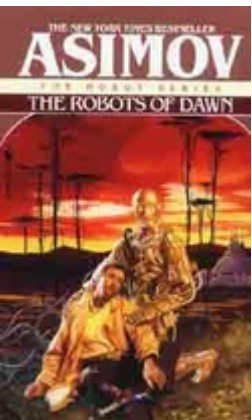


The Robots of Dawn

Contributors to Asimov



Cover for Asimov's The Robots of Dawn

The Robots of Dawn is a "whodunit" science-fiction novel by [Isaac Asimov](#), first published in 1983. It is part of Asimov's [Robot series](#).



This article, **The Robots of Dawn**, contains spoilers. **Be forewarned, plot and/or ending details follow.** Asimov says *you* decide.

Plot[]

The book opens in the year 4724 with [Elijah Baley](#) on [Earth](#), training with his son and others to tolerate the outside, in spite of their socially-ingrained agoraphobia. Suddenly, a robot approaches his and states he is needed back at the police department. An urgent matter has come up, involving the [Spacer](#) world of [Aurora](#).

Upon returning, Baley learns that Aurora has requested through diplomatic channels that he go to the planet. He is told that [Jander Panell](#), a humaniform robot identical to [R. Daneel Olivaw](#) has been unexpectedly shut down via a mental block - "roboticide" as Baley terms it.

The robot's inventor, [Han Fastolfe](#), has been implicated. Fastolfe, whom we last met in *[The Caves of Steel](#)*, is the best robotacist on Aurora. He has admitted that he is the only person with the skill to have done it, although he denies doing it. However, since even he can offer no alternative except an extremely improbable random glitch, matters don't look good for him. Fastolfe is also a prominent member of the Auroran political faction that favors Earth. Implication in the crime threatens his political career. Therefore, it is politically expedient that he be exonerated.

While en route to Aurora, Baley once again is partnered with [R. Daneel Olivaw](#), as well as [R. Giskard](#), another of Fastolfe's robots.

On Aurora, he sets out to solve the crime. He interviews [Gladia Delmarre](#) (whom we last saw in *[The Naked Sun](#)*; the Aurorans have given her the surname "[Solaria](#)" instead, although she prefers using no last name at all). Jander was a member of her staff before he was shut down. It turns out that Gladia had a secret, sexual relationship with Jander. She even considered him to be her husband.

Baley later interviews Fastolfe's estranged daughter, [Vasilia Fastolfe](#) (although she disdains the use of her given name and prefers to use "Aliena" instead, and generally, like Gladia, prefers to use none at all). Vasilia claims that her father is a monster, and would do anything necessary to advance his theories of a science that can predict the future - [Psychohistory](#). This includes the murder of Jander, if it would help him observe Gladia's responses. Vasilia also makes clear her desire to own Giskard, who was her nanny.

Following that, Baley interviews Santirix Gremionis. Gremionis is an Auroran who is attracted to both Gladia and Vasilia. With each of them, he offered to have sex after they had rejected him, not an appropriate action by Auroran standards. Gremionis denies involvement in the murder, and says he has reported Baley to the Chairman (the executive of the Auroran Government) for slander. However, it does seem that Vasilia subtly manipulated him into falling in love with Gladia, which he only realizes after Baley asks him about it directly.

Next, Baley interviews [Kelden Amadiro](#). Amadiro is Fastolfe's chief political rival and head of the Robotics Institute. He explains the Institute's political motivations -- that they wish to see Aurora and only Aurora colonize the rest of the Galaxy. Humaniform robots are an integral part of their planned colonization, since Spacers are ill suited to the rigors of untamed worlds or even worlds tamed by regular robots. However, Fastolfe is the only one who can construct them and refuses to cooperate under any conditions. The Institute has been attempting, futilely, to construct one. Amadiro warns Baley that all the accusations have been brought to the Chairman's attention, and the next day, a meeting on the subject is scheduled.

On the way back to the Fastolfe residence from the interview with Amadiro, Baley's airfoil (a private hovercraft) is forced to stop. The air compressor has been sabotaged. Baley, suspecting that it was done by Amadiro in an attempt to kidnap Daneel, orders him and Giskard to flee the car. A few minutes later, a large group of robots arrive and interrogate Baley. Baley tells them that he ordered Daneel back to the Robotics Institute, and they leave. Baley flees the car into the thunderstorm outside. His agoraphobia gets the best of him, and he falls unconscious.

He awakes in Gladia's home. He is told that they had stopped not far from her house. Daneel and Giskard fled there and quickly formed a rescue party which recovered Baley not long after he passed out.

The next morning, Giskard explains to Baley the political tradition on Aurora. Ever since a bitter dispute in the Legislature had almost led the planet to a civil war, there has been a general effort to avoid another such dispute. All debates are settled before voting, and the final vote is one with an overwhelming majority on one side. As such, while the Chairman of the Legislature only has minimal powers on paper, in reality his power is significant, since he is the one entrusted with deciding which way the votes go. So long as he is competent and utterly objective in his judgement, there is virtually zero chance to raise any significant number of voices against the Chairman's recommendation.

Baley then goes to the prearranged meeting. Present at the meeting are the Chairman, Baley, Fastolfe, and Amadiro. As the Chairman states, the question of Jander's deactivation is secondary (a mere civil court matter, or not even that, since Fastolfe is unlikely to be punished for ruining his own property). The matter of Baley's behavior doesn't concern him either. He wants to put a stop to the disputes about galactic colonization. However, neither side is willing to concede on the question of Earth's colonization rights, which means either Amadiro or Fastolfe will have to give in.

When asked whether he made any progress in his investigation, Baley recounts his experience the previous night. As he states, the breakdown was due to sabotage on Amadiro's orders. With Fastolfe refusing to cooperate, Amadiro had only one

way to obtain data about humaniform robots - thoroughly studying Daneel, effectively reverse engineering him given enough time along with the proper questions and tests. By having the car break down and Baley disabled due to the storm, Amadiro would have had a legitimate reason to have Daneel at the Institute, unsupervised.

The picture offered by Baley is consistent, but without proper evidence, there is no hope it will stand against the word of Amadiro, a prominent Auroran citizen. However, Baley then confronts Amadiro with a question. During Baley's interview with him, Amadiro referred to Jander as [Gladia](#)'s husband. How could he have known it? While it was easy to guess they were lovers (with the Auroran morals, such a relationship is only unusual to the extent that suitable robots are unusual), there is no way Amadiro could have figured it out by himself; Auroran laws and customs only see marriage as a union with the potential for kids, so a robotic spouse is totally unthinkable. Moreover, Gladia never discussed any aspects of her and Jander's relationship with outsiders. Amadiro says he might have heard it from someone, but visibly attempts to avoid a direct answer. However, as Baley states, only one Auroran could have told Amadiro that; Jander.

Baley then gives the solution to the mystery. While Daneel was at the house of Dr. Fastolfe's, a skilled roboticist, and thus unavailable for analysis, Jander was at Gladia's, who wasn't nearly as skilled. Seeing the opportunity, Amadiro suggested to Vasilisa that she should redirect Gremionis' attention to Gladia. Since Gladia was born on Solaria, she liked walking, thus her dates with Gremionis normally took the form of walks several hours long. Whenever that happened, Amadiro took the opportunity to contact Jander via trimensional viewing (telepresence) and question him.

When Baley says this questioning might have been what disabled Jander, Amadiro snaps and blurts out his experiments were completely harmless. This, effectively, is an admission to the experiments themselves, and is sufficient to bring the Chairman to Fastolfe's side. Fortunately for Amadiro, Fastolfe is neither spiteful nor greedy. So long as Amadiro is willing to recognize the colonization rights of Earth, Fastolfe is willing to not only forget the incident, but even to share the secret of the humaniform robots with the Institute. Faced with the alternative of a full fledged investigation and a political battle he has no hope of winning, Amadiro is forced to accept. Thus, the case is closed in a most satisfactory manner.

Baley, however, secretly has another suspect in mind. During his investigation, he had noticed that Giskard many times had acted as if he had knowledge of what others were thinking. He confronts Giskard, who admits it. Vasilisa unknowingly gave Giskard this ability during childhood experiments. Using knowledge derived from Han Fastolfe's mind, Giskard shut down Jander. This was to thwart Amadiro's attempt to build humaniform robots, and also bring Baley to Aurora.

Giskard's has no desire to let his abilities become public knowledge, and he puts a block in Baley's mind that prevents him from revealing the secret.