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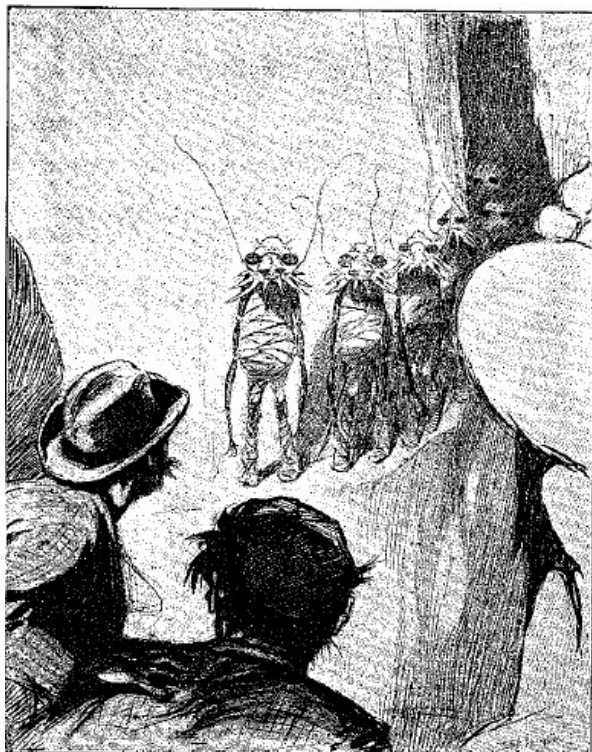
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## Of Selenites and dark holes . . .

Posted on July 14th, 2010 by earleholland



“ 'INSECTS,' MURMURED CAVOR, 'INSECTS !' ”

*“My chest hit something hard, and I found myself with my chin on the edge of an unfathomable abyss that had suddenly opened beneath me, my hand extended stiffly into the void. The whole of that flat circular area was no more than a gigantic lid that was now sliding sideways from off the pit it had covered into a slot prepared for it.”*

Thus, Dr. Cavor and his companion Mr. Bedford discovered an entrance on the lunar surface leading down into the world of Selenites, the man-sized insect creatures inhabiting the Moon in [Herbert George Well's](#) classic tale, *The First Men In The Moon*.

That scene burst into memory recently when the [National Aeronautics and Space Administration](#) released a [crystal-clear image](#) showing a subterranean entrance on the far side of the moon. There on the pock-marked terrain is an oblong-shaped hole, mostly in shadows but stretching more than 400 feet in diameter.

What's startling about the image, however, is that sunlight reached through the hole to the floor below and shows the rocky detail of the chasm floor. Scientists believe the feature is a natural skylight formed when the ceiling gave way in an ancient lava tube below the Moon's surface, exposing the

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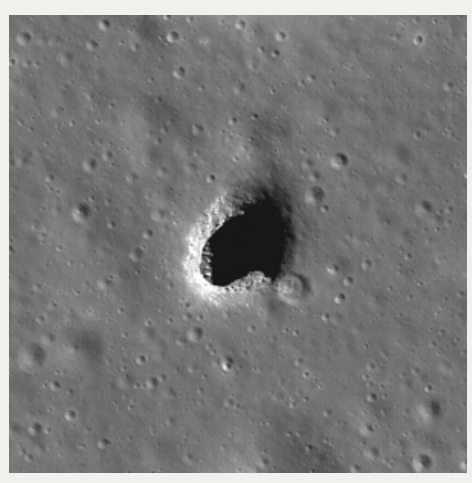
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- \* [November 2009](#)
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- \* [May 2009](#)

natural passageways normally hidden.

The portal lies in the *Mare Ingenii*, the “Sea of Cleverness,” on the Moon’s far side that is never in direct view of the Earth. It was taken by a camera aboard the Japanese *SELENE/Kaguya* spacecraft before it crashed onto the lunar surface.



This isn’t the first such “skylight” believed found on our closest celestial neighbor. Another was spotted half a world away, on the “near side,” in the region of the *Marius Hills* and revealed by a lunar-orbiting NASA satellite.

While geologists may revel at finding odd features like this on the Moon, NASA scientists have suggested that they might serve as portals to safe havens beneath the lunar surface, areas where astronauts might one day establish stations where they would be safe from cosmic rays, other radiation of perhaps even meteor impacts. The darkened “Mare” features, or “seas,” have long been known to actually be vast areas where molten rock had spread across the landscape, altering the appearance of the surface.

It isn’t hard to imagine what Wells’ characters would have felt finding the Selenites’ vast underground network. The strangeness of the Moon itself would be amplified by a second “world” beneath the surface.

Growing up in the South, in a region riddled with century-old mine tunnels, it wasn’t all that unusual to come upon similar features while hiking through woods, areas where ceilings had succumbed and the ground sank to reveal long-hidden passageways. And when venturing into such dank hallways, with the light failing behind you, the idea that Wells’ Selenites, or some other strangeness lay ahead, just beyond the limit of one’s eyesight, was easy to imagine.

The wonder of science fiction is that much of it, eventually, becomes fact. *Earle Holland*

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[Dave Mosher](#) // Jul 22, 2010 at 10:14 am

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Really enjoyed this portrayal.

I also thought of H.G. Wells, but my mind led me to imagine a sort of pre-made moonbase. You know, instead of compacting all the regolith with machines to block out radiation, you just drop a ladder, crawl into a lava tube and set up shop there.

[Rolf](#) // Aug 2, 2010 at 8:01 am

Many thanks for this fine article. Fiction and fantasy will remain as the biggest driving forces – even in sciences!  
Many greetings from Germany!

[Mike](#) // Aug 13, 2010 at 12:32 pm

Concept and fantasy are awesome! I'm agree with Dave "you just drop a ladder, crawl into a lava tube and set up shop there."

Best Regards,  
Webston.net

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