

MOTHILANDS

On the planet Beacon, humanity survives in the shadows, just below the surface of a grey jungle, surrounded on all sides by salt seas and fierce predators capable of laying waste to entire villages.

Once a year, the desperate tribes of this hostile world are given a reprieve from their struggles as the sun peeks out from behind the moon and the moths are banished to far off lands.

On the planet Reprieve, society has beaten back the night with torch and flame. People build great cities with the help of lost technologies and squabble over the space and resources needed to feed growing populations.

Once a year, the disparate clans of this thriving world hide in fear of a threat lured to their lands by a beacon in the sky. For one month, the moths upend the natural order until the moon goes dark once more.

Why Mothlands?

Mothlands is a setting of wilderness survival and world exploration. Players will be challenged with harsh environments, mysterious ruins, and the ever present threat of the setting's supreme predators, the moths. Mothlands also offers opportunities for interpersonal and societal conflict between cut-throat rivals and independant nations vying for dwindling territory.

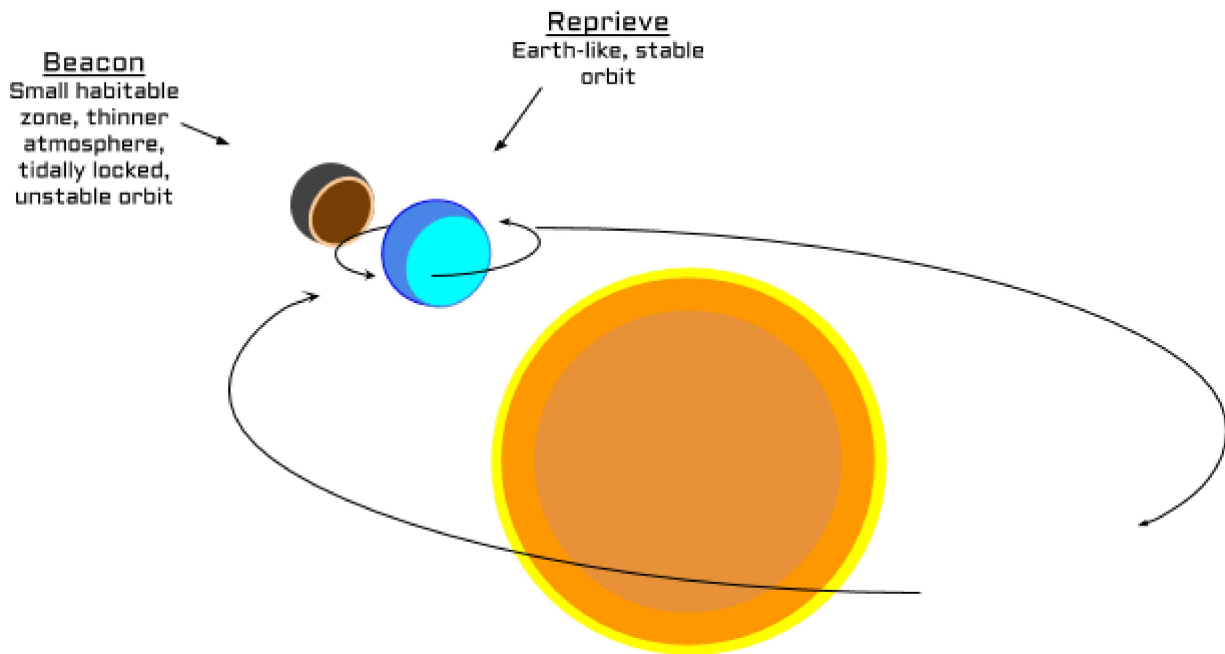
Is it Sci-Fi or Fantasy?

Mothlands takes elements from pulp science-fiction and uses them to craft a world with heady fantasy themes, but it's flexible. The lost technology that once connected the worlds of Beacon and Reprieve might be a dilapidated space elevator wired to a nuclear reactor or a green swirling portal powered by glowing crystals. Regardless of the details, Mothlands focuses on personal drama, political intrigue, and the mysterious legacy of the predecessors: those who engineered it all.

What are the Moths?

In the worlds of Mothlands, a "moth" is a common name for many different creatures. What they share is an attraction to light, an imposing physicality, and the traits needed to travel between Beacon and Reprieve: the adaptation of enormous scaled wings reminiscent of a real world moth or butterfly.

Moths harbor no fear, nor hatred, of human-kind. They are possessed of strange forms and complex life cycles, and while they are not intelligent in the ways we understand, they are cunning. To face one is to tempt death.



TOUCHSTONES AND INSPIRATION

Tone

The Dragon Age Series of Video Games - An epic quest highlighting interpersonal relationships, moral decisions, and political intrigue. *Also:* Avatar: The Last Air Bender (animation)

The Firefly Television Series - Rascals, low lifes, and daring dos team up to pay the rent and maybe accomplish something big while they are at it. *Also:* Saga (comics) or Cowboy Bebop (animation).

The Anime Moribito - Historically based fiction blending cultures with a low fantasy edge.

Aesthetic

Nausicaa of the Valley of the Wind - A low tech world after the fall of civilisation. Big beautiful bugs and strange mushroom forests abound amongst ancient ruins and islands of civilization. *Also:* Apocalyptic pulp Sci-Fi/Fantasy of the early/mid 20th century.

The Numenera RPG Setting - Science as magic. *Also:* The Shannara Series (Novels)

The Comics of Moebius - Vibrant worlds with a rich culture and strange, yet earthly, creatures.

Bronze Age Cultures of Africa, Mesopotamia, the Orient, and the Americas

Pinterest: <https://www.pinterest.com/arsenic7/mothlands-inspiration/>

SETTING ESSENTIALS

The Untamed Territories on Reprieve: A region of evergreen forests, mountains, streams, and hot springs spanning thousands of miles. It is relatively untouched by modern day civilizations. It lies between the empire of Tecaht'na and the vast plains of the East. Though it is spotted with settlements and trading posts, no one power has yet laid exclusive claim to its bounty.

The River-Wise were the first documented peoples to explore the territory, but word of rare goods and untapped resources quickly attracted people from the East and South.

The Twilight of Beacon: Beacon is a wild place. Nearly half the planet sees not a day of sunlight, thanks to the unique orbit of the world around both its twin and the sun. As such, Twilight exists in a region of near perpetual eclipse and is the only known area of the planet inhabitable by human life.

Twilight is lush and warm, covered in grey jungle and red brine. Occasionally the region is swept by storms sweeping in from parched lands but otherwise the skies are astoundingly clear.

One would do best not to venture too high, however, as the canopy is the domain of moths and their offspring. What's more, what little light shines here is harsh on the skin and eyes. The young translucent leaves of trees can filter out this harsh light but even in the month of reprieve, stargazing is a dangerous activity.

Peoples of The Twilight on Beacon

Fallen Leaf: The people of the village Life's Blood are one of the few peoples of **Beacon** who are not nomadic. They have made their home in the undergrowth of the jungles surrounding the lake-spring from which the village draws its sustenance and its name. Far below the canopy, they train in stealth and careful movement and survive by trapping and hunting the enormous arthropods that venture from the tree tops to the forest floor.

Moth's Blood Tribe: A fierce tribe of hunter/warriors who pride themselves on their courage. They revere the moth's as cunning predators. They also have a reputation for being more territorial and violent than other tribes on **Beacon**.

The Roach: An oddity of a tribe. Its members live largely alone in small family-based cells of two to three members. They regularly converge to share information and supplies with fellow Roach, agree on a destination and time, and separate again. They often encroach on the territory of other tribes but their small cells make them simultaneously less threatening and more difficult to snub out.

The Keepers: Though they are most commonly known by other, more derogatory names, this taboo bending tribe refer to themselves as The Keepers in reference to their reverence of the holy fire. Fire is forsaken amongst the tribes of the twilight unless carefully controlled and respected. The Keepers push this superstition to its limit, building great bonfires during the month of reprieve and creating secret forges in which they craft metal implements and weapons.

Peoples of The Known World on Reprieve

The Old Houses: Long ago, ruling from hilltop fortresses, five families split the most fertile land of the peninsula between them, forming an alliances held together by iron, auger, and tradition.

Much of that iron, last mined a hundred years ago, has rusted now and only two of the houses remain. Having consolidated their power, **House Yiojino** and **House Micretia** watch the world pass around them from their islands of security.

Tecahtan Peoples: Originating from an empire spanning much of the southern portion of the continent are a diverse people unified under a loose theocracy called **The Spirited Way**. Their capital is **Tecaht'na** and they are the Tecahtan peoples.

Religious Tecahtans tend to bind their hair with beads of quartz, turquoise, and jade and are respected as great weavers, clayworkers, and artisans. It is also not uncommon for the Tecahtan citizenry to openly display **Auger** with pride, as they believe these objects to harbor the benevolent spirits of animals.

The River-Wise: A disparate group of explorers, River-Wise have mastered the art of shipcraft. Their river boats connect the cultures of the region and allow for the trade of goods and information between the untamed world and the old nations. Their philosophers, astronomers, and engineers are among the most learned in the world.

River-Wise value cultural exchange up to and including cross-cultural marriage. Their clothing is a milieu of elevated styles from throughout the peninsula. That said, they tend to share a heritage that can be traced back to their origins in the shallow seas of the far South.

The Scattered Peoples: All along the shallow seas are small communities consisting of one to three families. They find their purchase on the edges of tropical forests and seaside groves, comfortable in the abundance around them but weary of the seasons slow march towards the month of moths.

Hospitality is an important value in their culture, as travel is a tedious affair and shelter is an incredible boon on a long journey across the wilderness. Their astronomers, **The Starwatchers**, are among the most studious in the world and it is their knowledge upon which the River-Wise built their ships and sailed out into the world's great streams and water flows.

The Witchwood Clans: Wandering in from the East, The Witchwood are a collection of clans pushed to the edges of their homelands by war and disease. They are not a unified people, but do share a common history and culture.

Ridgecrest, Featherback, and Cloudseeker are the most prominent amongst those clans that remain in the Plains. Many more have disbanded, making the trek South, to the Eastern coasts of the Tecahtan Empire, or West, through the mountain passes of Windhome.

Their common name stems from their reverence and mastery of a collection of **Auger** passed down from generation to generation and bearing a resemblance to carved wooden figures. These objects are revered as harboring the spirits of their ancestors.

DISAMBIGUATION

Auger: An object descended from an ancient civilization of inventors and sorcerers. Their secrets survive almost exclusively in the form of auger, which take on many shapes and forms. They are understood to hold mystical secrets, both dangerous and enticing. Many superstitions exist regarding their origin and nature.

Auger are commonly passed down from generation to generation as heirlooms, though some may be traded away out of desperation or disuse. Activating them is often a puzzle and even within families the secrets of their usage can sometimes be lost for a generation or more.

It is believed by some that auger draw power from the individuals who wield them, burrowing down to some mysterious, possibly spiritual, reserve.

A/so: The artisan's drilling tool, for which these rare objects are named.

Demon: A creation of the predecessors possessed of supernatural intelligence. Such beings may have the appearance of spirits, sculpted metal, or even inanimate objects. They are dangerous to cross or to bargain with.

Moth: Apex predators of Beacon and Reprieve. Consisting of many species but most, if not all, possess scaled wings and imposing physical attributes. Possessed of the ability to traverse the space between worlds.

A/so: Various scaly winged insect found on Reprieve. The people of Mothlands see this creature as a bad omen and many legends exist regarding a connection to their more dangerous namesake

The Predecessors: The ancient peoples whose ruins can be found beneath the soil and thick foliage of Beacon and Reprieve. Each culture has its own relationship to the predecessors, as well as unique names that reflect their attitudes toward those who engineered the now ancient structures and devices unearthed by the adventurous.

In general, the people of Beacon refer to this civilization in tragic or even negative terms. Perhaps the most evocative and emblematic name being that of the Moth's Blood Tribe who commonly refer to them as The Mistaken.

On Reprieve, modern cultures have spent a great deal of time and effort attempting to understand predecessor constructs and the spirit world and so their terms have a more reverent tone. The River Wise refer to them as The Navigators, alluding to the fact that their ruins can be found even in the most obscure and distant regions of the world.

Spirit: The memories of the predecessors survive in their works; contained in an invisible spirit world accessible to those with the will and desire to see it. The spirit world is a frightening and confusing place full of boundless information and incredible dangers. Only sorcerers know how to harness its full potential to effect change in the world.

Sorcerer: An individual possessing a rudimentary knowledge of, and affinity to, auger: objects exhibiting unexplained mystical power. Many sorcerers become obsessed with acquiring more and more varied auger, but that obsession is a dangerous one. There are other names for those who wield forces beyond the ordinary, but all have been touched by the predecessors' technology in some way.