Excerpt from Act I of *Family (Dys)Function:*

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REUNION ORGANIZER JONES

**Can it,** both of you! *(Remembers to be more polite.)* Uh, I mean, let’s get back to planning the reunion, shall we?

ENTERTAINMENT DIRECTOR JONES

Yes, we still need to choose the entertainment. And I’ve got an idea that I’m sure everyone will just love! *(Patronizing)* At reunions, many families choose to have their **elders** tell stories about their involvement in the key events of their day. We can call them **Living History Talks!** The older folks are our **family treasures**. Won’t it be exciting to hear their tales and wisdom?! Now that’s entertainment!

SMITH and JONES FAMILIES

*(Are completely silent for several awkward seconds … then reluctantly agree.)* “Yeeeah” “Suuure” “Okaaay” “Uh … sounds fascinating” “If we must” etc.

REUNION ORGANIZER JONES

*(Sarcastically)* Well that sounds like a real hoot. … Okay, next we’ve gotta pick a welcome committee.

WELCOMER SMITH

We don’t need a committee! I’ve got this. I’ll do gift bags, name tags, schedules, and registration packets. Oh, and we’ll need some ice breakers and mingling activities.

REUNION ORGANIZER SMITH

Yes! That’s one of the tips in my article! It suggests that we make notecards printed with interesting questions that will help us get to know one another better!

46 SMITH

Ooh, I’ve got a grand one! I’ll ask them: “Where do you prefer to summer — the Cape, the Hamptons, or Newport?”

47 JONES

How about: “How many hot dogs can you fit in your mouth at one time?”

47 SMITH

“Did you happen to catch the latest Hirst installment at the Museum of Modern Art?”

48 JONES

Ooh, I’ve got an art question too! “What lawn ornaments do you have?” And the follow-up is: “Are any of them a giant possum carved out of a stump with a chainsaw?”

48 SMITH

How about: “What typeface do you prefer for the monograms on your linens?”

49 JONES

“Which monster truck do you like better, Mega Masher or Skull Smasher?”

49 SMITH

“Which do you prefer, horse polo or water polo?”

GROSS FAN JONES

Here’s a good one! I’m gonna go up to someone and say: “Hey! You’ve got a booger hanging out of your nose!”

50 SMITH

That’s not a question!

GROSS FAN JONES

Okay, then I’ll say: “Hey – Is that a booger I see hanging out of your nose?” Haw haw! *(Slaps knee.)* It gets ‘em every time!

CONFLICT RESOLVER

Look, why don’t we just stick to nice, neutral, open-ended questions like: “How have you been?” and “What’s new with you?”

WELCOMER SMITH

Yes, let’s just go with those. Oh, and one other thing: I’ll need to order the reunion t-shirts as soon as possible. And I’ve got an ever-so-clever idea! Why don’t we put a slogan on those shirts?! How about: *(looks up and gestures dramatically stretching out arms as if reading the slogan in the air)* “Family gives us two things: One is roots and the other is wings!”

50 JONES

Hah! The roots feel more like **root canals!**

51 SMITH

The wings are more like **wing nuts!**

GROSS FAN JONES

How about: “You can’t pick your family, but you can pick your nose!” … Hey, come on. That’s a good one!

WELCOMER SMITH

How uncouth! I think not. But here’s something! We could do an **acrostic** using the word family. Each letter can represent a phrase!

ENTHUSIASTIC PARTICIPANT JONES

Ooh, yes! Like the F could stand for “forever.” Because family is forever!

RELUCTANT PARTICIPANT SMITH

The F could also stand for “forcing.” As in, I’m **forcing** myself to go to this reunion to get my piece of the estate.

ENTHUSIASTIC PARTICIPANT JONES

A is for affection!

RELUCTANT PARTICIPANT SMITH

A is for aggravation.

\* \* \*

**A Note on Casting**

*The cast should be roughly equally divided into Smiths and Joneses.To provide great flexibility in casting and role assignment, numbers indicate lines that are available to almost any Smith or any Jones. Each actor could have one numbered line or several, as long as the lines correspond to their side of the family. Existing defined roles can also be made more substantial by having those characters assigned an additional numbered line or lines. With a few exceptions the gender of the characters doesn’t need to be considered when assigning roles. First names can be assigned after casting if desired and entered in the script. (Suggestions for character names appear at the end of the script.)*