

The Night of Stars - An Arcadian Celebration

A closer look at one of the biggest holidays in the world of Arcadia.

By Eli Allan, 2021

The Night of Stars is a fictional holiday in the world of Station Arcadia that takes place in late December. We wanted to create a holiday that didn't just feel like Christmas LITE and stayed true to the various cultures in the world of Arcadia. For instance, it wouldn't make sense for workers in Hardizan to get an entire week off to celebrate, the way it might in the Gannon islands. This meant that, as with many things in the Station Arcadia podcast, we ended up splitting it into four different parts. Most of it didn't make it into the episode, but there's always another year!

But there are some things that stay the same with the Night of Stars no matter where in the world you're celebrating it.

The Night of Stars - Overview

Our tagline for the episode that featured this holiday was "**A celebration of light and love.**"

No matter what society you look at, the Night of Stars is about **celebrating light during the darkest time of the year**. It falls each year on the winter solstice - literally the darkest day of

all - and celebrations inevitably include a literal form of light.

The Light from the Night of Stars can also be a symbolic one. In the wintertime, especially in a deeply dystopian society, it's easy to feel pretty bummed out a lot of the time. That's where the Night of Stars comes in. It's a day to celebrate living and the things that make you happy. For most, that means celebrating the people that make your world a brighter place.

But how does this rather vague and metaphorical holiday translate into specific celebrations? Let's take a look.

Talsoria

Lights! Camera! Celebrate!

Talsoria rarely does anything quietly or calmly. Why would one of the biggest nights of the year be any different? They begin their celebrations mid-afternoon and don't wind down until dawn the following day!

Light

Talsoria takes the "light" aspect of the Night of Stars to the max!

- Everyone in each tall skyscraper picks a colour (some buildings coordinate, but otherwise it's at random) and changes the colour of their apartment's lights. The overall

effect - of all the tall buildings lit up with multicolour squares - is quite striking.

- **Light up clothing!** The fashion lines pull out all the stops (and raise their prices) to provide custom light-up clothing for the occasion. It tends to stop working a few weeks after the holiday.
- Here's a big one: **fireworks!** The illegal fireworks begin over a week before the day itself, but on the Night of Stars, the skies are constantly alight with bright, colourful explosions. Each city puts on several official displays, and there are thousands more amateur firework shows throughout the country. You may even have heard some in the background of Memorie's meet-up with faer friends!
- And, of course, the engine of it all, **the stars**. Talsoria's light pollution makes it impossible to view the real stars from anywhere but the most remote mountain... but why would you want to? The stars that Talsorian cities project in the sky are bigger, brighter, and feature lines between the constellations and everything. *May not be visible with bionic eyes or other vision-modification technology.

The Parade

Each city in Talsoria organizes a massive parade during the Night of Stars. There are floats celebrating everything under the stars. There are also a LOT of **free samples** and handouts being tossed into the crowd, so remember to **bring a bag!**

Along with the parade come **performers** of all kinds. Here's a tip: if you've always wanted to show off a skill (be it music, juggling, or pretty much any type of performance), what better time to show it off than the one night where no one can hear well enough to complain? With the limited street space available, many

performers bring or rent hoverboards or floating platforms and **do their act from above the crowd.**

Some neighborhoods construct **temporary walkways** in the air by putting collapsable bridges between balconies. This creates ample space for people to observe the festivities from afar and avoid the crowds.

A Day for Kids

The Night of Stars is the favourite day of the year for most young-uns in Talsoria, and for good reason. Kids are the face of the future, a spark of hope, and they are celebrated on the Night of Stars. Traditionally, **kids are given free rein to roam the city** on the Night of Stars (often equipped with enough tracking devices for a small army to soothe anxious parents). They spend time with their friends, get underfoot, and are **given candy** by adults at every turn.

Seems overwhelming? You're not alone. Talsorians with sensory issues live difficult lives at the best of times, and the Night of Stars ramps it up several notches. There are plenty of Talsorians who **chose not to participate** in the festivities and who will instead hole up in the quietest room they can find to try and avoid the lights & noise. While some people choose not to celebrate at all, plenty of Talsorians will also hold their own more **low-key celebrations** over video calls, text chats, VR, and in video games.

Hardizan

Most Hardizan citizens are granted a half-day off from work to celebrate the holiday. Some even get the full day! With all this time to spare, most chose to spend time with their family and/or friends.

Family Time

Most people in Hardizan live in the same city as their extended family and often in the same house as their immediate relatives, but the grueling pace of work doesn't always make for a lot of quality time. The Night of Stars is **a time to come together and reconnect with your relatives**. Generally, whoever has the biggest house is pressured into hosting, and even distant relations are invited.

The Night of Stars can be a wonderful time to catch up, play games, and eat good food with the people you love. It can also, depending on the family, be highly stressful, hectic, and confrontational. The societal pressure to spend time with your family, even if you hate each other, can result in some less than ideal situations.

Feasts

Even the poorest of Hardizanians do their best to save a bit of extra food in the weeks leading up to the solstice and spend the afternoon preparing delicious meals for the whole family. When relations arrive, they will often bring a dish or two of their

own, and the resulting feast will leave everyone feeling stuffed and sleepy by the end of the night.

Everyone brings out the table cloths, sets up candles, and does their best to make the evening special for all involved.

Traditional dishes vary by region and class but include:

- Savory fish pies
- Roasted vegetables (commonly brussel sprouts, carrots, potato)
- Stir-fry
- Casserole
- Cabbage rolls

And for dessert:

- Upside-Down Cake, with canned fruit
- Rice pudding

Potlucks

But what about those citizens who don't have a family or aren't on good terms with theirs but still want to celebrate? Though not officially endorsed by city governments, there are a multitude of **open-invitation potluck events** throughout the country.

Some friend groups may decide to celebrate together, but it's more likely that most individuals in a friend group will be celebrating with their families, leaving the odd person stranded. This odd one out might choose to attend (or even organize) one of these potlucks.

Most Night of Stars potlucks are organized **by and for working-class citizens**, and they vary immensely in terms of size, level-of-sketchiness, and quality of food. A potluck might be held in a generous individual's house, an abandoned warehouse floor, a rented community building, a farmhouse, or any other location that can accommodate a fair amount of people.

Individuals are **expected to bring at least one dish to share** (sadly, the potlucks do not serve double duty as a resource for those in need of a meal), and it is common courtesy to list the ingredients.

But what if I'm Rich?

Upper-class Hardizan citizens would never attend a potluck, of course. But if you, an upstanding wealthy individual, should find yourself without a family dinner to attend on the Night of Stars, you may consider heading to a **soirée**. It's pretty much the same thing.

The Gannon Islands

Why celebrate for a day when you could celebrate for a week?

In the more laid-back Gannon Islands, one day just isn't enough time to spend with friends and family. The Night of Stars itself is the **final day/night of a week-long holiday**.

Reconnection

As in Hardizan, people in the Gannon Islands place a lot of emphasis on **connection and quality time** over the holiday. Unlike in Hardizan, the focus is not purely on blood relations. Many travel to spend time with their families on the Night of Stars, but plenty more chose to organize outings and events with friends. The idea is not only to spend time with your loved ones but to **reconnect with people you haven't seen in a while** or haven't spoken to as much as you would have liked over the past year.

In the spirit of reconnection, Gannon Island residents often **send cards** to their friends, family, and acquaintances, especially those they may not keep in close contact with. These often contain life updates and family pictures, with a healthy smattering of gossip mixed in.

Community Gathering

During the week leading up to the Night of Stars, winter markets pop into existence throughout most cities and towns in the Gannon Islands. These often include:

- **Pop-up shops**
- **Street vendors** selling warm food and drink
- **Visual art displays.** These are sometimes for sale, sometimes commissioned by the city or a member of the public, and sometimes just for fun.
- **Live music** in the form of busking. The buskers range from children to amateurs to professional musicians. Depending on the market, they may be able to roll up and play, or there may be a signup timesheet.

- **Places for kids to play** while adults shop and socialize, where they'll be watched over by volunteers. Often times this is just an ordinary playground that's been decked out with some coloured lights.

Food & Drink

Food varies immensely between the different Gannon islands, but in general, people turn to **comfort food** on the Night of Stars. This often means warm food, especially on the colder islands, and warm beverages such as hot chocolate, mulled wine, and apple cider. **Candy, sweets, and desserts** are also abundant during the holiday week.

The Solstice

On the solstice, the Night of Stars itself, people tend to have their own little rituals and customs. Some people play board games, some people attend parties, some play music together, some eat home-cooked meals, and some opt to take the evening off of cooking and reheat a frozen dish. But the most common tradition is to **watch the sun set mid-afternoon, then stay up all night to watch the sun rise the next morning**. This, staying awake through the longest night, symbolizes the resilience of the Gannon island people. It symbolizes their faith that even in the darkest times, there is always hope. The sun will rise again.

The Empire

The guns quiet, and the bombs cease. In the Empire on the Night of Stars, the citizens fill the silence with singing.

Gift Giving

It's traditional in the Empire to give a gift or two to friends and family, **to show that you value them**. Giving someone a gift for the first time (or omitting their gift for the first time) can be a big deal to some - it shows that your level of affection towards them has changed.

Fires

The quintessential Night of Stars experience in the Empire is to **gather around a firepit and sing campfire songs** well into the night. Cities will set up massive bonfires in central locations for people to gather, and high-ranking military officers will lead the singing.

The **city-organized bonfires** (such as the one Alice leaves to attend with her family) always draw good crowds, but many chose to set up their own fires with their family, friends, or coworkers.

The Fire Song is one of the most well-known campfire tunes and one of the most heartfelt, and is sung with only minor variations throughout the entire Empire. However, it is **far from the only song** sung on the Night of Stars - there are hundreds more, many of which are localized to certain countries or regions. They're often reasonably simple - generally repeating melodies, rounds, or call and response songs.

Many Night of Stars songs in the Empire are simply soldier's songs, remembered from years of service.

Alcohol

Alcohol plays a large part in the Night of Stars celebrations in Westerfield, Surrigen, Bremrig, and a minor role in Camnesse. Clercourt, on the other hand, increases their efforts to crack down on alcohol sales and consumption and jails/fines an unfortunate number of citizens each solstice.

Big parties

Though not a ubiquitous tradition, it's worth noting that the **gigantic parties in the Empire country of Bremrig** on the Night of Stars are quite something. A Bremrig rave is perhaps not the safest way to spend your Night of Stars in the Empire, but it's a great way to guarantee you'll wake up with a massive headache.

Ceasefire

With the occasional rare exception, the Night of Stars results in a **country-wide ceasefire**. Troops remain in position, bombs stay poised for retaliation, and the cities are as well guarded as ever. No one wants to give the enemy an opening or advantage. But with neither side willing to initiate combat on the holiday, the air does go quiet. Campfire smoke can be seen rising from trenches all down the line, and when the two sides are close enough to hear each other, they will sometimes - not always, but sometimes - **sing in unison**.

And that's the Night of Stars! As you can see, we only scratched the surface of this holiday in episode 17. But there's always another episode!