

The office of DR ALEX FARQUHAR at Fairfields, an experimental hospital for the criminally insane. The décor is modern, clinical – yet somehow disconcerting. A mirror on one wall. A window with no particular view.

On the desk: a telephone and a prominent alarm button. A Marks and Spencer bag that will be found to contain a box of tissues.

In the room: bookshelves full of books, a vase of sunflowers, an empty bottle of red wine. A medical screen. A wastepaper basket. A human skeleton on a stand. One door opens into a closet. Another into a bathroom. A third into the outside corridor.

Note: In MINDGAME, nothing exists until it is said to exist. It is whatever the protagonists make of it.

Sitting in a chair in front of the desk is MARK STYLER, a writer aged about fifty, casually dressed. Self-confident to the point of being smug. His face is pale and his haircut a little odd but otherwise he's the archetypal expert we've seen wheeled onto many a TV documentary. He has a worn leather briefcase.

He's been kept waiting. He looks at his watch for the ³tenth time. He gets up and examines the room. The skeleton. Looks at his watch again.

A pause.

He takes a tape recorder out of his pocket and switches it on.

STYLER: Recording. Six fifteen, Thursday July 22nd.

Pause.

First impressions of Fairfields. Note to myself...why that name? The view from Dr Farker's office. A nineteenth century manor house set in its own extensive grounds in this secluded corner of Suffolk...if indeed that most ill-defined of English counties could be said to have corners. The walls that surround the place may be predictable but the attendant ivy and – I think – Japanese wisteria are surely not. As I drive up the perfectly manicured lawns with rockery to the right and lily pond to the left, it is only the click of the maximum security metal doors

automatically closing behind me and the synchronised whirr of a dozen closed circuit TV cameras turning to follow me that remind me that I am not a guest at some exclusive Home Counties health resort but a writer, privileged to be invited into the country's most notorious asylum for the criminally insane.

Pause

What does the office of Dr Farker tell me about the man who runs Fairfields? Clinical. Hard-edged. Uncomfortable. Odd detail...the skeleton. A complete human skeleton standing in the corner. Did Dr Farker once study medicine – anatomy? In the office of a psychiatrist it seems oddly disconcerting but then maybe that's the idea. To disconcert.
To keep you off balance.

Pause

Books predictable. (*Reading a spine.*) Group Psychotherapy. Sociometry and Psychodrama. (*Continuing along the shelf.*) Miller. Milner. Mishler. Morino. Dr Farker arranges his books alphabetically. I wonder if I can trust him?

Pause.

There's not very much in this room that's personal, and nothing at all that connects it with the world outside unless you count the telephone and what I take to be a panic button. I wonder if Dr Farker sleeps on the premises? Sitting here in this office, walled in by his own A-to-Z of analysis, he's probably as out-of-touch as the inmates and he's kept me waiting here two hours, the rude bastard.