

Fresh Hell
a play about registering your kid for summer camp

written by

Brian Cern

based on the events of February 7, 2024

Lights up on table with a laptop computer sitting open on it. There is a chair in front of the computer.

We find Mom and Dad pacing, hovering above the computer. Mom is looking at her watch, keeping an eye on the clock.

The tension is palpable, like runners at a starting line, waiting for the starter's pistol to fire.

A moment of this insufferable tension passes.

DAD
When?

MOM
Nine AM, sharp.

Pause.

DAD
What time is it?

MOM
Eight fifty nine.

Pause.

DAD
(continued)
That's one minute...

MOM
(interrupting)
Dear God, don't start right now...

The alarm on Mom's watch sounds.

MOM
Go! Go! GO!

Dad straddles the chair, and plops in front of the keyboard. Hey types with all the force of a category five hurricane.

DAD
www....

MOM
We don't have time for "www!" Who the crap
still types "www" anyway?

Dad continues to band away.

DAD
...Dot com...

MOM
(panicking)
Dot org! Dot org!

DAD
Sorry! Dot org....

MOM
(threatening)
I swear to crap he is waitlisted because you
typed dot com...

DAD
(interrupting)
What? What? You're gonna what?

MOM
(ignoring him)
Login!

DAD
I don't see the...

MOM
(pointing)
It's right there!

DAD
I swear this is the worst designed..

MOM
WILL YOU STOP TALKING AND JUST LOG IN
ALREADY?!

Dad turns to look at Mom.

DAD
(flatly)
Please stop looking over my shoulder.

Mom starts nervously pacing.

The computer screen flickers.

DAD
(continued)

We're in!

MOM
Click on camps!

DAD
Wow, they have an exhibit about ancient Man...

MOM
If you don't click on the "camps" button right now, I will leave you and the kid and your family can make the same mess of him that they made of you!

Silence.

DAD
Sure, like you can start over at your age.

Silence. Mom gives Dad a flat death-stare.

MOM
I will kill you. I will kill you and leave your body on the front lawn holding... Or, worse, I will make you use vacation time to watch the kid.

DAD
You monster!

Dad turns back to the screen.

DAD
(continued)
Ok. I'm in the catalog. Click on "computer camp," and... Huh.

MOM
Don't you start with your "huh."

Pause.

MOM
What "huh?"

DAD
It says that the class is only a half day long.

MOM
Right. And?

DAD

What about the other half of the day?

MOM

It's a really good camp.

DAD

I don't care how good the camp is, it's mainly child care.

MOM

It's a world class education!

DAD

The kid is ten, there'll be plenty of time to learn this. I need to work. You need to work. That means that camp has also gotta be child care.

MOM

I have a spreadsheet. It's all mapped out.

DAD

But...

MOM

(interrupting)

Trust the spreadsheet.

Pause.

DAD

Okie dokie. Where were we... Catalog... Camp... Umm...I can't see where I register.

MOM

(condesending)

Look... Do you see where it says "Camps?"

DAD

Yes.

MOM

Do you see where it says "Computer Camp?"

DAD

Yes.

MOM

And "Register?" Do you see that?

DAD

...NNNNnnnnnooooo...

What? MOM

Seriously. DAD
There's no "register button."

Pause.

Logout. MOM

What? DAD

Maybe we logged in too early. Logout and try
again. MOM

It doesn't work that way. Here, I'll just
refresh the page, and... Oops. DAD

Silence.

Oops? MOM

Silence.

Yeah. Oops. DAD

What do you mean, "oops?" MOM

I mean... Oops. It's gone... DAD

What's gone? MOM
(freezes in her tracks)

Silence.

The internet. DAD

Pause.

That's impossible. MOM
(runs to look over his shoulder)

DAD

Maybe just the website, but maybe the internet.

MOM

(sounding more defeated)

No.

DAD

(proudly)

I broke the internet!

MOM

Your ass isn't that good.

Pause.

DAD

The website is down...

MOM

Our summer is ruined.

DAD

Not the whole summer, just that one week. Ope, it's back up!

MOM

(relieved)

Buy shares of Microsoft and praise Jesus!

Dad starts typing again.

DAD

...Dot org, and then login and... Hey, we just needed to scroll down, all the info was right there!

MOM

Well that's a dumb place for it.

DAD

Well, yeah.

MOM

I mean, why wouldn't you put the "register" button with the camp description?

DAD

(typing)

Computer Camp... and clicky!

MOM

This is a computer class... Why wouldn't you make it logical?

DAD
(typing)
Child's name...

MOM
Like a flow chart. If/Then... all that crap.

DAD
(typing)
Address...

MOM
It shouldn't be that hard. Go to the course,
click register. Boom.

DAD
And... *Checkout.*

Dad clicks the checkout button.

Nothing happens.

MOM
So, click the button.

DAD
I did.

MOM
And?

DAD
And, nothing. Clicking checkout from the
shopping chart just brings me back to the
shopping cart.

MOM
(exasperated)
Oh, what the crap?

DAD
Look, I click... Everything spins and loads
and... Boom, shopping cart.

MOM
(at a loss)
Well, keep clicking the button.

DAD
I am.

MOM
Are you sure?

DAD
I didn't even click your button this much when
we made the kid.

MOM
I know.

Dad turns to stare coldly at Mom.

DAD
You know, there's such a thing as "going to
far."

MOM
(apologetically)
I'm sorry for the things I said when trying to
register our child for summer camp.

DAD
(calming down, warmly)
It's alright, stress gets to us all. No need
to apologize.

Pause.

MOM
I'm sorry for the things I thought when trying
to register our child for summer camp.

Pause.

MOM
(continued)
It was worse.

DAD
Listen, do you want me to do it, or do you
want to have a go at it?

MOM
No. I'm sorry, you're a wonderful button
pusher.

DAD
Thank you.

MOM
(under hear breath)
Almost as good as my ex-boyfriend.

DAD
Checkout... Ugh... Checkout... Ugh...

MOM

We need this. I need this. I made a whole spreadsheet about summer camps and this summer and free time.

DAD

Checkout... Ugh...

MOM

I can't go back to the drawing board on this spreadsheet. It's color coded.

DAD

And... Checkout... And.... WAIT!

They hold hands, staring at the screen with the same intensity as a child waiting for Santa Clause.

BOTH

Loading... Loading... Ugh!

They deflate, Dad sits back at the computer.

DAD

And... Checkout... Ugh...

MOM

(turning away)

What if this is all my fault?

Dad notices something on the screen, and types a bit, before clicking something.

MOM

(continued)

What if I made my spreadsheet too perfectly? With all of its colors and pie charts....

Dad takes out his wallet and pulls out a credit card.

MOM

(continued)

I'm proud of the pie charts. The exact ratio of camp to commute to random free time for every day this summer.

Dad pays for camp.

MOM

(continued)

All in three-dee with colors and drop shadows... Drop shadows! What was I thinking ?

DAD
(triumphantly)
Done!

MOM
What?

DAD
All set. Bought and paid for.

Pause.

MOM
Oh. That was easy. Downright painless.

DAD
Yep. This is why we got married right? To
spend our mornings registering the kid for
summer camp?

They kiss.

They are all the very picture of
happy parents. All affection and
smiles.

MOM
Yep. Ready to do the next one?

DAD
There's a "next one?"

MOM
Oh, yeah.

DAD
You're kidding me, right? How many are there?

Lights fade out during the next
line.

MOM
That was just computers. According to the
spreadsheet, we still need to do Theatre,
Swimming, Biking, Archery, Canoeing, Cooking,
Fishing, Small Engine Repair, Model UN,
Basketball...

End of Play.