The Lark in the Clear Air

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Under a sky drifting into a color
that could bend a tree, a no-color
heft like painter’s white, the voices
of old men rise and fall, until the air
corrodes and spits, rearing to a wreak.
That ends the talk. Hands over mugs,
they dash inside, from where they watch
the hunchback open the gate and stop,
out of breath. They wave him in, and he
stomps in, wet. When the sun revives,
“uncertain as a baby’s bottom,” they drift
back out, reclaiming the bench under
the pub’s dim lights, while, unnoticed,
the heavens wheel, spilling out signs,
like ads for eternal life. “Time, gents.”
They rise reluctant and wobble off.
One tries to whistle “The Lark in the
Clear Air.” One does a little jig. The third
Who says this is no country for old men?