

OLTL Sinks Marty and Raises Starr

BUSTED: OLTL CONTINUES TO RUIN MARTY

One Life to Live should stop abusing the character of Marty Saybrook. It was awful when the writers gave her amnesia and allowed her to live with Todd, her former rapist, while she recovered. It was even worse when they had her fall in love with him.

As if these misogynistic crimes against Marty weren't enough humiliation for one woman to endure, the show continues to denigrate her with choices so questionable the character is becoming irredeemable.

Yes, Marty still has amnesia, and is reeling from the knowledge she made love to her former rapist. However, that's no excuse for her current self-indulgent behavior. She has turned her back on her teenaged son, who needs his mother more than ever after the death of his own baby. He has reached out to his mother only to be rebuffed again and again and now pops pills to cope with his pain. What kind of mother (even one with amnesia) would heartlessly ignore her own child's obvious suffering?

Instead of spending quality time with her son, Marty is shackled up in a motel room with a guy she just met. She spends her days drinking, lashing out at people who love her and throwing one heck of a pity party for herself.

Where is the strong, tough and resilient Marty that fans used to know and love? Marty had a selfish streak in college, but as an adult became someone we admired for conquering her demons and refusing to remain a victim. This is the woman we expected to see - especially after the show brought back Marty's original portrayer, Emmy winner Susan Haskell, and showed her competent replacement, Christina Chambers, the door.

The character's daily tribulations are an exercise in torture for Marty as well as viewers. I find myself yelling at the T.V., "Enough is enough," when Marty launches into yet another tirade against someone who loves her and is trying to help her. These are not the actions of a mature woman, but rather a spoiled teenager acting out. It's frustrating to watch an intelligent character so completely dumbed down.

The only thing worse than Marty's shabby treatment of her son has been her inappropriate response to Todd, who claims to still be in love with her. The former psychologist lured her prey to a roof on New Year's Eve with promises of reciprocating his love, only to admit it was a hoax and that all she really wanted was for him to kill himself. When Marty finally succeeded in coaxing Todd into jumping, she still didn't seem satisfied. She even berated John and Blair for saving his life. Physician heal thyself!

As a result of what the writers have done to Marty, against my better judgment, I find myself feeling sorry for Todd. You know a show has crossed a line when its resident rapist/sadist/kidnapper is more sympathetic than a former heroine. If this was the writers intent all along - some sort of sinister master plan to help rehabilitate Todd - they're on their way to

accomplishing their goal. Todd is still pathetic and hard to root for, but unfortunately now Marty is too.

{mosimage}BLISSFUL: THE EMERGENCE OF STARR ON OLTL

The only positive result from the fallout of the Todd/Marty drama on One Life to Live has been the emergence of Kristin Alderson as a leading lady in her own right. Alderson, at only 16, has spent more than half her life playing the character of Starr Manning. Over the past year she has honed her skill and blossomed into a fine young actress.

As Alderson deftly played the star-crossed romance of Starr and Cole; followed by Starr's pregnancy; Starr's decision to give the baby up for adoption; and finally the death of the baby (who viewers know is really alive) - it was like watching Alderson become a woman before our eyes.

OLTL was smart to keep Alderson employed when she hit her gawky tween years, and not recast Starr as some dumb-ass, pretty teenage girl (see Abby on Y&R). They wisely kept Alderson on the canvas, allowing viewers the chance to become more attached to her since we made the investment in watching her grow up in real time.

Two years ago, OLTL started working Alderson more and giving her front burner storylines. First came Starr's teenage romance with Cole, which began before they each knew her father was his mother's rapist. This storyline was just a preview of what depth Alderson possessed as an actress.

After Starr held her ground with her parents about seeing her boyfriend, and subsequently stood by him throughout his withdrawal from steroids, the writers really let Alderson knock it out of the park. It appears they created the storyline of Starr's unplanned pregnancy to showcase Alderson's newfound maturity and range. The material this 16-year-old has had to play over the past year would challenge actors twice her age.

Alderson has consistently turned in stellar performances by never over-acting and never trying to be something she isn't. You always knew Starr was first and foremost a teenage girl, who not only was struggling with monumental life-altering decisions, but also normal teenage angst.

Alderson looks and acts her age, which makes your heart break every time her expressive almond eyes question something adults say should be so. Alderson's Starr is learning that adults don't always have the answers, especially her troubled parents. It's been agonizing (in a good way) to watch Starr make her way through the tangled web of teenage life as the daughter of town pariah Todd Manning. We wonder if gentle Starr, with her spine of steel, will inherit any of her father's darker qualities. The panicked flash in Alderson's eyes allows us to glimpse unrest brewing under Starr's stoic demeanor after everything she has been through.

One can only imagine Starr's desire for revenge when she ultimately learns her baby is alive and was stolen from her. It will be exciting for fans to watch this drama unfold and even more

exciting to see the direction Starr – and Alderson –take into adulthood.

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