

1990

Dear Friend

Paul Allen

Follow this and additional works at: <https://ir.uiowa.edu/iowareview>

Part of the [Creative Writing Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Allen, Paul. "Dear Friend." *The Iowa Review* 20.2 (1990): 127-128. Web.
Available at: <https://doi.org/10.17077/0021-065X.3898>

This Contents is brought to you for free and open access by Iowa Research Online. It has been accepted for inclusion in The Iowa Review by an authorized administrator of Iowa Research Online. For more information, please contact lib-ir@uiowa.edu.

DEAR FRIEND,

Your letter about the land ruined,
your Guggenheim ended,
and how it seems there's busy-ness
plaguing you, like gnats when

you were 12 with a bad backlash
in your bass reel, sweating,
a keeper gone free in the slack:
I don't know what to say.

Me, more and more I imagine
Leon. He's black. His thumbs
are gone. So are his shoe laces.
I dream we live up-state.

His place outlives us half a mile
down the neglected road
fringed with condoms and Cheetos bags
from the teens. We drink when

one of us has something with bite
enough to see us through
the p.m. on my gritty porch
to dark. His wife's fishing, mine's with

some friends. We don't say much. Our legs
hang off the edge. If we
do talk, it's to speculate on
the wasp nest overhead

and the several ways to down it
if I take a notion.
(This dream, though, it's copacetic).
By dark we're dumb mumblers

who've jerry rigged our day, our lives,
standing to our full height
only to piss at the county
road. He shows me some things—

his Social Security card,
photo of hauling dung
for the Army mules near Boulogne,
the title to his truck.

I tell him how I owe people,
and my poems aren't coming.
“Fuck 'em.” He spits. “Fuck them.”
That's that? Back to wasps and a whiz.

But you—*sans* a Leon—who knows?
You might try suicide,
delighting in ways. Hell, my friend,
I've thought of six or eight,

counting acetone and putty.
I thought I'd write to pick
you up. Don't guess this helps.
One day I'll send Leon's address,

if I ever find it. I know
it's here someplace. Or there.
Meanwhile do whatever. Go out,
stay in. Get a tattoo.