

Name? Claire Jennifer Kostis

Age? 20

Birthplace? Melbourne

Residence? Currently studying an undergraduate exchange year in economics at Harvard University in Boston, USA

Occupation? Student

Appearance? Tall, 5'10, slim and athletic – she's an amateur netball player. Straight blonde hair, brown roots, wears it long – just below her shoulders. Brown eyes and brown eyebrows. Straight, narrow nose. Straight and thin upper lip, which comes from her father. Overall ... the impression is 'straight' ... but her lower lip is curved, full and sometimes it opens to give a smile almost as radiant as her aunt's though her eyes, in smiling, are more open, fresh and genuine ... because she only smiles this way when she is truly happy.

Dress? Often seen in Lycra, athletic tights and t-shirts because she has been running or exercising or playing sport. Otherwise, she wears jeans, tank tops, sweaters - anything that was nearby and clean enough to pull on.

Strengths? Fitness, determination, persistence, integrity, open-mindedness, tolerance.

Weakness? Naivety. She's unsure of her own mind (she doesn't realize this is because she is only twenty - she thinks of herself as mature). She's feeling her way through social-life. She is slow to come forward with details about herself, feels like a bit of a wall-flower, struggles to get on with her peers in trivial conversation, leans towards people who are entertaining because they are different to her. Overwhelmingly, she feels that she, herself, is boring.

Obsessions? Fitness ... it helps her deal with her emotional highs and lows. It's been a lifestyle, but now it's an addiction, like it was for her mother.

Ambition? High achiever. Wants an HD in her undergraduate course and wants to go on to a Masters. At Harvard she, finds herself in a very bright cohort and knows this will be harder to achieve than it was in Australia. She wants to live up to the honor of having been accepted into Harvard, but constantly feels the stress of the scholarship.

Work habits? Works long and hard. (Plays long and hard too.)

Hobbies? In the U.S. plays basketball instead of netball. Likes any kind of sport and is usually good at whatever she tries. No other hobbies ... she leans towards physically exhausting pursuits.

Illness? None. Doesn't understand why people have them.

Family? Her mother died in a car accident 8 months ago, father and older brother still live in Australia.

Kids? Not yet, and not sure it will ever happen. Regards children with uncomprehending suspicion.

Friends? Mostly seem to be gay (male and female) – she has found them more fun.

Pets? The family had a Labrador, Tammy, which died of old age recently. No other pets. She would love to have a dog again, but her lifestyle doesn't suit at present.

Politics? Left wing. Left wing. Left wing. Only one eye for politics.

Tics? Can't keep her feet still. Curls and uncurls her toes all the time, rocks her ankles, stretches / un-stretches. She is constantly moving this small part as a substitute for more vigorous movement. If you secure one of her feet to the floor so it can't move she can't think straight.

Diet? Very anti sugar.

Drugs? No. 'Natural' has been given to her as a religion.

Favorite kinds of coffee? Flat white, in moderation, no sugar.

Erotic history? Had a serious boyfriend in her last year of school and didn't like it. She has found herself attracted to girls instead. She was suppressing the feeling in Australia but when she arrived in the US she decided she was anonymous enough, far away from her parents enough, and she could experiment. She joined a dating site online and had a couple of short relationships with girls that started well but ran out of steam due lack of common interests. Now she has met an English Lit student and is in a relationship that is going very well. She is feeling confident that she is gay, she has become active in the LGBTI community at Harvard and is having lots of fun, finding her identity and enjoying life.

Favorite books? Dambisa Moyo, Hirsi Ayaan Ali, Geoffrey Robertson ... interested in non-fiction books rather than fiction, and following human rights, the Bottom Billion, and economic solutions other than hand-outs to bring about the end of poverty.

Favourite music? Missy Higgins, Powderfinger,

Desires? To be accepted. To be fully seen and to be loved anyway for who she is. To have some part in leaving the world better than when she found it.

Fears? Rejection, failure.

Most traumatic event? Her mother's sudden death in a car accident.

Most wonderful experience? Right now, her early relationship with Leah

The major struggle, past and present? Finding out who she really is, accepting her gender identity.

Make a summary of what the character is like.

Show them through appearance.

Claire stood out in the midst of the pack of people pushing trolleys stacked with luggage along the arrivals hall at Athens airport. Her smooth white skin and long blonde hair were enough to distinguish her, but she was also tall enough to look over the heads of everyone else in the slowly moving queue. Instead of a trolley she had, hanging casually from her tall shoulder, a single purple tote bag bearing the logos of several different sports brands. She was slim, her body taut and evidently at a peak of fitness. She carried herself with a lanky, easy grace.

Theo was certain she was his Australian cousin as soon as she walked through the doors, and he moved towards the front of the crowd holding the sign with her name on it above his head where she would see it easily. She came towards him with a beautiful smile that reminded him of Aunt Mary's in the generous parting of her lips but unlike Aunt Mary she was wearing no make up, her brown eyes were bloodshot and reticent, wary of what news he might have for her.

"Theo," Claire held out her hand.

Show them through a habitual or repeated action.

Claire and Leah lay on the sofa together, and yet apart, concentrating on their separate areas of study. Their legs were interleaved, and their heads were at either end, resting on the softly padded arms of the sofa while they read. Every thirty seconds or so a page turned. Less often a highlighter pen squeaked against a paragraph of text, and all the time Claire's toes were in motion: curling, uncurling, tapping to an inaudible rhythm in her head. Leah's internal clock ran past its limit of endurance long before Claire finished her chapter.

"Stop moving your toes!" Leah demanded.

"Sorry," Claire's voice smiled.

"I mean it, you've got to stop moving those toes. I can't concentrate with you tapping me like that!" Leah sat forward and gripped both of Claire's feet, pressing them flat against her own legs.

"Don't do that, you know I have to move my toes."

"No you don't, read on. I'll just hold your toes still for you."

Claire harrumphed at her, but she wanted to finish her unit of work, so she turned her attention back to the book and Leah sat still, in wait.

It was less than thirty seconds before Claire put down her book and athletically sat up, twisting from the waist to grab both of Leah's wrists.

"Don't you hold my toes!"

Leah crowed in victory and wrestled them both to the floor. When Claire had her pinned they grinned at each other, faces flushed.

"I can make your toes stop moving, I know how," Leah's tone was provocative.

"Do you really?" Claire lowered her full weight onto Leah and they kissed, tongues continuing the wrestle and their excitement building.

After she had unhooked Claire's bra and they were both equally unclothed, Leah tugged on Claire's arm to encourage her up from the carpet. "Look at that, clothes everywhere!" Leah viewed the floor by the sofa with great satisfaction. "Time for bed, lover ... I'm gonna fix those toes real good this time."

Show them through a speech in a scene.

1st Person narrating themselves

or describing someone else and in so doing, showing themselves.

"Leah's fun. She's smart, she's so full of life, she's optimistic and she makes me feel ... like it's all possible, you know? Like life's waiting for us to enjoy it, today, tomorrow ... with Leah I feel like I can leave the past behind and head off into a new, exciting future. It feels right; it feels normal. It feels like I belong with her; like she makes me whole; like she's the one I've been waiting for."

"I guess Mum didn't say anything to you when I broke up with Jarrod. She said I was young, I was trying to work out my identity and it was natural for me to have close friendships with girls. She said I shouldn't be thinking I was gay just because it hadn't worked out with Jarrod. I shouldn't be in such a hurry to 'pre-form' my identity. I know she thought I would find a man I could love if I kept on looking for one. But I know that's not how it is for me, Dad. And I'm so lucky I've found Leah.

"Mum said you would be surprised, but you wouldn't be upset or disappointed in me. She said you both just wanted me to be happy. She just thought I shouldn't decide yet, what my gender identity was, and so I didn't say anything about it to you. "But now I've decided, Dad, and I'm really happy. I've felt so confused about it, but now, with Leah, it feels so right and I hope you're glad for me. And ... I didn't know how to tell you I'd be staying in America, not until you could see us together, until you could see why. We can get married in Massachusetts. We can have children by IVF or adoption. It's legal. It's not even an issue, like it is in Australia. We walk down the street holding hands, Leah introduces me to everyone as her girlfriend, and it's all just ... so normal, and that feels so good."

"We met on campus, in October, only a few weeks after I got to Boston. I was going back to my room from basketball training and there was a poetry reading going on in one of the lecture halls. There was a billboard outside and ... I don't know why ... I decided to step in and listen. I was just standing at the back of the hall. And up the front of the hall was this tiny-petite-girl with a beautiful voice performing a poem she had written. It was about her mother and how her mother had first explained death to her, when she was a small child and her guinea pig had died. It was a long poem ... not just about the death of pets, but also about her mother's reaction when Leah's uncle had been killed in the Vietnam war and her mother talking about the death of Leah's grandmother, before Leah was born. Leah made it very real, very sad but also uplifting somehow, like death had the most important role in making us appreciate life. It made me cry, but I couldn't stop listening and by the time she finished the poem I felt ... she'd done more for me than the psychotherapist ever did. I waited for her to leave the hall and I told her how much I liked her performance; how much it had resonated with me ... and then I went back to my room, not expecting to see her again. I hadn't even told her my name.

"But a week later, at training, she was there, watching from the stand. She came down when we finished and asked me to have coffee with her. She said she thought I had something I'd like to talk to her about. We talked all night – not just about Mum. About anything and everything. She ... unraveled me. I'd never felt so understood. I'd never had so much to say, or so much I wanted to hear from any one. It's been six months and we still haven't run out of things to say to each other.

She wanted to come here to be with me, but I wouldn't let her. She's performing one of her poems in a slam at the Nuyorican Poets Café in New York tomorrow night, and it's such an honour to be invited to do that. She has so much talent, Dad. I just can't believe she's chosen me."