"Qualifications" and "If I'm Not Already Dead (Or"
(poems)

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"Qualifications" and "If I'm Not Already Dead (Or)" (poems)
Qualifications

The visiting writer, balding dignitary wearing his Pulitzer on his pullover, was saying 
Fuck the MFA, since he had never taught 
till he was forty and Viet Nam had made 
going to Kosovo and Belgrade child’s play. 
If you want to be a writer (and, oh, he is 
a writer, so much so the State Department begs 
him and a name-dropped handful of others 
to travel as American emissaries to semi-
dangerous but troublesome re-building zones) then, 
yeah, get your damned undergrad but then go 
after some real life—like a couple of nosy years 
of the Peace Corps, alternate shifts 
in a pickle factory, a full season picking 
choke cherries or working construction 
in the cold with rugged regular folks—because 
otherwise, you’ll just end up a goddamned 
English professor, writing who-gives-a-shit 
driveland about your seamless, sorry-ass college life. 
But then I had to duck out to go teach a class.
If I’m Not Already Dead (or)

maybe even then) I’m doing
something as you begin this,
probably just anything

even though I’m
famous (you’re reading me
I figure) or close (or only

still hoping) so you wouldn’t
expect it. But picture me now
enjoying my favorite places—

maybe an over-stuffed chair
or an Adirondack chair,
really any comfy

chair, possibly
in the Adirondacks but
probably not. Or doing

my favorite activities
such as sitting, mostly,
or walking toward

sitting or staring
while sitting. Often, though,
I’ll be reading or writing

or eating, other forms
of sitting. And in return
I’m thinking now

of you, most likely
sitting, too, and I’m
grateful to be

there with you
and for your utter-
most casual attention.