MUNDANE LITURGY

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The sky above the horizon is yawning
and drowning the kitchen in soft pink morning light as my mother washes the dishes. Steam rises up and curls the ends of her hair, soapy water loosens the skin on her fingertips, and I wonder how she manages to hold the world together with those hands. That evening she’s stringing white lights up on the tree slowly and gingerly, and I think about all thing things we do to keep out the dark.

Is not that the very essence of the human condition—crawling through tunnels, inching across dirt and mud, grasping for the light at the end?

My grandmother’s soft and honeyed drawl floats out to sit on top of the damp summer air while the porch swing sings and the street light on the corner flickers in rhythm with the crickets, and I marvel at how such tired eyes could inspire such wonder. After the children go to bed, she and I sit on the porch and our laughter rises up to the rafters and brings relief to my bones. Later, as I fall asleep, I notice that the heaviness is gone from my chest.
It has to come from somewhere, doesn’t it—
the light—even in minuscule
pinpricks, like stars poking through
the darkness of the night sky.

The trees are bare and wanting when we are walking
through the same woods in which I made my home as a child,
and a little hand is grasping your finger. I show
him how to call out to his echo, and as such a small voice
booms off the walls of this vast place, I remember
the crows-feet smile of my grandfather that taught me
to always bellow toward the light, and a grateful
laugh escapes from my lungs. On Sunday, the church’s
song is rising up to the heavens, and for a moment
I feel that the heavens are singing back.

It comes like that, sometimes—
not in flashes or sparks,
but like the rain
in glorious magnanimity.