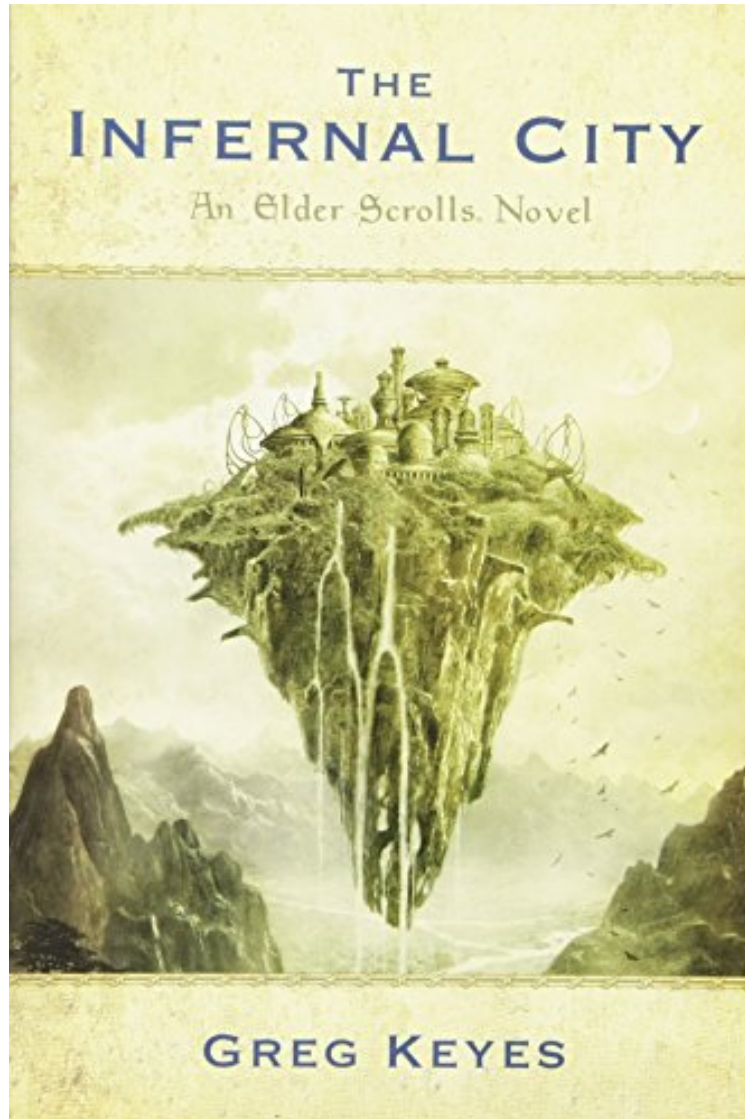


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## The Elder Scrolls: The Infernal City

Greg Keyes

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**Greg Keyes : The Elder Scrolls: The Infernal City** before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Elder Scrolls: The Infernal City:

4 of 4 people found the following review helpful. Surprisingly good novel By Reasonable Reviewer I saw that the book was on significant sale, and I will read nearly anything. So, I ordered a copy. I read the book cover to cover on a cross-country flight, and, ... it is surprisingly good. The The Elder Scrolls: The Infernal City tells the tale of six principal characters: a haughty prince, a waif with a dream, a lizardman searching for a purpose, a secret agent of the king with a dark secret, an ancient elf on the trail of vengeance, and a member of the king's special "inspector" squad. Be warned

... spoilers follow. The premise is that a part of Oblivion has found its way, partially into the prime material plane. This is the floating city, the Infernal City, shown on the cover of the book. The denizen that formed the demi-plane has been coordinating with conspirators within the king's privy council. The goal is the gold tower in the middle of the Imperial city, but everyone in the story has ulterior motives. Our young waif and lizardmen are best friends. She is an accomplished alchemist, and he is ... what is he, a faithful companion. They end up flying to the Infernal City while the City completely destroys their homeland and turns all the dead into undead. Our young waif uses a family heirloom to contact the prince and tell him of the dangers of the city. Enter the brash young prince who is there to save the day, but it turns out that the prince's whole life is a lie. He has been surrounded by actors and buffoons who are there to make the prince look dashing and regal. When his entire party is wiped out, the prince learns the truth, and his spirit is nearly crushed. Enter the scheming dark elf who rescues the prince. Our elvish friend spent several decades in Oblivion, escaped, and is dead set on vengeance. The two agents end up meeting and realizing that they are (presumably) on the same side. The lizardman and alchemical companion manage to put together a potion to escape, only to find that they have become part of the demi-plane and cannot go home. So ends the first book. It is followed by *Lord of Souls: An Elder Scrolls Novel*. The pacing is very good, and, while there are many points of view, the author does a good job of keeping it all straight for the reader. I have two minor gripes. First, the book could have been set in any fantasy world. It has a patina of Elder Scrolls painted on, but the Bethesda mythos is not really necessary for the story. The second is that the book is a bit confusing. I had to re-read some of the sections two to three times to figure out who the POV character was and what the context of the section was. All in all, a good book at a reasonable price. In service, Rich

The Original Dr. Games since 19932 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Too predictable and only good for nostalgia if you're an Elder Scrolls fan. By JTHall I like the Elder Scrolls games, but the books just do not add up to the adventure the games give you. Yes, they are great for a nostalgic read if you want to add to the stories within "Tamriel," but I was hoping for more suspense. The book is predictable and gives hints through character speech about what's coming next. I found this book a bit boring and turned to other books for reading and ended up only reading this one to finish it. Sadly, as an Elder Scrolls fan, I am quite disappointed. The books in the games are better reading than this. 1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. First of two Elder Scrolls novels by Greg Keyes. By Miss\_C. "The Infernal City: An Elder Scrolls Novel" is a story based in the video game realm of Tamriel. I enjoyed the general plot, which is original and not based on any specific game quests. Because this book reads like fan-fiction, I definitely think it helps to have played "Morrowind," "Oblivion," and "Skyrim," in that order of relevance to this novel. I became a fan of these games starting with "Oblivion," and the events in the novel take place 40 years after the Oblivion Crisis between the "Oblivion" game and the "Skyrim" game. I didn't expect the novel to rely so much on the lore of "Morrowind." I believe there is much in the book that I could likely understand better and subtleties I missed because I'm not as familiar with "Morrowind." I would have enjoyed reading the book more had not small annoyances taken me out of the story so often. First, the book could have been edited at least one more time. There are places where words are either repeated or missing, and there are spelling mistakes. Throughout the novel, I also had to go back and re-read because I couldn't figure out who was speaking. Speakers are too infrequently labeled, which causes confusion. The book contains too many characters in too few pages, which means that none of the characters are completely developed and aren't especially sympathetic. Fans of the video game series will see many inconsistencies in the author's writing. On the one hand, there are places where I enjoy recognizing a Khajiit name when I see it or recalling what Bravil looks like. On the other hand, in the first five or more chapters in the first part of the book, the names of characters aren't consistent with their characters' video game "races." Players of the games would call this "not lore-friendly." I don't think I've ever seen so many letter "X"s. I've played literally hundreds of hours of these games and have barely seen the letter "X." I honestly think that many of the names throughout the novel are weird for the sake of being weird, which is distracting. Overall, "The Infernal City" is a niche novel based on a game franchise. If you are not a fan of the franchise before reading this novel, then I believe you might have difficulty understanding the context of the story, which might make it less likely that you will enjoy reading this book. I would give this novel two-and-a-half stars, if possible. I don't know if I should round down because I feel that the audience for this novel is limited or if I enjoyed reading it enough to round up. Bearing in mind that this is the first novel of two, I'll round up and hope that the second novel is better and that the story finishes strong.

Four decades after the Oblivion Crisis, Tamriel is threatened anew by an ancient and all-consuming evil. It is Umbriel, a floating city that casts a terrifying shadow for wherever it falls, people die and rise again. And it is in Umbriel's shadow that a great adventure begins, and a group of unlikely heroes meet. A legendary prince with a secret. A spy on the trail of a vast conspiracy. A mage obsessed with his desire for revenge. And Annaig, a young girl in whose hands the fate of Tamriel may rest. . . . Based on the award-winning *The Elder Scrolls*, *The Infernal City* is the first of two exhilarating novels following events that continue the story from *The Elder Scrolls IV: Oblivion*, named 2006 Game of the Year.

"This action-based fantasy will find a following among YA and adult gamers." ---Library Journal About the

AuthorBorn in Meridian, MS, in 1963, Greg Keyes spent his early years roaming the forests of his native state and the red rock cliffs of the Navajo Indian reservation in Arizona. He earned his B.A. in anthropology from Mississippi State University and a master's degree from the University of Georgia, where he did course work for a Ph.D. He lives in Savannah, GA, where, in addition to full-time writing, he enjoys cooking, fencing, the company of his family and friends and lazy Savannah nights. Greg is the author of *The Waterborn*, *The Blackgod*, the *Babylon 5 Psi Corps* trilogy, the *Age of Unreason* tetralogy (for which he won the prestigious "Le Grand Prix de l'Imaginaire" award), and three New York Times bestselling *Star Wars* novels in the *New Jedi Order* series.Excerpt. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved.

Chapter OneA pale young woman with long ebon curls, and a male with muddy green scales and chocolate spines, crouched on the high rafters of a rotting villa in Lilmoth, known by some as the Festering Jewel of Black Marsh. You're finally going to kill me, the reptile told the woman. His tone was thoughtful, his saurian features composed in the faint light bleeding down through the cracked slate roof. Not so much kill you as get you killed, she answered, pushing the tight rings of her hair off her face and pressing her slightly aquiline nose and gray-green gaze toward the vast open space beneath them. It works out the same, the other hissed. Come on, Glim, Annag said, tossing herself into her father's huge leather chair and clasping her hands behind her neck. We can't pass this up. Oh, I think it can be safely said that we can, Mere-Glim replied. He lounged on a low weavecane couch, one arm draped so as to suspend over a cypress end table whose surface was supported by the figure of a crouching Khajiit warrior. The Argonian was all silhouette, because behind him the white curtains that draped the massive bay windows of the study were soaked in sunlight. Here are some things we could do instead. He ticked one glossy black claw on the table. Stay here in your father's villa and drink his wine. A second claw came down. Take some of your father's wine down to the docks and drink it there. The third. Drink some here and some down at the docks . . . Glim, how long has it been since we had an adventure? His lazy lizard gaze traveled over her face. If by adventure you mean some tiring or dangerous exercise, not that long. Not long enough anyway. He wiggled the fingers of both hands as if trying to shake something sticky off them, a peculiarly Lilmothian expression of agitation. The membranes between his digits shone translucent green. Have you been reading again? He made it sound like an accusation, as if reading was another way of referring to, say, infanticide. A bit, she admitted. What else am I to do? It's so boring here. Nothing ever happens. Not for lack of your trying, Mere-Glim replied. We very nearly got arrested during your last little adventure. Yes, and didn't you feel alive? she said. I don't need to feel alive, the Argonian replied. I am alive. Which state I would prefer to retain. You know what I mean. Hff. That's a bold assertion, he sniffed. I'm a bold girl. She sat forward. Come on, Glim. He's a were-crocodile. I'm certain of it. And we can get the proof. First of all, Mere-Glim said, there's no such thing as a were-crocodile. Second, if there were, why on earth would we care to prove it? Because . . . well, because people would want to know. We'd be famous. And he's dangerous. People around there are always disappearing. In Pusbottom? Of course they are. It's one of the dodgiest parts of town. Look, she said. They've found people bitten in half. What else could do that? A regular crocodile. Lots of things, really. With some effort, I might be able to do it, too. He fidgeted again. Look, if you're so sure about this, get your father to talk Underwarden Ethten into sending some guards down there. Well, what if I'm wrong? Father would look stupid. That's what I'm saying, Glim. I need to know for sure. I must find some sort of proof. I've been following him. You've what? He gaped his mouth in incredulity. He looks human, Glim, but he comes and goes out of the canal like an Argonian. That's how I noticed him. And when I looked where he came out I'm sure the first few steps were made by a crocodile, and after that by a man. Glim closed his mouth and shook his head. Or a man stepped in some crocodile tracks, he said. There are potions and amulets that let even you gaspers breathe underwater. But he does it all the time. Why would he do that? Help me be sure, Glim. Her friend sibilated a long hiss. Then can we drink your father's wine? If he hasn't drunk it all. Fine. She clapped her hands in delight. Excellent! I know his routine. He won't be back in his lair until nightfall, so we should go now. Lair? Sure. That's what it would be, wouldn't it? A lair. Fine, a lair. Lead on. And now here we are, Annag thought. They had made their way from the hills of the old Imperial quarter into the ancient, gangrenous heart of Lilmoth Pusbottom. Imperials had dwelt here, too, in the early days when the Empire had first imposed its will and architecture on the lizard people of Black Marsh. Now only the desperate and sinister dwelt here, where patrols rarely came: the poorest of the poor, political enemies of the Argonian An-Xileel party that now dominated the city, criminals and monsters. They found the lair easily enough, which turned out to be a livable corner of a manse so ancient the first floor was entirely silted up. What remained was vastly cavernous and rickety and not that unusual in this part of town. What was odd was that it wasn't full of squatters there was just the one. He had furnished the place with mostly junk, but there were a few nice chairs and a decent bed. That's about all they got to see before they heard the voices, coming in the same way they had which was to say the only way. Annag and Glim were backed up in the corner, and here the walls were stone. The only way to go was up an old staircase and then even farther, using the ancient frame of the house as a ladder. Annag wondered what sort of wood it was could resist decomposition for so long. The wall- and floorboards here had been made of something else, and were almost like paper. So they had to take care to stay on the beams. Glim hushed himself; the figures in the group below were gazing up not at them, but in their vague direction. Annag took a small vial from the left pocket of her double-breasted jacket and drank its contents. It tasted a bit like melon, but very bitter. She felt her lungs fill and empty, the elastic pull of her body around her bones. Her heart seemed to be vibrating instead of

beating, and the oddest thing was, she couldn't tell if this was fear. The faint noises below suddenly became much louder, as if she was standing among them. Where is he? one of the figures asked. They were hard to make out in the dim light, but this one looked darker than the rest, possibly a Dunmer. Hell be here, another said. Heor maybe shewas obviously a Khajiit everything about the way he moved was feline. He will, a third voice said. Annag watched as the man she had been following for the last few days approached the others. Like them, he was too far away to see, but she knew him by the hump of his back, and her memory filled in the details of his brutish face and long, unkempt hair. Do you have it? the Khajiit asked. Just brought it in under the river. Seems like a lot of trouble, the Khajiit said. Ive always wondered why you dont use an Argonian for that. I dont trust em. Besides, they have ripper eels trained to hunt Argonians trying to cross the outer canal. Theyre not so good at spotting me, especially if I rub myself with eel-slime first. Disgusting. You can keep your end of the job. Just as long as I get paid for it. He pulled off his shirt and removed his hump. Have a look. Have a taste, if you want. Oh, daedra and Divines, Annag swore, from the beam they crouched on. Hes not a were-croc. Hes a skooma smuggler. Youre finally going to kill me, Glim said. Not so much kill you as get you killed. It works out the same. And now Annag was quite sure that what she felt was fear. Bright, terrible, animal fear. By the way, the Khajiit below said, lowering his voice. Who are those two in the rafters? The man looked up. Xhuth! if I know, he said. None of mine. I hope not. I sent Patch and Flichs up to kill them. Oh, kaoc, Annag hissed. Come on, Glim. As she stood, something wisped through the air near her, and a shriek tore out of her throat. I knew it, Glim snapped. Just come on, we have to get to the roof. They ran across the beams, and someone behind her shouted. She could hear their footfalls now why hadnt she before? An enchantment of some sort? There. Glim said. She saw it; part of the roof had caved in and was resting on the rafters, forming a ramp. They scrambled up it. Something hot and wet was trying to pull out of her chest, and she hysterically wondered if an arrow hadnt hit her, if she wasnt bleeding inside. But they made it to the roof. And a fifty-foot fall. She pulled out two vials and handed one to Mere-Glim. Drink this and jump, she said. What? What is it? Its Im not sure. Its supposed to make us fly. Supposed to? Where did you get it? Why is that important? Oh, Thtal, you made it didnt you? Without a formula. Remember that stuff that was supposed to make me invisible? It made you sort of invisible. It made my skin translucent. I looked like a bag of offal walking around. She drank hers. No time, Glim. Its our only hope. Their pursuers were coming up the ramp, so she jumped, wondering if she should flap her arms or . . . But what she did was fall, and shriek. But then she wasnt falling so fast, and then she was sort of drifting, so the wind actually pushed her like a soap bubble. She heard the men hollering from the roof, and turned to see Glim floating just behind her. See? she said. You need to have a little faith in me. She barely got the sentence out before they were falling again. Later, battered, sore, and stinking of the trash pile that broke their final fall, they returned to her fathers villa. They found him passed out in the same chair Annag had been in earlier that morning. She stood looking at him for a moment, at his pale fingers clutched on a wine bottle, at his thinning gray hair. She was trying to remember the man he had been before her mother died, before the An-Xileel wrested Lilmoth from the Empire and looted their estates. She couldnt see him. Come on, she told Glim. They took three bottles of wine from the cellar and wound their way up the spiral stair to the upper balcony. She lit a small paper lantern and in its light poured full two delicate crystal goblets. To us, she said. They drank. Old Imperial Lilmoth spread below them, crumbling hulks of villas festooned with vines and grounds overgrown with sleeping palms and bamboo, all dark now as if cut from black velvet, except where illumined by the pale phosphorescences of lucan mold or the wispy yellow airborne shines, harmless cousins of the deadly will-o-wisps in the deep swamps. There now, she said, refilling her glass. Dont you feel more alive? He blinked his eyes, very slowly. Well, I certainly feel more aware of the contrast between life and death, he replied. Thats a start, she said. A small moment passed. We were lucky, Glim said. I know, she replied. But . . . What? Well, its no were-croc, but we can at least report the skooma dealers to the underwarden. Theyll have moved by then. And even if they catch them, thats a drop of water in the ocean. Theres no stopping the skooma trade. There certainly isnt if no one tries, she replied. No offense, Glim, but I wish we were still in the Empire. No doubt. Then your father would still be a wealthy man, and not a poorly paid advisor to the An-Xileel. Its not that, she said. I just there was justice under the Empire. There was honor. You werent even born. Yes, but I can read, Mere-Glim. But who wrote those books? Bretons. Imperials. And thats An-Xileel propaganda. The Empire is rebuilding itself. Titus Mede started it, and now his son Attrebus is at his side. Theyre bringing order back to the world, and were just dreaming ourselves away here, waiting for things to get better by themselves. The Argonian gave his imitation shrug. There are worse places than Lilmoth. There are better places, too. Places we could go, places where we could make a difference. Is this your Imperial City speech again? I like it here, Nn. Its my home. Weve known each other since we were hatchlings, yes, and if you didnt already know you could talk me into almost anything, you do now. But leaving Black Marsh that you wont get me to do. Dont even try. Dont you want more out of life, Glim? Food, drink, good times why should anyone want more than that? Its people wanting to make a difference causing all the troubles in the world. People who think they know whats better for everyone else, people who believe they know what other people need but never bother to ask. Thats what your Titus Mede is spreading around this version of how things ought to be, right? There is such a thing as right and wrong, Glim. Good and evil. If you say so. Prince Attrebus rescued an entire colony of your people from slavery. How do you think they feel about the Empire? My people knew slavery under the old Empire. We knew it pretty well. Yes, but that was ending when the Oblivion crisis happened. Look, even

you have to admit that if Mehrunes Dagon had won, if Martin hadn't beaten him, Martin and the Empire didn't beat him in Black Marsh, Glim said, his voice rising. The An-Xileel did. When the gates opened, Argonians poured into Oblivion with such fury and might, Dagon's lieutenants had to close them. Annag realized that she was leaning away from her friend and that her pulse had picked up. She smelled something sharp and faintly sulfurous. Amazed, she regarded him for a moment. Yes, she finally said, when the scent diminished, but without Martin's sacrifice, Dagon would have eventually taken Black Marsh, too, and made this world his sportground.