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Sommario/riassunto	Mercury, arsenic, antimony, lead, and thallium can be lethal, as many a poisoner knew too well. Emsley explores the gruesome history of these elements and those who have succumbed to them in a fascinating narrative that weaves together stories of true crime, enduring historical mysteries, tragic accidents, and the science behind it all. The colourful cast includes ancient alchemists, kings, leaders, a pope, several great musicians, and a motley crew of murderers. Among the intriguing accounts is that of the 17th century poet Sir Thomas Overbury, who survived four attempts to poison him with mercury but died when given the poison in enema form - under whose direction remains uncertain.

Here, too, is detailed the celebrated case of Florence Maybrick, convicted of poisoning her violent husband James with arsenic, but widely believed at the time to be innocent. The question of her guilt is still disputed.
