

Goliath

by Peter Wood

Slumped round shoulders hunker over a table. Half eaten croissant on the plate with an orange health drink and a double-shot latte next to it. He takes a swig of the coffee. His head is shaven to a grade two office-military spec. Tiny drools of coffee slip in and then down the folds of his mouth which he wipes with the back of a bear-claw hand.

He glances at the other patrons of the café. He has the mix of middle management goliath and shy, fat kid at a school swimming pool. Neither fit comfortably but it's as bespoke as his suit, protective as fat. The arm rests on the table curling protectively round the contents.

Goliath opens a leather satchel resting by his chair. He pulls out a manila folder loaded with sheaves of printed documents. His fingers flip through them, locating the one he needs, separates it. The others he returns to the folder. His movements are efficient, methodical and practised despite sausage-meat fingers.

Goliath reads the document, landscape creases of a frown form. Eyes scan the tabulated page flicking from column to column to text and back like a crossword junky. A silver pen is retrieved from an inside jacket pocket, A stab of ink on the page.

The goliath flicks back a page, slashes another note. After a pause of thought, he continues.

A steady drip of notes, ticks and personal codes appear on the pages. Soon he reaches the end. He frowns then replaces the document in the folder.

The folder has a white sticker on it. The white sticker has two biroed words on it: *Staff Cuts*.

The folder is re-sheathed in the leather satchel.

The goliath downs the coffee, leaving the orange health drink untouched. He glances round, looks somehow diminished from his work. He swings the satchel over his shoulder, makes a quick wave goodbye to the coffee-shop staff. They smile back. He's a regular,

they know his order, he likes that but most of all he's glad they don't have to meet him, in an *official* capacity.

Goliath is gone.

