

MICHAEL BAZZETT

Other People

The day was too bright at the abandoned café
scoured clean by April wind as you held my hand

almost lovingly and said, Maybe we should see other
people, and suddenly there they were, absentminded

in their mismatched clothes, all around us, the people
we had been unable to see until that point

because we had been so involved in seeing one another.
But then your words conjured them from the very air,

these other people we so clearly needed to begin seeing
if we didn't want to keep fooling ourselves, which was

another phrase you used, and I suddenly understood
why I sometimes felt oddly wooden, like a poorly hinged

door when I leaned in to kiss you—it had to be that
elderly woman with the permanently puckered mouth

and cardigan laced with cat hair who stood like a shadow
behind your right shoulder, fiercely glaring and happy

to finally be making eye contact with me after so many
futile attempts to serve as your matronly avenger.

Why she was holding an enormous scythe I cannot say,
any more than I could pronounce the surname of the

Estonian mechanic who stood so patiently beside her,
hefting a lightly oiled wrench in one grimy hand.

I rose in what I hoped was a dignified manner and strode
out through the gathering crowd, shaking hands with

the blacksmith sporting muttonchops and a svelte man
in suede boots and a remarkably slimming goatskin vest,

when it occurred to me that the fluttery pain near my heart
was not sadness but relief at no longer being so utterly alone.