



# TRIAL BY JURY - The Case of the Missing Virus

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### Virus

*[Scene: The courtroom is packed with reporters, their pens poised. The aspiring virologist sits nervously at the witness stand, fidgeting with a stack of lab notes. Across from him stands the sharp-dressed attorney, Mr. Rigorous, known for his devastating cross-examinations. Behind him, the jury watches intently]*

*Judge: [Banging down hard with the gavel] Order in the court! Mr. Rigorous, you may proceed with your cross-examination.*

Mr. Rigorous: [Grinning] Thank you, Your Honor. [He approaches the virologist.] **Dr. Specimen, you claim to have isolated a novel corona virus, is that correct?**

Dr. Specimen: [Squirming] Uh, yes, yes. We have a robust methodology –

Mr. Rigorous: [Interrupting] Robust, you say? [He winks at the jury.] Let's start at the beginning. Did you, at any point, isolate and purify this so-called "virus" directly from the fluids of a sick patient?

Dr. Specimen: [Squirming] Well, not exactly. You see, direct purification from fluids is unnecessary because –

Mr. Rigorous: [Leaning in, eyebrows raised] Unnecessary? I see. What you're telling us is that you skipped the part where you would actually prove there's a virus in the patient's mucus?

Dr. Specimen: [Flustered] We used a well-established protocol. Instead, we combined the patient's mucus with a monkey kidney cell culture, starved it, and –

Mr. Rigorous: [Interrupting with mock concern] Oh, so you took a patient's mucus, mixed it with cells from an entirely different species, starved those cells, poisoned them with toxic chemicals, antibiotics, and, what was it again, fetal bovine serum?

Dr. Specimen: Well, yes, that's standard –

Mr. Rigorous: [Grinning] “Standard.” So, after this biological disaster, when the cells inevitably broke down and died, you claimed that was evidence of a virus?

Dr. Specimen: [Getting defensive] Yes! The cytopathic effect is what –

Mr. Rigorous: [Smirking] Cytopathic effect! Ah, the mysterious code for “we poisoned cells and watched them die.” Tell me, Dr. Specimen, what proof do you have that the breakdown of these poisoned, malnourished cells was caused by a virus rather than, say... the toxic soup you created?

Dr. Specimen: [Stammering] Well, it's what the literature says and, um... everyone knows -

Mr. Rigorous: [Cutting in] “Everyone knows?” [He gestures dramatically to the jury.] I believe this court would prefer evidence over gossip, Doctor. Now, let's talk about the genome you supposedly created. You took this toxic brew, fed it into a machine, and then used some software to assemble genetic pieces, correct?

Dr. Specimen: Yes, yes, we sequenced the genome –

Mr. Rigorous: [Raising his voice] Ah, sequenced! You mean the software took fragments and tried to fit them together, like a biological jigsaw puzzle with missing pieces?

Dr. Specimen: [Defensively] It's highly sophisticated software!

Mr. Rigorous: [Sarcastically] Sophisticated? Doctor, if I fed a pile of shredded newspaper into that machine, would it also “reconstruct” War and Peace?

*[The jury chuckles. Dr. Specimen looks increasingly uncomfortable]*

Dr. Specimen: [Panicking] No, no! It's different. This is how we create the viral genome.

Mr. Rigorous: [Slyly] Create, you say? So, we're not finding a virus – we're creating one. Interesting choice of words, Doctor. Now, did you ever attempt to prove that this Frankenstein creation could naturally infect a healthy host?

Dr. Specimen: [Squirming] Well, no. We injected lab animals with the toxic cell culture, and when they got sick –

Mr. Rigorous: [Mocking] Sick from your toxic brew? And that, Doctor, is what you call “evidence” of transmission? You didn’t try something simple, like, I don’t know, letting the sick patient sneeze on a healthy person?

Dr. Specimen: [Flustered] Natural transmission doesn’t work well in the lab! It’s much cleaner to inject -

Mr. Rigorous: [Interrupting] Cleaner? Cleaner to torture animals with direct injections of this toxic sludge you call a “virus”? [He lets the words hang in the air.] Doctor, do you have any explanation for why you skipped natural transmission altogether, or is it because – oh, I don’t know – it never works?

*[The courtroom erupts with murmurs. Dr. Specimen is visibly sweating]*

Mr. Rigorous: [Turning to the jury] **Ladies and gentlemen, this man would have you believe that by starving cells, poisoning them, and injecting that toxic concoction into helpless animals, he’s “proving” a virus exists. All without ever isolating or purifying anything! Is this science... or sleight of hand?**

*[He paces dramatically, letting the tension build]*

Mr. Rigorous: One last thing, Doctor. After injecting animals with this “viral brew,” did you ever attempt to purify the “virus” again from those animals to confirm it was there?

Dr. Specimen: [Almost whispering] **No...**

Mr. Rigorous: [Leaning in] No? You never bothered to re-isolate the virus, because that would expose the fact it wasn’t there in the first place, wouldn’t it?

*[Dr. Specimen is completely defeated, sinking lower in his seat]*

Mr. Rigorous: [Addressing the jury] **Ladies and gentlemen, I rest my case. We are dealing with scientific fraud on a monumental scale, a fraud that never once demonstrated the existence of a virus through proper isolation or purification. It’s smoke and mirrors! I leave it in your capable hands to deliver justice.**

*[The jury nods thoughtfully as they leave the room to deliberate. After a brief pause, they return, their verdict ready]*

Judge: Members of the jury, have you reached a verdict?

**Jury Foreperson: [Standing] We have, Your Honor. We find the defendant... guilty of scientific fraud!**

Judge: [Solemnly] Very well. [He turns to Dr. Specimen] For crimes against logic and reason, and for misleading the public in the name of science, I hereby sentence you to... [He smirks] **a life term as the head of the National Institute of Infectious Arse-covering and Deception - NIIAD.**

*[The courtroom erupts in gasps and laughter as the viroLIEgist is dragged out, wailing in 'protest']*