

Pink and Gold Package / Sabrina Ramos-Wood

He stands strong, as if a Drill Sergeant yells. It's not everyday a man of tanks and M-16s joins the usual five o'clock crowd of brief cases. His standard issued combat boots accessorize the shades of green and brown on his fatigues—a perfect back drop for his long gold package that's tied with an elaborate pink bow, which he protects tenderly.

As the Link departs, the Union Station abandoned, curiosity stings my mind; I wonder what is behind his pink bow, not once do I notice the street lights and car horns we race past, or the ragged gentleman standing on the corner holding a tattered "will work for food" cardboard sign. A passed billboard reads, "I brought home the bacon."

It reminds me of more important responsibilities to think of than his gold package. Soon my thoughts are concentrated on a breakfast dinner, upcoming due dates and an undiscovered image for my next poem. Suddenly, I overhear the Sergeant's conversation with a commuter, "I just got back from Iraq." Why did I listen at this exact point in time? I may never know.

My heart became liquid, aching to cry out. Then, like a personal revelation, everything made sense. It didn't matter what was inside his wrapped gift, what truly mattered was whom it was for. Whoever she is, a patient wife or a loving mother, like his gift, she was beautiful. My eyes began to mist, my mouth too full of cotton to speak. A conductor's voice rings out "End of the line—Last stop!"

The sea of black jackets and umbrellas hurry off, the Sergeant and I are left behind. The loud bells of a departing Link grows faint as I pace two steps behind him till our paths split. He heads towards the bus station as I separate towards my car. Trying to forget my urging feelings a spirit inside lingers and discomforts my thoughts. I quickly dash off my cemented course. "Excuse me, Sir..." As I glance at his

long gold package with its pink bow, my eyes still slightly wet, many questions race through my mind, but, for the moment there was only silence. "You were in Iraq?" I finally asked as my voice trembled. "I got back yesterday..." Only one comment that came to my mind, but the message was clear, "Thank-you."