

White oleander, a cinderella story

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As a result of her mother's incarceration, Astrid is thrust into a myriad of unmerited situations- the foster homes. One evil stepmother leads to another in this tale of adversity and just when Astrid's prospects brighten under a shining sun, the clouds roll in and it begins to rain. " White Oleander" is a Cinderella story with all the ingredients of misery and misfortune but the wrong ending. At the beginning of her first real encounter with calamity, Astrid is inundated with a deluge of emotions, leaving her dazed. It is during this time of bewilderment that the young girl is placed in her first foster home in the custody of a Sunday Christian named Starr. With the absence of a father figure in her life, Astrid's feelings for Ray metamorphose into those of desire and what began as a timid liking, turns into something much more. The Oedipal feelings she harbors towards " Uncle" Ray, Starr's boyfriend, lead ultimately her expulsion from the home. Now crippled with the consequences of her desires, Astrid is relocated to the racially " opinionated" turquoise home of Marvel where she is exposed to the influence of the sophisticated Olivia. In her time of need for something beautiful when her own beauty has been marred by the Starr's jealousy, Astrid idolizes the woman next door who is, in her eyes, perfect. She comes to depend on Olivia as a staple in her life, someone who will be there to teach her the things a woman should know. However, contact with her idol eventually leads Astrid to another home because of Marvel's racist ideals. Cut off from her hero, whom she reluctantly realizes is just like her mother, Astrid is placed in a beautiful home in the custody of a graceful Hispanic woman named Amelia. At this point, Astrid's role changes from that of a babysitter. In Amelia's home, she becomes money to pay for more remodeling. In this environment where she has nothing to eat, Astrid's survival instincts come to play. What

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isn't provided for her, she provides for herself. At the urging of her mother, Astrid asks for new placement and is, for once, lucky enough to have her case handed to a social worker that seems to care. It is at this point that a ray of light breaks through the clouds. Though Claire seems extremely fragile and dependent, it is also evident that she is a caring person. Astrid's cautious liking grows to tacit love of her new foster mother. It seems that reign of the evil stepmothers has ended. But the neurotic fear and suspicion Claire harbors in her heart towards her husband, Ron, slowly but surely consume her. A slow decline into extreme depression leaves Astrid alone again and worse off than before. The stability of her life is wrenched away along with Claire and a new Astrid, devoid of love, moves on to MacLaren Hall. After a relatively brief stay in this institution that is painted with jungles where she finds a true friend, Astrid chooses to go home with a Russian woman name Rena. This new foster mother is neither the evil stepmother nor another Claire- she is almost a peer. Assimilating easily into her new world full of moneymaking schemes, Astrid transforms into a hardy, street-wise young woman. Learning that " money makes the world go ' round," Astrid abandons her naïve ideas of beauty and grace. Ingrid Magnussen, Astrid's mother, is a constant presence in her daughter's life during the hardships she endures. Her scathing letters that gyrate back and forth between caring and berating are continuous factors in Astrid's ideas and actions. It is ultimately gleaned that Ingrid does, in fact, love her daughter very much. But being the woman that she is- a Viking, as a matter of fact- Ingrid's emotions flow through the wrong channels of communication. Through each of her hardships, Astrid learns a life lesson. Three instances of

cloud-filled skies, interrupted by a brief moment of sunlight, end in an outlook that is partly cloudy with a chance of shower.