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Bourbon, Cigarettes, Van Morrison

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Bourbon, Cigarettes, Van Morrison

—*Lake Anna, VA*

The wind's picked up, rattling
half-dead leaves, snapping
off acorns that clatter through
branches and thud to the ground.
Wasps circle the screened-in porch,
probe corners, and the sky's
brief flirtation with blue

has passed behind the gray shade
drawn over hills beyond the lake's far shore.
Every now and then, a gust catches
the ceiling fan's wicker paddles,
and they turn, slowly. It's nearly too
obvious: autumn begins in beauty
and ends with a cold rainstorm

in late November, too dismal
to mean anything else but winter.
I'd forgotten how music can shift
a body into depression like this, how
memory clings like cigarette smoke
to a damp sweater. And rain
begins drilling at the roof. Van

Morrison's given way to only
that percussion, whiskey's
flame in my belly. My mother
no longer speaks, but she grins

horribly at the nursing home,
flicks spit those days when she
fails to recognize me. The wasps

have given up. Eventually, so does the rain.