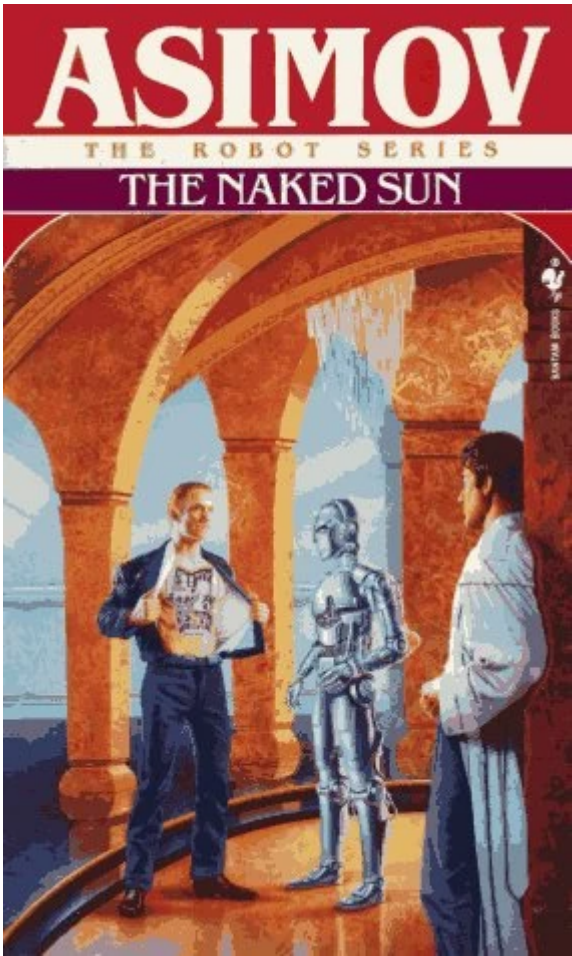


The Naked Sun

Contributors to Asimov



The Naked Sun is a science-fiction novel by [Isaac Asimov](#), the second in his [Robot series](#). Like its predecessor, [The Caves of Steel](#), it is also a whodunit story. The book was first published in 1957 after being serialized in *Astounding Science Fiction* from October to December 1956.



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

Summary[]

It is the year 4722. Rikaine Delmarre, a prominent "fetologist" (fetal scientist, responsible for the operation of the planetary birthing center reminiscent of those described in Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World*) of [Solaria](#) (a planet politically hostile to [Earth](#)), is murdered. [Elijah Baley](#) is called in to investigate, at the request of the Solarian government. He is again partnered with [R. Daneel Olivaw](#). Before departing Earth, he is asked by Earth's government to assess the Solarian society for weaknesses.

The book focuses on the unusual traditions and culture of Solarian society. The planet has a rigidly controlled population,

and robots outnumber humans twenty-thousand to one. People are strictly taught from birth to despise personal contact. They live on huge estates, either alone or with their spouse only. Communication is done via holographic telepresence (*viewing*, as opposed to *seeing*)

Ultimately, we find out that neighbor and fellow roboticist [Jothan Leebig](#) was working on a way of subverting the robots' inability to kill humans. This was achieved by understanding a missing word in the [Three Laws Of Robotics](#); "knowingly". He used this knowledge to cause the death of Rikaine at the hands of his wife [Gladia](#), because Rikaine was opposed to his plans, while Gladia invoked in him base desires which he despised. Later on, he also manages to poison the "Police investigator" (Until this murder, there had been no need for police on Solaria) using a pair of robots.

The key to this technique is that a robot cannot knowingly kill or knowingly allow a human to come to harm. But if the robot does not know that their actions will cause harm, then they will not be stopped by the Laws.

The future implication of this was pointed out by Elijah, that it can be extended to the point at which robots could be used to fight wars (In the Asimov universe, this would be unthinkable, given the Three Laws).

Leebig kills himself before he can be taken into custody, due to a very Solarian fear of human contact. The irony is that the "human" he was afraid of, was Daneel, a robot.

Despite knowledge of her guilt, Baley never discloses Gladia's role in the murder -- in part because they have established an unfulfilled romantic relationship. He manages to have her sent to the Spacer capital planet of [Aurora](#), where she can further her growth as a human being, something she could never do on Solaria.

After investigating the murder to a satisfactory conclusion, Baley returns to Earth a hero. The information he brings back is invaluable to the government, which while predicting the downfall of [Spacer](#) societies; the similarities between the nature of Solarian society and Earth Society in their closed natures suggested a fundamental flaw in the Terran society.

A more thorough description of the after-effects can be found in the sequel to the Naked Sun, [The Robots of Dawn](#). According to Elijah's boss in the sequel, the direct benefit to Earth involved a change in the conditions of some trade treaties.

Adaptations[1]

The novel was adapted for television as an episode of the British anthology series *Out of the Unknown*, with Baley being portrayed by Paul Maxwell and R. Daneel Olivaw by David Collings. Broadcast on BBC2 on 18 February 1969, the story was dramatized by Robert Muller and directed by Rudolph Cartier and the music and sound effects were created by Delia Derbyshire of the BBC Radiophonic Workshop.

Cast of BBC2 Adaptation:

- Paul Maxwell as Elijah Baley
- David Collings as R Daneel Olivaw
- Sheila Burrell as Under-Secretary Minnim
- Neil Hallett as Hannis Gruer
- Erik Chitty as Dr Altim Thool
- Ronald Leigh-Hunt as Corwin Attlebish
- John Robinson as Dr Anselmo Quemot
- Frederick Jaeger as Jothan Leebig
- Trisha Noble as Gladia Delmarre
- Paul Stassin as Rikaine Delmarre
- John Hicks as Bik
- David Cargil as Robot
- Raymond Hardy as Robot

- Roy Patrick as Robot
- John Scott Martin as Robot
- Gerald Taylor as Robot

The Naked Sun was one of six Asimov stories dramatised for the *Out of the Unknown* series. The others were *The Dead Past*, *Sucker Bait*, *Satisfaction Guaranteed*, *Reason* (as *The Prophet*) and *Liar!*

Although the episode was wiped by the BBC and no copy is known to exist, three of Delia Derbyshire's sound sequences were published on a BBC record of sound effects *Out of This World*, renamed as "Heat Haze", "Frozen Waste" and "Icy Peak".

In 1978, the novel was adapted in the Soviet Union under the name "The Last Alternative" (Последняя альтернатива). While using large portions of the text verbatim (or at least the text of the translation, which is of less than optimal quality), many parts are left out, creating numerous plot holes.

See Also[]

[List of Books by Isaac Asimov](#)