Whose Soldier   
by Greg Elsasser

GAGE

My parents never punished me the "normal way" when I was bad. In fact, I don’t think I can remember a time where I made to sit in "time out" or even put on restriction. Both of my parents were in the child psychology field, so I think they felt they needed to go the extra mile when it came to dealing with adolescents; felt they needed to be a good example to their own patients. I remember I lied once when I was 16 actually, I lied all the time, but this was one time I got caught. I told my parents I was seeing some stupid teenage movie, but I really had seen this NC17 movie that I had strictly been told I couldn’t see. Well, dumb me left my ticket stub in my pocket and my mom found it. So I waited. The next thing I know, my parents had created this huge sign that I had to wear around my neck. On one side the sign said, "I Love to Lie" and on the other side it said, "Ask Me, Gage Barrington, Why!" Then I had to walk up and down the corner of Travers and Sidewinder Ave. for three hours. I can’t tell you how I wished I’d had my car taken away or something. But when I was done and I had all the egg yolk washed off of me, the punishment was over and my mom and dad never mentioned it again. That was the way it had always been; the way I was used to. You see, I couldn’t just punish Julie by telling staying out really late the night we had the fight, or by drinking myself into a stupor and come staggering home I had to be creative. I thought I had done the ultimate. But when I was lying up in that motel room, healing, I thought about the sign incident and I began thinking how humiliating it was for my parents to have me marching up and down that street with the sign on that had their son’s name on it. Everyone in that town knew my parents; they knew that it was their son that had been lying. They would have to fact their patients, who I’m sure were wondering how these "doctors’ could help people when they couldn’t keep their own son in line.  *(Beat)* I really wasn’t the one they were punishing, was I?