

NIGHTFALL

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I have never been a science fiction or Asimov fan, but today I became aware that his short story [*Nightfall*](#) was voted the greatest science fiction story of all time. So I decided to read it. I immediately disliked the narration and dialogue, finding it sappy, but pushed on, trying to give it a fair read. But very soon I could see that even the science didn't add up. This takes place on a planet somewhere surrounded by six suns, and at the time of our story only Beta is in the sky. It is about to be eclipsed by a large Moon that no one knew about before, seven times bigger to the eye than Beta. This will throw the planet into total darkness for the first time for any of those alive. This happens only every 2049 years. The people have never experienced darkness and never seen stars, though Cultists have told them they exist. According to the same prophecies, seeing these stars in the darkness will cause madness.

Do you see the big hole in this story? If there are six suns around this planet, with five currently out of sight of this part of the planet, those five should be lighting up the big moon by reflection, just as our Moon is lit at night. So while this moon is eclipsing Beta, the other five would be lighting it up with their combined light. Meaning, **there would be no darkness created.** That eclipsing moon would be brilliantly bright from the other five suns, something like $5 \times 7 = 35$ times as bright as our Moon at night.

Am I really the only one that has ever noticed this? I searched the question online and found a few other people questioning the six sun system, but none of them mentioned the moon and reflected light.

There is only one way this would work, and that is if the planet is eclipsing all five suns from lighting up that moon. In which case all six suns would be in a line, with Beta in front and the other five behind. If the smaller suns are orbiting the larger one, that would either NEVER happen, or it would happen only on *very* large time scales. It would certainly not happen every 2049 years.

And even if it happened every few million years, it would only last a few minutes or hours, not long enough to cause any physical or mental stress. Besides, the whole conceit rests upon the assumption these six-sun people would have never experienced darkness, except in some circus ride. Which is ridiculous. You can experience darkness during the day quite easily, not just in caves but in any house. That is admitted in the story when they shut the drapes. If you want it even darker, shut your eyes and put your palms over your eyes. Pitch black. Are we supposed to believe these people never sleep or that they sleep outside with their eyes open? The whole thing is an embarrassing absurdity. I couldn't even finish it. Just awful from the first sentence, getting worse every page.