

Foster Mother/Cousin: Candice Clark (First Contact)

Setting: Home of Candice Clark

I'm a cousin on Jessica's father's side. I remember seeing Jessica at our annual family reunion picnics. She was always a cute kid, real sweet, you know, and a little shy. When her dad died several years ago, the families lost touch. Mom used to call Helen, but it seemed like hearing from our side of the family always made her cry so bad that finally mom just stopped calling. Honestly, I kind of forgot about them. I was off at college.

One day about seven months ago I was on the phone with my mother, and she told me that a lady named June phoned her asking about Helen. June was the last CASA/GAL volunteer. Mom told me Helen had been living with a real bad guy—well, he was living with her actually—and Jessica ran away. And that now she was in foster care somewhere. I was just shocked!

Next thing I knew, June was calling me and she said that Jessica's group home wasn't working out for her. June asked me if I knew of a relative who could take her in and I just said, "Me! Let her live with me. I want her." I think I was as surprised as anybody was, but I'm glad I said it because I love having her here with me. She's a really cool kid.

Then Jessica ran from the group home and was gone for six weeks before she finally called June and June convinced her to come over here. I was already in touch with Angela. I'm glad she let Jessica stay here even though I had just started the classes to be a licensed foster parent. I have no criminal record of course. And I think Helen said it was okay, though I don't think she would say that today. Now Helen wants her back.

I never got married and I never really wanted to have kids either, but I really love having this big, older kid to take care of. I feel like I'm raising Jessica, not just supporting her financially, not just keeping her. I feel like Jessica is mine now and I want to raise her. My life has a deeper purpose because she's with me. Angela and I have talked about this. She knows my commitment and she said we would work toward an adoption. We've been talking about adoption here at home too, and Jessica wants to do it. But lately Angela hasn't said anything about it, which makes me nervous. Now they are making Jessica go see her mom so I don't know what's up. Do you?

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This whole sexual orientation thing is pretty special. Not everybody can understand Jessica like I can. I really don't have a problem with it. I'm going to help her do whatever she needs to, to feel comfortable with her life. Why does anyone care that she is a lesbian? I know that sounds naïve, but really, why do they care?

- What are the mother's thoughts and wishes in reference to this relative?
- How will you respond when Candice asks if you know what's going on with the caseworker not talking to her about adoption and making Jessica visit Helen?