
Meteor Man – A Fearsome Monster For Lunar Colonists

It is human nature to fear threats to human existence. The first colonists will face a variety of threats to their well-being, but one of the most unpredictable threats will be meteor showers. Before astronauts establish a permanent base on the moon, they will know exactly what kind of atmosphere is present. Scientists will map possible water sources, and the first dwellings will be carefully positioned and planned out. Astrologists may be able to provide some warning about approaching meteors, but they will not be able to predict all meteor showers, nor exactly where the space rocks will crash. This uncontrollable factor in the moon colony effort will create the first lunar monster: Meteor Man. While the moon may not have any natural predators to worry about, the threat of meteors is a real concern for the first moon colonists. Meteor Man will be the first lunar monster created by colonists because of the low lunar atmosphere, the damage that meteors could cause, and the long nights during which it will be impossible to see the rocks falling from the sky.

The low atmosphere on the moon means meteor strikes are much more common, than on Earth, which makes the danger of strikes a real fear for lunar colonists. Most meteors burn up in the thick atmosphere of the Earth, so only the largest make it to the ground. However, when these meteors do make it to Earth, they can cause extensive damage. Reporter Paul Baldwin describes how a meteor larger than a house entered the atmosphere above Russia and exploded with the power of over 30 nuclear explosions. It was only due to the angle and speed of the meteor that it did not strike land, but it still damaged thousands of buildings and forced 1,500 people to seek medical treatment. Imagine the damage meteors could cause when more of them reach the surface without burning up. Even if colonists build their homes underground or in lava tubes to shield against radiation and small meteors, as described by Mike Wall, there would be little protection against the large strikes. In addition, a strike that missed the colony could still cause vibrations that threaten the stability of the lava tubes. After the careful preparation of the moon colony, lunar explorers would fear for their lives as well as the destruction of all their hard work. Embodying this fear as a goliath creature made of the very rocks that threaten the colonists' existence is a natural step for the colonists to process their fears. The low atmosphere means meteors will be a constant threat, and this ever-present danger will give rise to Meteor Man.

Meteors make huge physical impacts on the moon, and this seeing this damage will make the colonists imagine Meteor Man as a huge and powerful monster. When colonists see these large craters, they will fear what could happen if something with that power struck their home base, or hit them while they were out in a moon rover. Such fears will inspire the colonists to think that their colony will be targeted, giving rise to the idea of an intelligent creature capable of pounding the moon's surface as he pleases, or even controlling the strike locations of the meteors falling from space. The moon's surface is riddled with craters from meteor impacts, some as large as half of the United States, as noted by Bill Steigerwald of the NASA Goddard Space Flight Center. Meteors break up on impact, and sometimes even vaporize, so seeing the impact of the craters without seeing the rocks that made the holes might lead colonists to believe in a giant monster that punches or stomps the holes in the ground and leaves without a trace. The damage that meteors cause without evidence of the large rocks that cause the damage will encourage colonists to see the craters as evidence of Meteor Man.

In addition to the physical evidence for Meteor Man, the long nights will provide time for him to cause damage on the moon. Peter Ray Allison explains that lunar days and nights will last 14 Earth days each. The long cover of darkness will offer plenty of time for Meteor Man to leave his prints without anyone seeing. The only evidence of his presence will be the new holes in the ground when the day finally comes. Not only do the long nights provide a cover for the monster, but they will also cause psychological stress to the colonists that may intensify their fears and break down their perception of reality. While the first colonists will undoubtedly be smart and brave, the stress of living on the moon in long periods of darkness may cause them to question everything they know about science. Colonists will certainly not sleep for 14 Earth-days at a time, so they will have to work in the dark. It is harder to keep a body's rest cycles regular in this situation, as Michael Price explains in the context of night shift workers. According to Price, if a person's circadian rhythms are not balanced, that person's work performance and mood will decrease. The interval of 14 days is not enough to totally adjust to full darkness or full sunlight, so the colonists will constantly be adjusting their bodies' habits. The additional stress on their bodies caused by the long days and nights will contribute to the creation of a monster that haunts their nights, threatening their existence and leaving their land pocket marked with holes. The stress of long days and nights will hasten the development of Meteor Man, who rules over his domain by hurdling rocks under the cover of darkness.

Scientists are aware of many of the challenges that will face the first moon colonists, but there is no impenetrable defense against meteor strikes. The lighter atmosphere on the moon means meteors crash into the surface harder and more often than they do on Earth. The fear of violent impacts will be embodied in Meteor Man, and the mystery surrounding Meteor Man will be increased by the long nights on the moon. As the colony grows, parents will use stories of Meteor Man to explain the new craters to their children, and may use threats of Meteor Man to warn children against exploring unsafe areas. The idea of a towering creature made of animated megaliths hurdling rocks at misbehaving kids will undoubtedly help keep children from misbehaving. Meteor Man will be a fearsome monster for lunar colonists to build into their new culture.