

# The Last Cycle

*The first time I heard about the Last Cycle was in the notes of the fallen brother Gregorius. In a dream the Most High spoke to his chosen one. He told us what awaits us all. And so he spoke:*

*“There will be a time when the Illusion crumbles. Walls will fall and the truth will be disclosed. In this time horrible angels will walk on this earth and in their steps flames will reign. The Legions of Darkness will emerge from dark alleys and a bloody war will rage.”*

*This was what Gregorius wrote in his chronicles; and this herald the end.*

*(From Arcanum Metropoli, by Leonardo Da Vinci.)*

## The Seven Keys

In the heart of the Demiurge's prison sits the Black Citadel. Like a fly, full of blood, it guards the creation that keeps man imprisoned. No signs of life can be seen from the inside. Only the Demiurge knows what secrets lie inside.

When the Demiurge left his creation he sealed his citadel. He rose the unseeing gates to protect his creation. The gates were sealed with seven locks that were locked by seven keys. These keys were seven manifestations of the Demiurge's being.

What happened next is shrouded in mystery. Not even in the black libraries there is knowledge about what would happen next. According to the legends the Demiurge stepped down through our prison to the Vortex. On his way he lost the keys. One by one they disappeared in dusky alleyways, dark cellars and deep seas.

## The First Battle

It is impressed in pages of Iron: When the Demiurge disappeared his servants did not wait long. They stepped forward from the shadows and gathered on the Square of Fear. Their hoards and legions swarmed by their feet. So, at the end of an Era and the beginning of the last their forces clashed. Their war-cries echoed in all worlds and brought war and destruction. On the fields of Elysium mankind fought, once again united in a deadly dance with the Archons and the Angels of Death. The battle stood for eternal times and harvested many souls.

Then the Dark Prince stepped out from the blind gates. His silhouette stood out, black and proud against the sky, but his body was battered and broken. Speechlessly, the abandoned powers gathered around Astaroth, bending their knees in fear and reverence.

The Dark Prince beheld the gathered forces raising his arms towards the towers of the citadel; to-

wards the Hall of Tears, where the Demiurge's book of Iron is at rest. His focus turned to the heart of the machine.

With a powerful voice he cried out his pain and rage towards the speechless birds of prey that circled the highest towers of the citadel.

And then he spoke:

*“Our Lord has left us! With seven seals and seven keys he has closed the citadel of power. The Last Cycle has begun – this is the end.”*

In sorrow and pain the Death Angels and Archons left the Square of Pain and returned to their palaces and dark kingdoms with heavy steps. Astaroth stepped down into Inferno, closing the gates behind him; to await the end.

But even for our oppressors Hope is an eternal flame. In dark chambers and empty hallways the legends about the Demiurge and the seven keys were whispered; the keys that can open the citadel. About the keys that can crown the brave to rule over the Machine; a new demiurge.

Dead prophets declared the truth in the flaming halls of Inferno and blind oracles prophesized a devastated future. Archons and Death Angels researched dusty books and sought in abandoned temples to find the truth about The Last Cycle.

And then the race had begun.

## The Truth

The Demiurge's servants realized that the machine would crumble without the Demiurge. The world had entered a new phase which would lead to the end. The machine would crumble and dimensions would collapse. What would happen to the Demiurge's servants was shrouded in mystery.

However; it did not take long before the Demiurge's servants learned about the existence of the seven keys. The keys are direct manifestations of the Demiurge himself so they affect the illusion around them, by

either enhancing them or tearing them apart.

Slowly, the keys manifested in the legends of mankind. Archons and Death Angels were soon to follow, but the nature of the keys made them lose track time and again. The race continued, in the past, in the now and in the future.

## *Astaroth*

In due time, the legends reached the halls of Inferno. This filled the dark prince with new hope and he gathered his legions around him. He left Inferno behind and stepped into Elysium where he hopes to find a way into the Hall of Tears.

Of all beings fighting for the rule over the Machine Astaroth is the most complex one. It is uncertain whether he wants to maintain the Illusion or if he wants to destroy mankind. The only thing that is clear is that he has clearly expressed his wish to take the place of the Demiurge.

He has an extended network of agents researching clues to find the keys. They are connected through several secret societies ruled by lictors and chosen human servants.

Astaroth is also using the Death Angels' organizations. For now, Gamichicth is enjoying the most of his trust.

## *The Archons*

After the devastating battle between Archons and Death Angels, a fragile alliance was formed between the remaining of the loyal servants of the Demiurge. The Archons thought that they were not strong enough to challenge Astaroth directly and a war with the Death Angels would be devastating for both sides.

When the Archons found evidence proving that the keys were lost within the prison; inside the machine itself, they realized that their time had come. If they could find the keys they would be able to open the blind gates and enter the Hall of Tears. There they would find the knowledge they needed to keep mankind imprisoned for all eternity.

The Archons soon realized that the only way they would be able to find the keys was to cooperate. They made a sacred alliance and since that moment they have been working together to find the keys; more or less.

But there is opposition within the ranks of the most loyal servants of the Demiurge. Malkuth and Tipareth have both taken advantage of the situation to gain more power. So far Tipareth's capriciousness has been tolerated by the other Archons, but Malkuth has since long fallen into disgrace.

Malkuth's unspoken goal is to find the keys herself, to tread into the Hall of Tears alone. With the knowledge she hopes to find there she will dissolve the prison and restore the divine status of mankind.

## *The Death Angels*

The Death Angels follow their own dreams. Their primary goal is to destroy the Machine and terminate mankind. After this apocalypse they hope to be able to reorder the reality after their own minds and create an eternal inferno in all true realities.

The Death Angels are basically unaware of the existence of the keys. They are used as pawns in the game by Astaroth and possibly the strongest of the Archons.

The only Death Angel that actively searches for the keys is Thaumiel. His goal is to challenge and defeat Astaroth and Netzach to determine who is the strongest. Thaumiel also has a network of agents spread across Elysium and Inferno.

## *The Essence of the Keys*

The only thing one can say for certain about the keys is that they are true manifestations of the Demiurge's being. According to the legends they represent seven aspects of the Demiurge that were used when the Machine was created.

The shape of the keys vary with time and they can be found in different eras and in different shapes.

They can be traced as religious artifacts or ancient symbols of power. They can be magical formulae or new knowledge; like scientific discoveries. There are times when the keys have manifested in persons; as a part of their immortal souls.

## *The Power of the Keys*

There are no credible sources that can tell us about the power of the keys. There are secret chronicles that have traced their manifestations in the history of mankind. It is through these sources one can get a feeling for the powers of these mystical artifacts.

Only a few of the keys have been found; and only a couple of times someone has been able to control their powers over a longer time. In most of the cases it has led to that the Legions of Darkness has gathered to claim the desirable artifact by force.

The only thing that is certain is that the owner of one of the artifacts receives undreamed-of possibilities. No one knows what happens when all seven artifacts are combined. What is known though, is that this combination will open the Blind Gates that seal the Demiurge's Citadel.