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# Higher than Usual

## By Derek Paterson

16 April 2001

Perkins came up to me and he was grinning from ear to ear, his eyes dancing with an unexpected madness that made me take a step back and look at him suspiciously.

"We've got one of them," he told me gleefully.

"One of what?" I asked, bewildered.

"One of *them*," he said, as if that explained it. "Cheeky sod from Accounts came upstairs and tried to get a coffee out of our vending machine. Can you believe it? Out of *our* vending machine."

He was holding a plastic coffee cup and I wanted to sniff it to make sure he wasn't having a caffeine overload.

"Are you feeling all right?" I asked.

He nodded, still grinning, and jerked his thumb over his shoulder. "The lads have got him in the toilets. They're giving him a damned good thrashing. That'll teach him to come up onto our floor. Accounts will think twice before they mess with *us* again."

He turned and stalked away, leaving me confused and shaken. I'd have to have a word with someone about him. I didn't want to get him into trouble or anything, but there were limits. If he had a drink problem, the company would try to help him. There were groups he could join. . . .

As soon as I reached my desk, my phone started ringing and I forgot all about Perkins. It was a busy morning and I only managed to grab a coffee myself around eleven. I glanced at my newspaper while I sipped the foul stuff, wondering whether I'd be better off drinking paint solvent.

## [Before Paphos](#)

by Loretta Casteen

8 January 2007

It starts again. The baby begins to cough and choke.

## [Locked Doors](#)

by Stephanie Burgis

1 January 2007

*You can never let anyone suspect*, his mother told him. That was the first rule she taught him, and the last, before she left him here alone with It.

## [Heroic Measures](#)

by Matthew Johnson

18 December 2006

Pale as he was, it was hard to believe he would never rise from this bed. Even in the darkest times, she had never really feared for him; he had always been strong, so strong.

## [Love Among the Talus](#)

by Elizabeth Bear

11 December 2006

Nilufer raised her eyes to his. It was not what women did to men, but she was a princess, and he was only a bandit. "I want to be a Witch," she said. "A Witch and not a Queen. I wish to be not loved, but wise. Tell your bandit lord, if he can give me that, I might accept his gift."

## [Archived Fiction Dating back to 9/1/00](#)

