



Expert Witness: Dr. Hendrik van Loon

Honorable judges,

I am here today not as a friend to Madame Mercier or to Madame de Villon, but as a scientist. My work is in studying plants, herbs, and poisons, and I believe it is my duty to speak honestly about what the evidence in this case shows — and what it does not show.

The Crown claims that Madame de Villon was poisoned with arsenic. However, from what I have heard about her illness, the symptoms do not match what we normally see with arsenic poisoning. Arsenic usually causes severe stomach pain, vomiting, and shaking fits. But these signs were not clearly seen before Madame de Villon's death.

Also, I must point out that arsenic is not the only poison in nature. There are plants that can make a person very sick or even cause death, but their symptoms may look different and not be as easy to notice. One example is a plant called wolfsbane or monkshood. If this plant is brewed into tea or eaten by mistake, it can cause weakness, numbness, and heart failure. These signs can sometimes be confused with other illnesses.