

By Sydney Schwartz April 2, 2008

Love story from Iraq to Plymouth



MARSHFIELD —

Army Staff Sgt. Jerome Packard sent his wife a birthday surprise from Iraq – a gift of love and relaxation. Anna Packard's husband told her to take the day off from work, put their kids on the bus and be ready by 10 a.m. Tuesday, her 28th birthday. But she had no idea what was coming. "He was just hinting all the last week," said the Plymouth mother of two. "The whole thing was an absolute surprise." Anna said she was on the phone with Jerome in Baghdad at 10:30 a.m. Tuesday when a limousine pulled up. Inside, she said, was a single red rose. The limousine took Packard to the [Spa-tique Day Spa in Marshfield](#), where she received a hot-stone massage, a facial, a makeup application and other treatments. And sprinkled throughout the spa getaway were a few more surprises. When she entered the massage room, she found 28 white lilies – for her 28th birthday. Birthday cake and tea were waiting when she came out. In the facial room, she found a large spa gift basket, a gift from [Spa-tique](#). And, after her facial treatments, the aesthetician slipped a diamond heart necklace – a gift from Jerome – around her neck. "He planned this special day for her for the last month whereby she had no idea what she was doing today for her birthday," spa owner Darcey Eldridge said. "She broke down and cried." Packard said she and her husband have been married for six years and he has always gone out of his way to surprise her and make her birthday special. This is his second deployment to Iraq. When he returned from his first deployment, in May 2006, they had a big party and he surprised her with a new wedding band for her birthday, she said. But this gift, she said, was the biggest surprise. She said she was shocked that he was able to keep the secret for so long. "This is kind of his specialty. He's very romantic and he loves to do surprises. It just usually doesn't work that well," Packard said. "(He) pulled out all the stops. Everything was a big secret." She said she still doesn't know how he planned the surprises. When she got home from the spa, she used a webcam to show her husband the flowers and the necklace. But he wouldn't tell her all the logistics. "He just said, 'Don't worry about it. I have tricks and I have secrets,'" she said. "It was just unbelievable. Honestly, I have no idea how he pulled everything off."