

## Loudon Wainwright Iii

### "What Are Families For?"

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Your mother's loose, your father's slim  
She smothers you, you bother him

Passed back and forth between those two  
Until they've had enough of you

Another bundle comes along  
But by this time something's gone wrong

Awake all night deprived of sleep  
It's overload they're in too deep then...

She forgets to take a pill  
Overload is overkill  
What... what are families for?

He's at the wheel, she's at his side  
Three kids in back out for a ride

Looking at houses, autumn leaves  
Keep hope alive, try to believe

They haven't made a huge mistake  
And what seemed real in fact is fake

Kids can't sit still, "are we there yet?"  
He lights his seventh cigarette

"Almost," she says, "it won't be long  
Look out the window, sing a song"  
Singing what... what are families for?

You're the brother who is big  
You were your parents' guinea pig

The first, the oldest and the best  
Smarter, quicker than the rest

Your little sister's just a girl  
So you can kick her from your world

You push your baby brother down  
And grind his face into the ground

They do what you want them to  
Because those two look up to you  
What... what are families for?

Finally you leave the nest  
Life was a quiz, now it's a test

You can't just live, a living's earned  
So you use every trick you've learned

You cast off siblings, you make friends  
Discover the receiving end

You swore you'd never be a dad  
But that's what works, isn't that sad?

Young women want to mother you  
You hate it but you want them to  
What... what are families for?

All grown up, holding your own  
You fend them off by telephone

You keep in touch, it's come to this  
The furtive hug, suspicious kiss

Your sister's ensconced in your life  
The archetype of an ex-wife

For all that dirt he ate back then  
Your brother figures you owe him now

Mom wants back all that Dad took  
But Dad is dead, he's off the hook  
What... what are families for?

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