



## Q+A

### Our Office Is Nothing Like This

Novelist Martha Moody (*Best Friends*), who spent 15 years as a doctor in private practice in Ohio, imagines life in a similar setting for her second book, *The Office of Desire*.

**More** Which came first, writing or medicine?

**Moody** I've always written. I took creative writing in college, and I went to South America to translate poetry. In Peru, I saw a waiter with running sores on his hands—that turned me on to medicine. At the time, I thought I'd return to South America as a doctor.

**More** How has your voice as a writer changed over the years?

**Moody** It took me until I was about 40 to master the craft. I was lucky: I was writing for myself, not to get published. That gave me a certain freedom.

**More** Why office culture?

**Moody** You're thrown together with people—an accidental intimacy. You end up knowing more about your coworkers than you ever wanted to. For instance, the character Brice, the office manager, has an ailing mother who calls in regularly with new afflictions. The entire staff is privy to this troubled relationship.

**More** How did your coworkers react when you left work to write?

**Moody** I was a closeted writer, so they were shocked. The men were especially baffled: How could I leave a practice I had spent years building?

**More** Do you miss it?

**Moody** I volunteer regularly at a clinic; that's very satisfying. Yes, leaving has a cost. But I don't have any regrets.

—REBECCA ADLER



### My Best Investment Floral Design Course

**WHO** Colleen Aguirre, 50, office manager; Raleigh, North Carolina

**HOW MUCH** \$1,163 for the course and up to \$60 a week for fresh flowers

**RETURN** She pulls in more than \$7,000 a year arranging flowers for homes and weddings. Profit after expenses: about \$2,000. "It's a small supplement to my income but a major investment in my sanity. I need to be creative, and the office job doesn't allow a lot of that." She arranged the flowers—all shades of pink and green—for her daughter's wedding in May and saved \$2,000. Any plans to become a full-time florist? "No. It's very strenuous. Those buckets of flowers can get really heavy," she says. "And, you know, there are a lot of bridezillas out there."

—KATE ASHFORD

