

CHRISTMAS EVE

PICK OF THE DAY

Martin's Close BBC4, 10pm

Only 30 minutes long, this adaptation by Mark Gatiss of an MR James ghost story is a sublime example of something being small but perfectly formed.

A twisted tale with as sharp an edge as a butcher's blade, it is initially relayed to us by a narrator (Simon Williams) enjoying a glass of Madeira as he recounts the most macabre trial ever heard by 'Hanging' Judge Jeffreys.

In a 17th-century court, Jeffreys (Elliot Levey) and a jury consider a charge of murder. The accused is a young gentleman whose alleged victim was a simple country girl who had become



infatuated with him. But as the counsel for the Crown, Dolben (a mesmerising Peter Capaldi, above), explains, this was a case like no other, due to some deeply unsettling peculiarities...

Savour the delicious chill of James's ghoulish imagination, spiced up with a flourish of brilliant tiny touches, not least the unmistakably Bercow-esque manner of Levey's Jeffreys. ★★★★★

