

THANK YOU FOR YELLOW

By Luke 'Luca' Cockayne

CHARACTER NOTES:

Both ANA and LUKE have matching tattoos of [something simple and easily seen from far away, like a bright yellow flower] on the inside of their right arms.

NURSE LUKE is the LUKE character in nurse's scrubs and wearing a medical mask. The audience is supposed to recognise they are the same person (they've still got the tattoo), but ANA is unaware.

NURSE can be played by a person of any physical appearance.

STAGING NOTES: The play is about an artist in a psychiatric hospital and uses her visual art, her wardrobe, and the condition of her room to communicate her mental state as much as anything she says.

The stage is split into two parts – ANA'S ROOM & THE GARDEN – characters move between the sections and the part not in use are blacked out.

Scene 1: ANA'S ROOM

Inside a psychiatric hospital, on an acute ward. A wooden bed with plain bedding. An en suite bathroom is implied.

A young woman, ANA, is alone in the room. She's wearing a variety of scarves as a make-shift skirt and a shirt that's barely buttoned up. She's wearing leggings over a swimming costume. She has bare feet and self-harm scars.

ANA is painting on an interior wall with tea bags. She smears the wet bags across the plain wall's surface, making sweeping shapes. She is holding a cup of water, which she's dipping the tea bags into, and some of the water goes on the clothes on the floor.

ANA [to herself]: Pretty, pretty, swirls and sweeping, pretty wall, pretty feelings.

Enter NURSE.

NURSE: Ana, if you've got any cigarettes you can go into the garden for fresh air time. Ana, what are you doing?!

ANA: Painting!

NURSE: What are those? Tea bags? *[grabs the teabags]* You've got everything all wet!

[ANA wanders away]

NURSE *[noticing what ANA's wearing]*: Wait, come back and put some proper clothes on!

[NURSE sighs and starts cleaning up the mess]

Scene 2: THE GARDEN

In the psychiatric hospital garden. There's a wooden bench and a tree.

ANA is fidgeting, miming the action of lighting a cigarette.

Enter LUKE.

LUKE: Got a light? *[He takes two cigarettes out of a packet, offers ANA one]*

[ANA gets out her lighter, but doesn't give it to LUKE. She moves her body into a 'sexier' pose and takes the offered cigarette from him.]

ANA: Is there anything you need from me? I can make you feel good. I can do all sorts of things with my mouth, with my tongue. Do you like my hair, pretty pretty. Good and pretty. Do you like my scarves? Do you like my body? *[She starts trying to undo one of the scarves that make up her make-shift skirt. Gets confused. Starts unbuttoning the shirt more in a 'sexy' way]*

LUKE: Hey, it's okay. It's just a cigarette.

ANA *[to herself, looking down]*: It's never just a cigarette. Flirting too much. Bad. Bad. Not pretty. But I don't have any cigarettes. How else am I supposed to get a cigarette? Trading is good. Trade is fair. What to trade. What to share?

Exit LUKE [unnoticed by ANA]

ANA: Sorry. Inappropriate. Try again? *[She realises LUKE is gone. Shrugs and wanders back to her room area, still holding the cigarette]*

Scene 3: ANA'S ROOM

Inside ANA's room again. The teabag stains are still visible. The room is messier with childish art materials and loose papers with childish drawings of yellow flowers, yellow paper, torn out attempts at paper flowers, on the floor and on top of the bedcovers.

Enter ANA. She's shedding clothing as she goes until she's just in the swimming costume. She runs a tap (offstage) and comes back with a bowl of water, ties her hair in a spare scarf, and then starts grabbing coloured paper, felt-tip pens, anything that contains yellow dye. She enthusiastically starts trying to extract the colours, getting water everywhere even worse than before.

Enter NURSE.

NURSE: Ana! What are you doing! *[hauls ANA up]*

[ANA accidentally kicks the bowl of water over]

NURSE: What kind of mess are you making? Look everything is wet again! What is it with you and... stay there. Stay there!

[NURSE exits and then quickly returns with bin bags and starts picking up items (including ANA's shirt and leggings) and throwing them into the bin bags.]

ANA *[distressed]*: No! I need those. Stop!

[NURSE continues putting items in the bin bag]

[ANA tries to stop them, bracing herself against NURSE's legs. The scarf in her hair becomes undone.]

ANA: Please. My drawings! Please stop.

NURSE *[shouting]*: I need help!

[In the scuffle the bag rips open. The yellow dye has soaked through some of the items, the unsmoked cigarette breaks, and the mess gets worse.]

Enter LUKE. [He is dressed as a nurse]

[NURSE and NURSE LUKE wrestle ANA to the ground, sedating her with an injection]

[NURSE LUKE and the NURSE strip the bed, removing the bedframe, as ANA sinks onto the bare waterproof mattress that's left behind. NURSE LUKE and the NURSE finish packing up the items as they talk]

NURSE: We keep increasing the dosages, but she just won't stop making a mess.

NURSE LUKE *[picking up a drawing, the drawing is smudged and the paper is wet]*: What do you think she was drawing?

NURSE: It just looks like a mess to me. I don't know how to help this one. Prancing about with almost no clothes on, expecting us to tidy up after her like we're her maids or something! I gave her paper and coloured pens after that teabag incident and look what she's done! Now we'll need to turn her water off.

NURSE LUKE: I don't think she's doing it deliberately. Seems cruel to take her bedframe away.

NURSE: It doesn't matter. This is the second time she's soaked the place and we can't let her damage any more furniture. Bad behaviour's still bad behaviour. Could you get her a clean blanket? I better get all this washed.

Exit NURSE and NURSE LUKE [with the bin bags and wet bedding]

NURSE LUKE returns with a blanket, which he places on the sleeping ANA. He takes some bright yellow acrylic paints out of his pocket and hides them in the folds of the blanket.

NURSE LUKE: Here you go Ana, maybe these paints will help.

Scene 4: THE GARDEN

Enter ANA. [She's wearing the blanket around her like a dress or a cloak. She hangs the blanket up in the branches of a tree, revealing that she's still in her bathing costume. She starts using her fingers to paint a bright yellow flower on the blanket in swooping lines]

Enter LUKE

LUKE: Um, Ana, I don't think that's what you're supposed to use that for.

ANA: Got paint. Need to paint. Not paint on walls. Bad. Bad. Not paint on paper, paper thrown away. Paper gets wet. Bad. Paint on blanket. Wear blanket or paint on blanket? Paint on blanket. Need canvas. No canvas in hospital. What is canvas? Fabric. Fabric like blanket. Use blanket.

Enter NURSE

NURSE: ANA!

Exit LUKE

[ANA panics, getting paint on herself as she tries to cover herself and hide the paint all at once]

NURSE: Ana that's hospital property. And you're half-naked! You need to stay in your room if you're not dressed.

ANA [starting to cry]: Clothes wet. Clothes lost. Drawings wet. Drawings lost. Sorry. Not very sexy today. Lost sexiness. Lost. Lost. I just can't. I need. I need canvas. Clothes got wet. Everything got wet. Thrown out. Nothing dry. No more cigarettes. Not fair. Bored. Tired. Not fair. Not sexy. Not good.

Enter NURSE LUKE [*holding a towel*]

NURSE LUKE: We can get you some pyjamas if you need something to wear. [*He wraps ANA in the towel and leads her away, leaving NURSE and the blanket hung up in the tree branches displaying the flower*]

ANA: Okay. No more painting today. Can I have my water back on? Water's been off for hours and hours. Didn't get anything wet. Can't find my leggings. Is in the bin? With other wet things? In the bin?

[*NURSE remains. Looking at the blanket with the painted flower on it*]

Enter NURSE LUKE [*holding a box with 'lost & found' on it*]

NURSE LUKE: I think she might have been telling the truth about her leggings getting lost. Some of this stuff's been in here for months, is it okay if I let her have a rummage?

NURSE [*distracted*] Sure.

[*pause*]

NURSE: It's a flower, right? What she's been trying to draw. I couldn't work out what it was before, but it's just a flower.

[*pause*]

NURSE [*reluctantly*]: There might be some canvas in the arts and crafts room...

NURSE LUKE: I think that'd be nice.

NURSE: [*nods*] Here give that box to me [*takes the box*]

Exit NURSE

Scene 5: ANA'S ROOM

Ana is in NHS pyjamas, although she's modified them in a way which could possibly be considered 'sexy' if it wasn't so haphazard. She's rocking herself, while sitting on the bare mattress.

ANA: Wait. Wait. Thirsty. Thirsty. Wait. Wait. Tired of waiting! Wait. Wait. Tired of waiting. Be good, be pretty, be good, be quiet, be good, be pretty. Thirsty.

Enter NURSE [*holding the 'lost & found' box*]

NURSE: That's your water back on, Ana. We told you when you first got here that there was spare clothing in the lost and found if you were running out of clothes, but incase you forgot here [*holds out box*]

[*to themselves*] This is going to be a disaster, the girl can't even dress herself appropriately.

[*brightly to ANA*]: And once you're dressed you can go down to the arts and crafts room!

We've opened it late for you, since you keep missing the opening times!

[*ANA takes a handful of socks out of the box, then carefully selects two that match and puts them on in a sort of wonder*]

ANA: No more wet feet. Socks. Dry socks. Dry socks.

[*looking up at NURSE quizzically*]: Thought I wasn't supposed to leave my room if I wasn't dressed properly. Is pyjamas dressed? Is socks? Thank you... for the socks. Nice matching socks.

NURSE: Pyjamas is dressed enough, but you really need to try and keep all your clothes on, and the pyjamas a bit more buttoned up. Why don't you see if there's anything else you like in here?

[*ANA buttons up her shirt and then goes to run off, but hesitates*]

ANA: Um, sorry for mess. For making mess. For upsetting NURSE. For damaging property. Mess bad. No more mess. Yes? All good with NURSE? [*She fidgets nervously*]

NURSE: [*surprised*] Oh my dear, it's okay. It's all right. Apology accepted! Run along, there's a surprise for you in the arts & crafts room if you hurry.

Exit ANA [running, just in her pyjamas and the socks]

NURSE: [*to themselves, affectionately*] And I'll just continue standing here holding this box like a muggins. [*Puts down box*]

Exit NURSE

Scene 6: THE GARDEN

LUKE is sitting on the bench, reading a book of poetry (The Fact Of A Doorframe by Adrienne Rich). The blanket is gone.

LUKE [*reading out loud to himself*]: "The waste of my love goes on this way / trying to save you from yourself".

Enter ANA. [She's wearing a hoody over her pyjamas, socks and sort of has shoes on. She looks comfortable, happier, and her outfit is less chaotic. She's holding a small canvas with a painting of yellow flowers on it, smaller versions of the yellow flower from the blanket 'painting']

ANA: I painted something for you, to say thank you, for the cigarettes.

LUKE: Hello Ana! That's a cool painting, I like the colour! You didn't need to give me anything though, they're just cigarettes. You needed one, I had some spare. It's alright. Look, take this packet then you have enough.

[*pause*]

You doing any better? You look a bit... more comfortable?

ANA: The canvas is helping. I like the wetness of the paint. I can use my fingers. It's nice. It, um, stops me wanting to cut myself. It's like... the same wetness... but without the... I don't know. That probably doesn't make sense. [*She shakes her head*] I just like the colours and the shapes. Yellow nice. Yellow dye in paper hard to get out. Painting feels calmer. I start feeling calmer can look at the painting after and remember that calm feeling. Maybe I can... keep it in my room maybe. Remember, not need to... remember the arts and crafts room. Not need to hide, not need to try to get out dye. Maybe this will make room happier? Maybe this will help. Help. Help feel better.

[*pause*]

Are you okay? I'm sorry, I've not asked you that before. All inside my head thoughts, other peoples thoughts real too. Sorry for... for offering body. For being... for inappropriateness. I am... not... am making a mess.

LUKE: [*laughs*] Hey it's alright. I'm sorry you've not been... I'm glad you're doing better. I'm glad the art stuff helps. And I'm even better knowing you're doing better.

ANA: Me too. [*conspiratorially*] And if I stick to using the canvas safely in the arts and crafts room, maybe I'll even get my bedframe back!

Exit ANA

LUKE [*getting up and closing the book*]: "Trying to save you from yourself..."

ENDS
