

Spoiler alert #1: the sixth commandment is Thou shalt not kill



# The Sixth Commandment



BBC1, Monday  
17 & Tuesday  
18 July, 9pm



If you're beginning to wonder what the point of the whole true-crime drama genre is – apart from telling intriguing and macabre stories, of course – all you need to do is watch this new four-parter, which foregrounds and honours the lives of Peter Farquar and his neighbour Ann Moore-Martin, the victims in one of the most chilling cases of recent years. Written by the brilliant Sarah Phelps

(*Dublin Murders*, *A Very British Scandal*), and sensitively directed by Saul Dibb (*The Salisbury Poisonings*), it's about the human cost of the crimes it carefully dramatises.

## DEVASTATING CRIMES

The series begins by painting a vivid portrait of schoolteacher and devout Christian Peter Farquar (Timothy Spall), who lived in the village of Maids Moreton, Buckinghamshire. We meet him just as he's retiring from the school where he was an inspirational, much-loved

figure, but he is troubled by feelings of loneliness and guilt, driven by his own attitude to his sexuality. When he meets a student called Ben Field (Éanna Hardwicke), while teaching at a local college, Peter's life changes. Field carefully forges a close relationship with Farquar, manipulating him into believing the young man is falling in love with him. We also meet Peter's equally religious neighbour Ann Moore-Martin (Anne Reid), who also comes under Field's spell. What then happens is devastating and deeply affecting.

## THE VERDICT

Airing on Mondays and Tuesdays for the next two weeks, the series is one of the most admirable examples of true-crime drama we can think of. The always-great Spall is extraordinary as Peter, imbuing him with an immense dignity, while young Éanna Hardwicke is also magnificent in the tough role of murderer Field. Like many examples of this genre, it tells an inherently engrossing story, but this one packs a particularly powerful emotional punch.

BOYD HILTON

Spoiler alert #2: this guy breaks it