

Fiction by David Abrams: “Thank You”



Thank you Thank you for your service Thank you for going Thank you for coming back Thank you for not dying Thank you for taking the bullet, the mortar round, the shrapnel that is making its way to your heart by micromillimeters every year Thank you for eating that god-awful food gritted with sand so we don't have to Thank you for eating Thanksgiving dinner on a paper plate Thank you for living in a metal shipping container for the first three months until they got their shit together and built proper housing for you and your men Thank you for driving a Humvee without armor while ambassadors and visiting senators and country music stars were going around in bulletproof SUVs Thank you for carrying a gun for slinging it across your body for wearing it like a heavy necklace that, after the first week, you hardly noticed was there Thank you for the magazine of bullets you polished every night Thank you for dripping with sweat Thank you for leaving your wife for eighteen months Thank you for telling your children you'd be back before they knew it Thank you for punching the walls of your shipping container Thank you for your bruised knuckles Thank you for screaming Thank you for crying quietly in the porta-potty when you thought no one was listening Thank you for enduring the stink and heat and filth of that entire year-and-a-half Thank you for writing back to that fifth-grade class when all you really wanted to do was sleep after a hard day of walking Thank you for looking through the tear-blurred sights of your rifle Thank you for crying over the dead Thank you for the sucking chest wound Thank you for the partial loss of your leg Thank you for your blood caught in a sterile metal tray shaped like a curled cheese puff Thank you for hating and killing Muslims Thank you for the hard clench of your jaw Thank you for thinking of us back here in the United States of Amnesia going about our war-free lives Thank you for our amber waves of grain purple mountains majesty bombs bursting in mid-air Thank you for Fox News and the pretty girl who reads the headlines Thank you for the freedom to fill my lungs so I can howl across the bandwidth of Twitter Thank you for this Big Mac and this Whopper and this Domino's pizza Thank you for

almost dying in order that I might live to gain another twenty pounds and then Keto myself back to normalcy two years later Thank you for the chance to marry Kevin S., to fuck him, to bear his two children, and to file for divorce when I was through with all of that Thank you for giving me the freedom to move from Portland, Maine to Portland, Oregon Thank you for my Golden Retriever Thank you for my God-given right to enjoy the rain Thank you for my new breasts and the blue pill which cures my erectile dysfunction Thank you for infomercials and the operators who are standing by Thank you for this cigarette and this beer and this fried pork rind Thank you for the chance to uncork this '41 Cabernet and eat this Bernaise-smothered filet Thank you for the three Starbucks in my neighborhood Thank you for *American Idol* Thank you for my amazing Amazon Kindle Thank you for the Mall of America Victoria's Secret Dippin Dots The Gap Best Buy and the weight of shopping bags that turn my fingers white Thank you for my Prius and the \$3.34 per gallon which fills it Thank you for giving your blood for my oil Thank you for leaving and returning Thank you for limping through the airport on your half leg Thank you for that little American flag sticking from a side pocket of your rucksack (long may she wave) Thank you for your smile on a stiff upper lip and the way you tried to conceal your limp by swinging both legs in equal cadence like you were in a Sousa march Thank you for catching my eye Thank you for allowing me to stop you on the concourse Thank you for taking this stranger's hand Thank you for saying You're welcome No problem Glad to do it.

The original version of "Thank You" was published in F(r)iction Magazine in 2015.