

I'm sorry for having taken so long to answer you; since it sounds like much of my family has also failed to respond, I can only claim a genetic tendency for procrastination. Hopefully, the fact that this is so long after Valentine's Day won't make it completely worthless...

1. Who are you, how did you meet Dave and/or Jess, and why do you like/love/admire them?

I'm Jessica's older sister (by two years). I've only met Dave once, in the official family-meets-fiance trip, so my answers will be sort of skewed. I like Dave because he seems like a nice guy, and I approve of the way he and Jess are comfortable and happy-looking together. I adore my sister, and not just because I'm required to because she's related to me. Hmm. Specifics are hard. She is exuberant and intense, and *pure*, not in the way that you would describe an innocent, but in the way that you would describe light through colored glass — she hasn't made many of the compromises in her heart or her ideals that most people I know have. She's unafraid to express how she feels, and so can be trusted to be sincere. She has a talent for art that I am envious of; she once drew a sketch for a present for someone that I xeroxed and have framed on my wall.

2. What do you dislike most about them?

She's the pretty one.

3. Have you ever connected with DJ spiritually? How so?

Our family has never been particularly religious, so no, not in the narrow sense of the term. The most significant connection I made with Jess was probably the Christmas we were both home when she was a freshman in college. We talked a lot about all sorts of things then, and that was when it really hit me that she was a grown-up person, and one that I was intrigued and pleased to know, rather than just being "my little sister"

4. What is love? What is love in relation to DJ?

One of the things that I've learned after many failed relationships, and some non-failed ones, is that **love is the easy part**. Most people that I know and like, I'd have the potential to love. That's not sufficient for me to spend my life with them successfully. You have to be able to speak the same language (and that's not something that you can really change). You have to have the same *sorts* of ideals, even if they aren't exactly the same. You have to have compatible requirements for together time and non-together time. All sorts of little personal details that can make love either heaven or hell, and half the time you don't even realize they're important until they start to clash.

Love, because of this, can be the worrisome, fretful sort of love, that you have to check what you're saying before you say it so it doesn't get taken the wrong way, that you have to have to think what you can do now to demonstrate your love, that requires constant *work* ... or it can be the buoyant, comfortable sort of love, that you take for granted more often than not, that you can lean back on for extra strength, because you know the other person is there and can be counted on. I've seen Jess in both sorts, and I was happy to see that with Dave, she's relaxed, comfortable, assured. They can laugh and tease without worrying about offense; they can say half-sentences and know they'll be understood.

5. How many hacks/footbags will DJ go through before the end of their lives?

Well, they're going to be favors at the wedding, so including those, hundreds!

6. Detail your most memorable Dave experience

Okay, there haven't been that many, so you may be getting this one multiple times from my family. Jess and Erik have been having a battle over a lion-headed trash can ever since Erik went to college. He took it with him, and then she stole it from him and took it to California. We had just gotten there and were in her apartment (a teeny tiny thing), and Dave had just arrived. Mom and I distracted Jess in the kitchen corner of the apartment, while Erik dashed out to the car with the trash can. While we were distracting Jess, you could see that Dave looked like he knew *something* was going on because we were acting so odd, and then when Erik grabbed the trash can, he figured out what it was. We made little shushy faces at him, and he didn't say anything. That was when I, at least, decided he must be okay, if he could deal with a whole group of strangers being Up To Mischief in front of him and not be fazed.

7. Detail your most memorable Jess experience

Most memorable? Hrm. It's always been the case that Jess was worried she'd be left behind somewhere, I was never particularly worried about it, and Erik would dash off places and leave everyone else behind. Once, we were grocery shopping and had split up to pick things up; Jess issued her standard injunction "Make sure not to leave me." Mom and I snuck outside and moved the car, then waited until she came out and saw that it was gone before revealing ourselves. She didn't think it was funny. This isn't necessarily the most memorable experience, but it's probably one of the most archetypal, given her constant worry of being left behind, and the fact that she's probably the easiest one in the family to tease.

8. If Dave and Jess ruled the world, what would it be like?

Ferrets would be legal. You couldn't post apartments saying "no dogs allowed." There would probably be more rules against being bad, in one form or another, and I imagine that there would be lots of twiddling attempts to solve the world's problems ("Homeless hungry people? Free food! Uh oh, now restaurants are having trouble, we should make another change.")

9. What are your favorite things to do with DJ? Why? What do you get from the experience?

My sister is my favorite person to knit sweaters for, because she has all sorts of ideas for what she wants in them, and because she's so amazingly enthusiastic about getting them. She's also fun to cook with, partly because she's a better cook than I am and has lots of recipes in her head.

10. What have you learned from DJ? (What have you taught them?)

I learned an appreciation for Ansel Adams, and other nature, from Jess. I learned that dogs aren't necessarily annoying. I learned how to draw little cartoon guys, though not as well as Jess does. I learned that my brother was a real person too, because she noticed it first.

11. What do you think will be their greatest challenge as two people who are committing to a marriage? What will be their greatest joy?

Hmm. Normally I would say that the greatest challenge happens when something goes seriously wrong — the first major disagreement, medical troubles, something like that. But Jess and Dave have already had to deal with medical problems with Dave's diabetes, and both of them have had experience with rougher relationships, so that they know that things aren't always perfect. Perhaps because they are already so much alike, with many shared interests, their challenge will be in not becoming too inseparable. There are two types of love quotes and poetry, the one sort that says

*How do I love thee? Let me count the ways,
I love thee to the depth and breadth and height
My soul can reach, when feeling out of sight
For the ends of Being and ideal Grace.*

and seems to imply a sort of all-encompassing passion, which is frequently how one feels when first fallen in love, but can be disappointing if that's what you expect all the way through but then you fall out of the honeymoon space. The other sort of quote, this one used in the wedding of a friend of mine, is more restrained...

You are joined together and together you shall be forever more. You shall be together when the white wings of death scatter your days. Aye, you shall be together even in the silent memory of God. But let there be spaces in your togetherness, and let the winds of heaven dance between you.

Love one another, but make not a bond of love, let it rather be a moving sea between your souls. Fill each other's cup but drink not from one cup. Give one another of your bread but eat not from the same loaf. Sing and dance together and be joyous, but let each one of you be alone. Even as the strings of the lute are alone tho they quiver with the same music.

Give your hearts, but not into each other's keeping, for only the hand of life can contain hearts. And stand together yet not too near together, for the pillars of the temple stand apart, and the oak tree and cypress grow not in each other's shadow.

If there is to be a challenge in their marriage, perhaps it will be in remembering to leave spaces.

As to their greatest joy, I think it's that they're both, already, getting to find out that there's someone in the world, someone whose opinions they greatly respect, that thinks that *they* are the most wonderful person in the world. And as they grow together and learn more about each other and change themselves, they'll still be the most wonderful person in the world, but more so.

12. Describe Dave and/or Jess as 80-year-olds. What will they be like, be doing, be forgetting?

I sort of imagine a cozy house full of animals, dogs and cats and ferrets and trained rabbits, and kids and grandkids always visiting. I can't imagine a better Grandma than Jess would be. Nothing that was ever loved once will be thrown away, making for a bit of clutter, especially in terms of old cars; perhaps they will have to have a separate large garage for them. They won't go cross-country hiking as much as they once did, but they'll live out in the country where they can still ramble around in the meadows or under the trees, when it's a nice day.

13. How do DJ complement each other? How are they each part of a whole?

This one is hard for me, because I haven't seen enough of Dave. But Jess really does seem to be complemented; she's less unsure of herself, and has an affectionate connection to Dave that always seems to be running, even when they're not looking at each other or touching. Jess did describe how Dave gets stubborn when he's low on sugar, and how other people have tried to force him into taking an insulin shot, and that just makes him more stubborn, and how she soft-talks him into it instead. That seems to me like a good example of how Jess could have a number of manners that are well-intentioned and helpful, but the sort that she *is* is the sort that's most suited for Dave. As a different example, Jess likes overalls, and Dave likes the way overalls look. Okay, so that's simpler, but it's a good example — as much as it's valid to be willing to change the small things for someone you love, finding that your small things are right can be miraculous.

14. Describe DJ as children, adolescents, college kids. How are they different now? In what ways will they continue to grow?

When Jess was very little, she was a great fan of bugs and creepy-crawlies of all sorts. She also had a phase of dragons (about the same time as my phase of unicorns and horses), which resulted in millions of stuffed and ceramic dragons around the room. As I mentioned before, she was always the one who was worried about being left behind. She anthropomorphized our things the most; whenever we got a new car, she'd be very sad at getting rid of the old one. When Mom sold the big yellow station wagon that we had for years, she sent Jess the license plate; I'm not quite sure whether Jess took it as a fond memento, or more as if Mom had sent her the skin of a dead pet. . . Ever since she was little, she's had the twin interests of animals and art, so her degree in textile arts and then going to vet school doesn't seem that surprising. As she's grown up, Jess has started to realize that her parents are not always *more* right than she is, and she's gained confidence in her own plans and ideas. She's still a bit unsure of herself, but I expect that having Dave's support will help her through that.

15. Why do two people get married?

That's got as many different answers as pairs of people, but I think that Jess's answer would be close to what mine is — because you come to realize that this life you have together is the one you want to keep forever. It's not to prove anything, either to society or your parents or each other, or to place a chain on the other to keep them from escaping — it's because in your hearts, you have already grown together, and marriage is just the external reflection of that. (Well, plus to get benefits like joint health insurance and the ability to make legal decisions for the other person, but that's probably not what you meant).

- What medium of art/craft does Dave most resemble? Does Jess most resemble?

I was originally going to vote for Jess as a cute little clay figure of an animal, and then I ran across this quote while I was searching for the quote from the *Prophet* above:

*Take a lump of clay, wet it, pat it,
And make an image of me, and an image of you.
Then smash them, crash them, and add a little water.
Break them and remake them into an image of you
And an image of me.
Then in my clay, there's a little of you.
And in your clay, there's a little of me.
And nothing ever shall us sever;
Living, we'll sleep in the same quilt,
And dead, we'll be buried together.*

- How many pounds of pet food will DJ go through before the end of their lives?

This is a tough one for me, never having bought food for a large dog... after some research, I come to the official conclusion of 30,000 pounds.

- What breed of dog does Jess most remind you of? Does Dave most remind you of?

Um. Another one of those questions that requires research. :) Jess might be a Malamute or a Samoyed or another one of those dogs whose tails are carried curled above their backs — I can't imagine her being a dog with a droopy tail. Dave might be a Belgian Malinois, but don't hold me to that.

- If you were stuck with Dave and Jess on a desert island, what three items would you most want, and why those three (especially in relation to Dave and Jess)?

I should have to have a dog, I suppose, lest I be snubbed as a Non-Dog Person and have to live in my own corner of the island. And perhaps a couple of sheep and spinning / knitting supplies, not just because I would go mad with nothing to knit but because I owe Jess a sweater every other Christmas (how long are we on the desert island for?). Plus we could train the dogs to herd the sheep and it would give us something to do. And, really, I'd want to bring my boyfriend, for all the obvious reasons, plus if I'm going to be on an island with two people happily enmeshed in wedded bliss, I wouldn't want to be the only single one there.