From the Sidewalk

When he smiles, I know he knows me.

But only for a while. What he shows me is outmoded:

is that a wink or a six shooter, loaded? His prairie dog’s named Peety,

his Chihuahua— Santini. His freedom is his passion, but his family

often bleeds him. In February he’s a skier, in October he’s a seer.

He’s friends with the bombarded, they love him unguarded. He kisses everyone

near him: strangers, strippers, and beer men. He borrows faces and gyrations, sits

near the stage he chases. He holds his harmonica with a solid grip when he hears

*Must be the season of the witch.* I saw him briefly last Labor Day. We ate pizza

at Leaning Tower, but what he said just didn’t follow. By Christmas he was nearly

gone, his humor and Triumph badly worn. And his lyrics couldn’t make a song.

If he saw it coming, he never let on. His business couldn’t hold him;

when his truck gave out, he retired. His mind was lathered, his spirit expired.

He settled in with some working girls who could’ve used a brake, but their habit,

they just couldn’t shake. One shot him up at the Red Roof Inn, the other left him

naked, washed in liquor, while she went across the street for a Snickers. I read

the police report a few years later, and wasn’t a bit surprised; I thought

I knew him, but then again it may have been a disguise.