

AFTER THE BLAST

BY ZOE KAZAN



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The world premiere of AFTER THE BLAST was produced by LCT3 (Evan Cabnet, Artistic Director) at Lincoln Center Theater, opening on October 23, 2017. It was directed by Lila Neugebauer, the set design was by Daniel Zimmerman, the costume design was by Kaye Voyce, the lighting design was by Eric Southern, the sound design was by Brandon Wolcott, the projection design was by Lucy MacKinnon, and the stage manager was Megan Schwarz Dickert. The cast was as follows:

ANNA	Cristin Milioti
OLIVER	William Jackson Harper
CARRIE	Eboni Booth
PATRICK	Ben Horner
SAM	David Pegrum
LOWES/THE ROBOT	Will Connolly
MARGARITA	Teresa Yenque

CHARACTERS

This world has been intentionally populated with an eye toward ethnic and racial diversity. The cast should reflect that.

ANNA

Female, thirties.

OLIVER

Male, thirties.

CARRIE

Female, twenties or thirties.

PATRICK

Male, thirties.

SAM

Male, twenties to forties.

LOWES

Male, twenties or thirties.

Double-cast with the actor voicing the Robot.

MARGARITA

Female. Seventies or older. Spanish-speaking.

THE ROBOT (ARTHUR)

Mechanical object/puppet.

The Robot should be voiced and operated live, as a puppet, rather than pre-recorded.

SETTING

The near future.

AFTER THE BLAST

1.

Some kind of antiseptic waiting room. Two men sit, waiting: Oliver and Sam. Sam reads a book. Silence.

OLIVER. I'm sorry, but I have to ask: real or reproduction?

Sam holds out the book. It's a plain paperback, probably from the 1970s.

SAM. Smell.

Oliver takes it carefully and smells the pages.

OLIVER. Wow.

SAM. Nice, right?

OLIVER. Can't fake that.

SAM. Well, they can Simulate it, but I don't think it's the same.

Oliver passes the book back to him.

OLIVER. It's in great condition.

SAM. My mother's father brought it down. Practically his entire Quota of Ephemera, he used on books. Not that I blame him.

OLIVER. My grandparents brought hard drives full of photos. Pictures of the sky. The Grand Canyon. Seems silly now.

SAM. Lots of people brought photographs. It's actually been enormously helpful for mapping. I'm in Cultural Collection, so.

OLIVER. No kidding. My friend Patrick works over there, in the Music Cache—

SAM. Patrick Maybill?

OLIVER. Yes!

SAM. He lives six units over from me. We commute together.

OLIVER. No kidding.

Sam holds out his hand. The two men shake hands.

SAM. Sam Hakitano.

OLIVER. Oliver Erkenbrecker.

SAM. Oh, *Oliver*. Right. Patrick always—

OLIVER. Yup, raised together—“brothers” practically, if we can still use that word—

SAM. Well, I know *actual* brothers, so I guess it’s still applicable—

OLIVER. You know a multiple?

SAM. My friend Hakim has two boys.

OLIVER. No kidding.

SAM. He and his wife—you wouldn’t guess it from looking at them, believe me—but somehow, together: genetic jackpot. The strongest, healthiest, prettiest kids. The Council thought it was worth the investment.

OLIVER. Wow.

SAM. (*Lowers his voice.*) There’s no official word, of course, but apparently Fertility’s been skewing low.

OLIVER. I hadn’t heard that.

SAM. Just by a couple points of a percentage point. But still. Hakim—he’s on the Census Board—he says they’re considering making it policy to grant multiples. Just to the most successful pairings, just to keep the numbers level. Can you imagine handling multiples?? In the size of our units? I mean, *one* already runs us ragged. Gloria. She’s three.

He pulls out an electronic Card (like a very slim iPhone) and shows it to Oliver.

OLIVER. Adorable.

SAM. Yeah, we think she’s pretty great.

Beat.

You been here before?

OLIVER. I’m buddies with a couple guys in Product Development, so. You?

SAM. We came here years ago, to fit my father for a leg. Artificial

Solutions, man. Gave my dad a good eight years. Running around. What are you here for today, if you don't mind me asking?

OLIVER. Just...dropping by.

SAM. Cool.

Oliver smiles and looks away. Sam goes back to his book. It feels like the conversation might be over. But then Sam leans over:

I'm sorry, but—you're working on Inhabitation, right?

OLIVER. (*Nods.*) Environmental Solutions. Recruited me, first year of university.

SAM. Wow. Well. God bless.

Pause.

I know I'm not supposed to know anything about this, and you probably can't... Patrick once said something about... That you had said...that the timeline looks...that we might be "upstairs" sooner than—

OLIVER. There is a lot to learn about what's happening above-ground. And there's obviously a ton of work left to do. But... We *are* optimistic.

SAM. ...Very optimistic?

Oliver smiles and looks around to ascertain they are alone. He leans forward and speaks sotto voce:

OLIVER. This is only an estimate, of course.

SAM. Of course.

OLIVER. And this is not to be repeated.

SAM. Understood.

OLIVER. To anyone.

SAM. Yes.

Beat.

OLIVER. We are *estimating* partial re-habitation in the next ten to fifteen years.

Sam heaves a big sigh of relief.

SAM. That's...that's...

OLIVER. Not to be repeated, right? Not even to your wife.

SAM. Yes. Of course. But that's great to hear. Especially from someone in the know.

Oliver nods. Sam sits, deep in thought.

OLIVER. So, what are you here for today? Another leg?

SAM. Ha, um, no...

He looks around.

...We're getting a Helper? Have you heard about them?

OLIVER. Oh, um. Actually. That's what—we're getting one too.

SAM. Pretty cool to get them in Beta, right? I hear the waitlist is super long.

OLIVER. Is this—will it be for Gloria?

SAM. No, my mom. With my dad gone, she's pretty lonely.

OLIVER. You're lucky you've still got a parent.

Sam nods and knocks wood.

SAM. What about you?

OLIVER. No, my parents are long gone.

SAM. No—sorry—I meant, why are you getting a Helper?

OLIVER. Oh.

Beat.

Has Patrick told you about our situation?

SAM. I don't think so.

OLIVER. My wife and I are still waiting to receive Fertility.

SAM. Oh, I'm sorry.

OLIVER. It's okay. My wife is taking some time off work to prepare for our next application, but she's kind of at loose ends. I thought this might help.

SAM. May I ask what attempt you're on?

OLIVER. We completed our fourth last year.

Sam winces slightly. Oliver nods.

SAM. Is it... I'm sorry, but we did have a slight hiccup on the Genetics ourselves—

OLIVER. Genetics aren't the problem.

SAM. I'm sorry. I shouldn't pry.

Silence.

We had to terminate our first attempt. Down's. Jenny and I fought to keep it. But, you know—"drain on resources" and all that.

OLIVER. I thought they'd eliminated the possibility of any chromosomal—

SAM. Look what happens with gender selection. We just got unlucky.

OLIVER. I'm so sorry.

SAM. And we didn't find out until Jenny was twenty weeks along—

OLIVER. What a nightmare.

SAM. Yes.

Beat.

But we have Gloria now. So. All worth it.

He smiles. Pause.

OLIVER. Anna—my wife. She's always had kind of a hard... The vitamin D deficiency has, for her, been, um, kind of debilitating? Of course, you can't stay on pharmaceuticals if you want Fertility. So, she went off. And she seems fine, day to day. She eats. She makes jokes. But she can't seem to get past the M.H.E.

SAM. That test is so outdated. Who can honestly say they are "happy" every single day?

OLIVER. I know! And it's a vicious cycle—she doesn't pass the Mental Health because she seems depressed, so we don't receive our Fertility, which makes her...more depressed. (*Laughs.*) I mean, give her a kid: she'll be happy. That's what I wanna say to them: Don't look at her sitting there, all nervous. Watch her in our unit, see how she is with our friends' kids.

SAM. You still have one more chance, though, right?

OLIVER. Yes. Just the one.

SAM. Could you apply for an exemption?

OLIVER. I hope it doesn't come to that.

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4 men, 3 women

Generations ago, humans retreated deep underground after an environmental disaster ruined the world above. Nature is now simulated through brain-implanted chips, and fertility is regulated to keep the surviving population in balance. Anna and Oliver want to have a baby, and their options are running out.

"[Kazan has] created a slyly detailed alternate universe that is both an extrapolation of the world we know today and its own consistent entity."

—**The New York Times**

"...sharp, stirring... incisive and humane... AFTER THE BLAST has the smart, fully fleshed-out trappings of a compelling dystopia story, but its heart—and its strength—is its examination of despair... AFTER THE BLAST's brilliance lies in its use of science fiction's black mirror to cast light on human betrayals both global and personal. Its shattered world is ours..."

—**New York Magazine**

"...an intriguing, engaging, and laugh-laced philosophical discourse with heart..."

—**The Huffington Post**

"[Kazan is] a playwright...of uncommon talent. ...[AFTER THE BLAST] pulls off the bedazzling feat of taking a hyper-politicized topic and using it as the occasion for a taut, sermon-free drama whose true subject is the inability of men and women to see each other plain... The true star of AFTER THE BLAST...is its creator. Kazan has emerged as a writer of real individuality."

—**The Wall Street Journal**

Also by Zoe Kazan

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