

Jacob's Tattoo

By Eric Walters

The morning fog had burned off and our hotel room was filled with bright sunlight when I returned breakfast. I knew a croissant would not even begin to satisfy my son Jacob's morning appetite.

The pile of used towels on the bathroom floor suggested that Jacob had already showered. He needed more beauty sleep; Jacob had fallen back to sleep in just his boxers. He looked peaceful; I hoped that his anger from the night before had faded away.

I shook him. Lukas stirred and mumbled something about being hungry. He rolled over and I saw the bandage on his left shoulder.

"Jacob Jaden Whitmore." I'd invoked the full name. Now he was fully awake.

"What is this?" I could feel the anger building in me. This seemed like a bad Silver Spoons episode.

"It's a bandage," Jacob said sarcastically.

"I know that. Is there a tattoo underneath that bandage?"

"There could be." More sarcasm.

"Do you want to explain how you managed to get a tattoo?"

"I snuck out last night and went back to the tattoo parlor. They hooked me up." I didn't even think to ask how he, a minor, got the release form signed. I was that angry.

"After I told you no tattoos?" I wondered how Edward Stratton would have reacted if his son Rick had done the same thing.

Jacob smiled. "Take a look at it."

I peeled back the bandage. The tattoo was small and blue. It was a re-creation of our handprints on the back of his bedroom door.

A tear came to my eye. I really wanted to be mad at Jacob. But I just couldn't.

Jacob sensed I was melting. "You want one?"

"Teachers shouldn't get tattoos."

Jacob reached under the bed, grabbing a small, paper bag. He pulled out a small plastic square and placed it in my hand.

“There you go.”

It was a temporary tattoo. Jacob then peeled the tattoo off his shoulder. “Got ya!”

The look on my face must have been priceless. I pushed Jacob back onto the bed. “I hate you.”

“The guy at the tattoo parlor whipped up a whole batch of them just for me. I paid for it with your credit card, of course.” Of course, he did.

“I’ll get you back for this.” I knew my attempt at payback would pale in comparison.

Jacob gave me a big hug. “Love ya, dude.”