

KEVIN MILLER

OFFICE HOMICIDE

JOSE TORRES

I ended the life
of a mosquito, who aimlessly
hovered above the landscape
of an invoice on
Lynette's desk.

I didn't think. Just
instinctively thrust my
palm over it, a tiny
black mess of a speck
on my lifeline,

but no blood. Bloodless
little thing.

BARISTA for nick arthur

JOSE TORRES

behind counter coffee shop bak-
ery cappuccino he stands red
bearded and focused procedur-
al. this is why they train you to
leave the wandering street urchin
san Francisco life Oregon man.
wooded eyes roadless thumb
hitch all the way to los angeles
where you found no angels all in
Sweden not santa cruz biblical
ripped jeans adventurer more red
each time growing spiritual less
Bukowski or strand-ed on geary
in this shop coffee bean paradise
for homeless orthodox religious
Russians and 26th "no one lis-
tens" here do you hear. there is
no place left west of coastal cliff
highway one for ocean crash! ker-
plunk! swish! woosh! all wander-
ers carry Kerouac whether they
know it or not in their caffeine
souls.

OFFICE

JEANNE LUPTON

Twelve-hour days
seven-day weeks
in a cubicle
at a computer
wearing headphones
transcribing tapes
open box of sugar wafers
close at hand,
cup of black coffee,
lit cigarette between my lips.
One time I walked by
the copier and the delivery guy
pinched my nipple
right through my sweater.
Another time when I had done
8 hours' work the boss
brought me 5 more tapes -
5 hours' more work.
I said, I'm done for the day.
She said, Not if you want
to work here.
There were all-nighters,
weekends sharing hotel
rooms so we could work

even when a blizzard
closed the city down.
Spring of '86 I quit
nicotine and caffeine.
Suddenly my typing
slowed way down.
I was no longer typing
a recognizable language.
Burn-out after 17 years.
Not a minute too soon.
I had to find new work.
I became a legal secretary
with vacation time,
sick leave, holidays.
Steve the boss was kind to
Hannah, a street person, let her
use the computer, the fax,
the copier. Hannah always
asked me for help.
Hannah liked to say she was
far too creative to be
a secretary. Steve's wife
called me when it snowed
to complain that her children
were home from school so
she couldn't go to the gym.
The female attorney talked
on the phone all day to her

friends and needed me to stay late
to help her meet her deadlines.
The other secretary got a call
while she was out shopping.
When she got back I told her,
You had a call from Mike Hunt.
She fell down laughing.
Steve promoted me to office manager.
I was that valuable.
The New York manager
got wind of it. I was
demoted the same day.
The lawyer down the hall
had his own secretary,
his own law firm,
but he brought me work.
After 18 years in law offices,
on a Tuesday, at quitting time
I quit
Now I'm on Social Security,
don't have a mortgage,
don't need Jim Beam or sex
or shopping or TV
to help me forget
my day at the office.