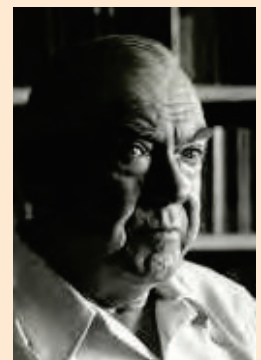


# The Case for the Defence



by **Graham Greene**

**The Case for the Defence is a short story written by novelist Graham Greene. The story takes place in England around the time it was written, in the late 1930s, when the death penalty for murder still existed. It was abolished in 1965.**



## Part 1

It was the strangest murder trial I have ever attended. They named it the Peckham murder in the headlines, although Northwood Street, where Mrs Parker was found murdered, was not actually in Peckham.

The prisoner was a well-built man with bloodshot eyes. An ugly man, one you wouldn't forget in a hurry – and that was an important point. The prosecution intended to call four witnesses who hadn't forgotten him and who had seen him hurrying away from the little red house in Northwood Street.



At two o'clock in the morning Mrs Salmon, who lived at 15 Northwood Street, had been unable to sleep. She heard a door shut and so she went to the window and saw Adams (the accused) on the steps of the victim's house. He had just come out and he was wearing gloves. Before he moved away, he had looked up – at her window.

Henry MacDougall, who had been driving home late, nearly ran over Adams at the corner of Northwood Street because he was walking in the middle of the road, looking dazed. And old Mr Wheeler, who lived next door to Mrs Parker, at number 12, and was woken up by a noise and got up and looked out of the window, just as Mrs Salmon had done, saw Adams's back and, as he turned, those bloodshot eyes. In Laurel Avenue he had been seen by yet another witness.

### **Glossary**

#### **trial**

/ˈtraɪəl/

the process where a judge listens to evidence and decides if sb is guilty or innocent

#### **Peckham**

/ˈpekəm/

an area in South London

#### **the prosecution**

/prɒsɪˈkjuːʃn/

the lawyer(s) who try to show that sb is guilty of a crime

## **Part 2**

‘I understand,’ the lawyer for the prosecution said, ‘that the defence intends to plead “mistaken identity”. Adams’s wife will tell you that he was with her at two in the morning on February 14. However, after you have heard the witnesses for the prosecution and examined carefully the features of the prisoner, I don’t think you will be prepared to admit the possibility of a mistake.’



Mrs Salmon was called again. She was the ideal witness, with her slight Scottish accent and her expression of honesty and kindness. There was no malice in her, and no sense of importance. She told them what she had seen and how she had rung the police station.

‘And do you see the man here in court?’

She looked straight at the big man in the dock, who stared hard at her with his bloodshot eyes, without emotion.

‘Yes,’ she said, ‘there he is.’

‘You are quite certain?’

She said simply, ‘I couldn’t be mistaken, sir.’

‘Thank you, Mrs Salmon.’

The lawyer for the defence began to cross-examine Mrs Salmon.

‘Now, Mrs Salmon, you must remember that a man’s life may depend on your evidence.’

‘I do remember it, sir.’

‘Is your eyesight good?’

‘I have never had to wear spectacles, sir.’

‘You’re 55 years old, aren’t you?’

‘56, sir.’

‘And the man you saw was on the other side of the road, is that right?’

‘Yes, sir, he was.’

‘And it was two o’clock in the morning. You must have remarkable eyes, Mrs Salmon?’

‘No, sir. There was moonlight, and when the man looked up, he had the lamplight on his face.’



‘And you have no doubt whatever that the man you saw is the prisoner?’

‘None whatever, sir. It isn’t a face you can easily forget.’

### **Glossary**

#### **the defence**

/dɪ'fens/

the lawyer(s) who try to show that sb is not guilty of a crime

#### **plead (guilty)**

/pli:d/

to say in court that you are guilty (or not guilty) of a crime

#### **court**

/kɔ:t/

the place where crimes are judged

#### **dock**

/dɒk/

the place in a court where a person who is accused sits or stands

#### **cross-examine**

/krɒs ɪg'zæmɪn/

to question a witness carefully about answers they have already given