

Story for performance #353
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Source: Oliver Poole, 'Sumptuous US embassy in Baghdad sets records', *Telegraph* in *The Age* online, 08/06/06.

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My favorite homecomings always take place at night—not because of the darkness, but because of the light. I don't mind darkness, and sometimes, when it becomes a palpable quicksilver that shifts shape to fit inside every part of me, I even love it. But darkness is what it is because of the light—just as light is made meaningful by darkness—and when I come home it's the light against the darkness that I wait for every time.

When I say homecoming, what I'm talking about is the plane's descent, when the grid of lights that map out our small lives below snaps into focus, into size. This high above everything, the lights blur into indistinct smears, phosphorescent blemishes on a silent and silenced landscape. My face is pressed up against the glass, attentive suddenly as I hadn't been hours ago to flight attendants and safety warnings. The clouds and the stars should be what I wait for, heavenly bodies beyond our imaginations, but I guess there's something about the surly bonds of earth and the lives we make there that I just can't look away from. This high above everything, the

world below—my small life—seems too distant to be believed. But circle toward the ground a few thousand feet and the lights become signals and semaphores, every light standing in for you. Every line of cars moving down the highway casts a shadow from its headlights that feels, in the darkness, more sure than brick under my palms or under my feet. Our small lives have lit up the night, today and every day, this night and always, and every time the blessed surprise feels both familiar and strange, its own deep relief. Here we are still living. We've sent lights up to guide you back home. Because by homecoming, I don't mean a celebrated return to some rarefied landscape of my sentimental imagination, just my return to whatever place was most recently the most familiar to me. Home is not a particular place, but something I carry with me. Something I send ahead of the rest of me so I can be greeted with semaphores, with night lights, something that awaits me every time.

Adapted for performance by Barbara Campbell from a story by Jacqui Shine.

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