

## Throwing Stones by Fred Coppersmith

**Author's Note:** Written sometime in the winter or spring of 1998, this was originally supposed to be the first in a continuing series of columns for an e-zine called *Crushed Lemming* (<http://members.tripod.com/~crushedlemming/index.htm>). Then Crushed Lemming went away. I lost touch with editor Brandy Larsen. No more columns were ever written. Such, they say, is life.

"Heartless powers try to tell us what to think  
If the spirit's sleeping, then the flesh is ink.  
History's page, it is thusly carved in stone  
The future's here, we are it, we are on our own."  
-- The Grateful Dead

When Brandy asked me to write this column -- or, rather, when she asked who might be willing to write and I volunteered -- I thought, how hard can this be? I'm a writer. I can think up a topic. There's plenty I feel passionately enough about to make writing a column every couple of months a snap, a breeze, a lark in the park. Hell, I figured, make this gig monthly, make it weekly, or every single bloody day and I could still dust off a few worthwhile words, deadlines be damned. I'm a writer. It's what I do. Then I realized -- I didn't even have a title. I certainly didn't have a clue how to proceed. I was lost, set adrift. Throw in any metaphor for writer's block you like -- it all weighed down on me. And time, as they say, was a'tickin'. The hour drew nigh.

So...I put it off, procrastinated, hid from it in other projects and diversions. I did what any red-blooded American of my generation would do -- I hid my head in the sand and prayed that it would all go away. I prayed to all things holy and some, I'm sure, not quite so grand that it all would just leave me alone.

I don't need any of this, I started to say. I've got midterms and finals, term papers and tests, averages to account and meetings to make. I've got enough responsibilities as is, thank you very much, I don't need this dinky little column; I've got bigger fish to fry.

But I don't eat fish and I wasn't born a fry cook. You can batter and bread it to your heart's delight, serve it up on a silver shiny platter, and it's still just one salty lie.

I had responsibilities, sure, but one of them was to this column. And to whatever there was of a writer lurking inside me. I owed it to myself to put pencil to page and scribble something out, to connect words into phrases and, for better or quite possibly for worse, just start being a writer.

Crushed Lemming is as good a place as any to start. It's a nice little pond to toss pebbles into, to watch the splash and ripple as a thought is tossed into the deep. Sink or swim, it's out there. My opinion is noted, my voice, hopefully, heard.

I've finally crawled up on my soapbox, shaking the sand from eyes and my ears. I can't promise you greatness; I can't even promise you a great read. But know this and remember:

We all build up lies we like to live by, and even writers hide from their craft. We erect monuments of isolation and mausoleums of denied dreams. We stand them up like dominoes in the desert or a house of cards to kiss the sky. We build them up, up, up...

Well, ashes ashes, all fall down.