

# "Do You Have Any Advice For Those of Us Just Starting Out?"

*by Ron Koertge*

Give up sitting dutifully at your desk. Leave your house or apartment. Go out into the world.

It's all right to carry a notebook but a cheap one is best, with pages the color of weak tea and on the front a kitten or a space ship.

Avoid any enclosed space where more than three people are wearing turtlenecks. Beware any snow-covered chalet with deer tracks across the muffled tennis courts.

Not surprisingly, libraries are a good place to write. And the perfect place in a library is near an aisle where a child a year or two old is playing as his mother browses the ranks of the dead.

Often he will pull books from the bottom shelf. The title, the author's name, the brooding photo on the flap mean nothing. Red book on black, gray book on brown, he builds a tower. And the higher it gets, the wider he grins.

You who asked for advice, listen: When the tower falls, be like that child. Laugh so loud everybody in the world frowns and says, "Shhhh."

Then start again.