

## Grand Lodge of Mars Condatis

*Chief Adept: "Very Honoured 3<sup>rd</sup> adept, what do you know of the Word?"*

*3<sup>rd</sup> Adept: "Peh, the Letter of Mars, of the Path joining Hod to Netzach, which also a Letter linked to Water, as Mars ruleth Water, and to Fire, as Mars ruleth Fire in Geburah."*

*2<sup>nd</sup> Adept: "Mars in Peh, linketh the base of the Black Pillar to the Base of the White Pillar, and the converse of Mars is Jupiter – for Jupiter is Lord of Fire, but in Chesed he ruleth Water, balancing Mars in Geburah."*

*From the Rite of the Pentagram and the Five Paths, Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn*



Hermetic order in Valles-New Shanghai. Belief in magic and the supernatural has never decreased in times of crisis - quite the opposite, no matter how technological the crises may be. While most people turn to old or new religions others seek to understand traditional esoteric knowledge. The Grand Lodge of Mars Condatis is a descendant of western hermeticism, tracing its ancestry back to the Renewed AMORC Caliphate fraternal order before the Fall, and through them back to Ordo Templi Orientis, the Golden Dawn, Freemasons and (mythically, at least) the Illuminati, Rosicrucians and ancient mystery schools.

While there exists several similar lodges on Mars (and one on Venus), they have so far not been unified. There are ongoing debates about how (or even if) they could be unified under an Imperator into a single order, with different lodges making varying claims of authenticity and leadership.

The grandmaster of the Grand Lodge is Gergo Bernát. In daily life he is a simspace designer, building customised environments for companies and glitterati, but all his spare time is spent running the Grand Lodge. He may not be the sharpest occultist around, but he is an efficient administrator who is good at networking and maintaining the hermetic mystique. Under him are a number of Adepti, who monitor and tutor members of the lower grades (Neophyte, Zelator, Theoricus, Practicus, Philosophus and Dominus Liminis). As members advance in understanding (often checked by tests) they are initiated into higher grades through solemn ceremonies.

The Grand Lodge operates the Temple of Mars, a religious establishment located in Central. Inside a nondescript office building they have an outer office linked to an interior temple equipped for solemn hermetic ceremonies. While they prefer to perform these in person, for practical reasons much activity is online or done using AR. The Temple sells training in cabbala, visualization, meditation techniques, modern astrology, practical magic and many forms of esoteric philosophy. It can also provide services such as exorcisms, blessings and the makings of magickal talismans. The Temple is protected by Tyler, an old and somewhat crusty security AI, and Veli-Matti Virtanen, the resident computer security/hacker who also doubles as AR maintainer.

The order does not see modern science as incompatible with a magical worldview, just an incomplete take on the whole. Reports about strange events before, during and after the Fall are taken as evidence that there are indeed more things in heaven and earth than is commonly acknowledged. Some members have pursued independent investigations into reports of “supernatural” phenomena, including exsurgents and asyncs. In fact, the order is “aware” of asyncs – they have always believed it is possible to awaken tremendous powers with the right training or conditions.

The order employs “modern astrology” – as mankind spread into space the traditional form of astrology became increasingly absurd: what does it mean if a child is born on the Moon with Earth in Sagittarius, or has Jupiter covering nearly half the constellations? Among the precursors to the order there was a great debate. The model that the order accepts assigns complex metaphysical “forcefields” to the different planets and moons, affecting things according to the angles they make with each other. Within the order there are still vigorous debates between the formalists (who claim the pattern is explained by complex mathematics, and that this math reveals deep insights) and computationalists (who have a more empirical bent, trying to refine astrology by correlating news and mesh sentiment analysis software with planetary positions). They all agree that the transition in the Fall from Earth as the centre of humanity to Mars as the centre is a clear indication that we have fully entered the Aeon of Horus.

Contrary to conspiracy theory, the order does not have branches at the highest levels of government or business – freemasonry went out of style a long time ago. While the order does have a handful of socially prominent members the vast majority are just normal Martians interested in the esoteric. That doesn’t stop them from thinking they do have more influence than they do. This is especially true because of the belief in the “The Secret Chiefs”, unseen powers that have been guiding mankind – and especially the order – behind the scenes. Some members like Veli-Matti are full-blown conspiracy theorists, trying to map the secret forces influencing the solar system.

### **Adventure possibilities**

The order is very interested in gaining async abilities, and if they figure out the truth about the Watts-MacLeod virus they will likely seek it out and deliberately experiment with infecting volunteers with it (while of course doing sensible purifications and wardings of course, you can never be too sure). Firewall agents might become involved in trying to track down attempted virus smuggling or stopping these experiments. Alternatively, members of the inner circles might successfully make themselves asyncs, framing their new powers as a vindication of their beliefs. An investigator might come across people who do indeed seem to have magical powers. The problem might be that not everybody gets the right strain

An order that believes in secret chiefs might be open for clever manipulation by con-men, infiltrators and other unscrupulous characters. While it would be hard to turn it into a dangerous tool, it is always useful to have people willing to run errands motivated by mystical fervour. All it takes is to make truly convincing “occult” events, using technology, psi or good old-fashioned manipulation. However, an infiltrator might discover that there really *are* secret chiefs – maybe some other manipulator beat them to it, or there is something out there that really is using the order for some strange purpose.

An order member was threatened by some local Triad gangsters. Feeling desperate he threatened them back with a curse – which came true! Through a very unlikely accident there was a medical malfunction and his morph had a heart attack. Now the member is in real trouble. The Triad is superstitious and believes he really has some form of power – and they plan to get back at him, or force him to work for them. The member cannot go to the order for help, since his curse broke their rules against black magic. So he seeks out some of his friends, the PCs, to try to find a way out.

