

SOAP SCOOP

by CONNIE PASSALACQUA

Andrea Evans brings camp to new heights



Andrea Evans

On "One Life to Live," whiny rich girl Tina Roberts (Andrea Evans) has been sent to coed Statesville Prison to serve time for a murder she didn't commit. The empathy-provoking sequence looks like the last step in the yearlong process of turning Tina, once merely a tarty teen villainess, into the soap's young heroine.

After the trial Tina has been through at the hands of her fellow inmates, viewers probably will begin to genuinely like her. But they've got to stop laughing first!

Intentional or not, "Tina in Prison" has turned into the funniest soap sequence in years. It's the perfect example of how daytime soap operas can turn divinely camp. Everything and everyone in this story line has been exaggerated. Statesville is populated with menacing, fire-breathing inmates, one group more stereotyped than the next.

Tina's fellow inmates fall into three categories: (1) obese women who look like lady wrestlers, (2) surly blacks and Latinos and (3) lesbians. Since any kind of homosexuality is strictly taboo on soaps, the orientation of this latter group is only implied.

This jail sequence is the perfect metier for Evans' Tina, who has just

about wrested the title of campiest character from "All My Children"'s Erica Kane (Susan Lucci). After 17 years of perpetual self-absorption, Erica finally looks like she has grown up.

But Tina, who recently thought nothing of passing off another woman's baby as her own just to hang on to her husband, has years to go before she stops being so self-involved. Unfortunately, Evans isn't as

good an actress as Lucci, who always made Erica's self-involvement seem humorous. Evans' whining is often just too grating.

Campiness does exist elsewhere on soaps. "Another World"'s Felicia Gallant (played by Linda Dano) has always been campy, but in a more agreeable way. A former romance novelist, Felicia is a kind of mother hen to the show's young characters.

But what a well-turned out hen! Felicia's wardrobe, full of bangles, beads, capes, dramatic hats and ropes and ropes of faux jewels, is legendary. Her shoulder pads grow larger each year.

But somehow Dano's natural warmth always shines through and overcomes Felicia's outrageous outfits. Like Lucci, Dano has the talent needed to stay campy and entertaining over the long haul.

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