

Controlling The Controllables

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RANDY: A 30-year-old man at rock bottom.

The Controllables: Three distinct characters: Attitude, Effort, and Focus

Waitress: A wise southern waitress.

Emily

Mr. Kaines

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(A man of about 30 years old enters a diner in Colorado. There is no one there except a WAITRESS cleaning up a table. There is a dartboard on the wall and you can hear the faint hum of music and the ball game playing in the background. The man, RANDY, takes a seat at the newly cleaned tables, after he takes in his environment.)

WAITRESS

Hi, my name's Darly! Welcome to Rock Bottom Diner. Can I get you something to drink hun?

RANDY

Y'know I think I'll take a big cup of coffee to help me swallow all the shame in myself.

WAITRESS

Alright.... Decaf or regular?

RANDY

Surprise me. But be careful, I'm used to disappointment!

WAITRESS

I'm gonna give you decaf, it looks like you already have enough tension in your life. (she pats him on the shoulder)

(The WAITRESS exits for a moment to go and get the coffee. She comes back with 2 cups in one hand and the coffee pot in the other. She pours him a drink and then sits down and pours herself one. RANDY grabs the newspaper at the table and opens it up as soon as the WAITRESS sits down so he can't see.)

RANDY

And while you're at it, can I get some eggs and bacon?

WAITRESS

Can't, I'm on a break.

RANDY puts his paper down

RANDY

What? I just got here!

WAITRESS

Well, your attitude is so depressing it made my heart a little faint, want any sugar?

(She stirs her coffee)

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RANDY

I can't help being this way! Look if you've had the things in my life happen you'd be the same way too.

WAITRESS

Look, sweetie. Everybody has bad things happen in their life. You think I wanted to be a waitress so I could talk to people like you all day? No. Look at the Newspaper! (*she picks it up and starts reading*) “ Earthquake in Oklahoma kills dozens. Tornado in Kentucky takes away a family's house. Flood in Oklahoma destroys school. Mans store is robbed right here in colorado. Disease breaks loose in Oklahoma.”

RANDY

Seems like I should move to Oklahoma I'd fit right in.

WAITRESS

That's the thing, sweetie, you wouldn't. If you keep reading the people come together and start rebuilding the homes, schools and help to support the families that lost people. The Oklahomans do what I like to call “controlling the controllable.”

RANDY

Well, I can't control being sad.

WAITRESS

But you can control what you're going to do about it! I moved here from Oklahoma five years ago with nothing but the clothes on my back and a greyhound ticket. My life was in distress, so I decided to move somewhere more peaceful.

RANDY

How do I find peace where I am?

WAITRESS

You're in Colorado! Look around, there's nature everywhere. Sometimes when life gets stressful, me and my boyfriend like to go rafting. In nature, you'll find your inner peace.

(RANDY feels a sudden spark of inspiration, he chugs the rest of his coffee and slams 100 dollars on the table.)

RANDY

Keep the change! Thank you.

(Randy exits the diner in a hurry)

Waitress

Well if he can't find the controllable, they'll for sure find him!

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SCENE TWO

(RANDY has made it to the mountains. He is exhausted, he has been walking for hours on end and is now on a cliff. He is surrounded by nature. He pulls out his notebook and speaks what he's writing.)

RANDY

Out of the thousands of times, I've seen these trees I've never seen such wonderful colors. The blue spruce and the evergreens have never looked so vivid in my life. The bluebirds and the yellow warblers dance around me in such a way as I've never been here, yet I've been here the whole time. I'm high above everything I've ever known. A chilling river is underneath me. I look up and there's still more. The magnificent mix of colors in the sky kisses my eyes as the sun starts to set. The mix of the orange, yellow, pink, and red call me for an embrace. It's almost like I actually hear them. Calling me. Closer. Closer.

(RANDY trips on a rock and falls off the cliff and into a river. The sound of struggling and rushing water is heard. here is a blackout, the lights come on and RANDY is crawling from the riverbank, soaking wet, and a huge gash on his head.)

RANDY

(coughing and crawling)

Help. Anybody. Can you hear me? I'm gonna die.

(RANDY passes out, the stage goes dark. 3 men wearing all black come in with candles. The only source of light on stage is the candles illuminating their faces. They are the controllables.)

ATTITUDE

Looks like we caught him just at the right time!

EFFORT

Are you kidding me ? He's dead!

ATTITUDE

Of course he's dead! We're spirits

FOCUS

Guys I don't think he's dead at all.

ATTITUDE and EFFORT

WHY??

FOCUS

Because he's sitting up and rubbing his eyes.

RANDY

Oh... oh my God am I dead!?

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Controllables

Uhh, yes.

RANDY

Oh no! I was upset and all, but I don't want to die! Am I going to hell? I swear I didn't mean to jump off that cliff!

ATTITUDE

Relax bud. We don't know your fate.

EFFORT

We are just here to show you a couple of points in your life you could have done a little better.

FOCUS

Where you could have controlled us!

RANDY

Where I could've controlled yall?

ATTITUDE

Yep, we are the controllables. I'm Attitude, and today you had quite a bad fall.

EFFORT

I'm Effort, and I'll show you where you could have tried a little harder to be a good guy.

FOCUS

And I'm Focus, I'm the one who will show you at the core what your intents were and what they should've been.

RANDY

So yall guys are gonna go around and talk about all the mistakes I've made? If y'all know me I pretty much do that to myself anyway, so I thank you for the sentiment but your critiques are not needed.

(as RANDY turns around to walk away he is faced next to a crying girl.)

RANDY

Emily? Hey are you ok? Stop crying!

(Emily is unaffected by RANDY's words, it's like she can't hear him.)

EFFORT

Remember Emily? The date you stood up in high school?

RANDY

How could I not! She's the first girl I was ever interested in. She never left my mind. Is she dead too?

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FOCUS

No silly! This is a flashback! You never saw her cry but we did!

RANDY

So you guys aren't just my guardian angels?

EFFORT

Buddy, we are not anybody's angels.

ATTITUDE

We are spirits that serve all mankind.

FOCUS

So you better be grateful that we came here to fix you!

RANDY

Well, there's nothing I could've done to stop her from crying.

Controllables

Are you stupid?!

ATTITUDE

What about showing up to the date YOU asked her on?

RANDY

Look I was nervous. This girl meant a lot to me, I bought these new jeans for the date, I put them on, and when I stepped out of the car they ripped! I didn't see her in the parking lot so I drove away. I thought about just putting other pants on but the only clean ones were some old gym shorts. I couldn't go on a first date wearing that!

FOCUS

I'm sure she would have understood if you went to the date and just told her what happened!

EFFORT

Plus what's worse? Letting the girl you all lone sobbing her heart out, or embarrassing yourself a little bit in some gym shorts?

RANDY

I guess you guys are right!

ATTITUDE

We are right! You couldn't control that your pants were going to rip, and you couldn't even control if she was going to judge you in your shorts, but you could control you being there.

FOCUS

Sometimes you have to get out of your own head and think about others to make things better.

RANDY

You're right. I should've showed up to the date.

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(RANDY picks a flower from the ground and hands it to Emily. She walks offstage. One of the Controllables wraps a bandage around RANDY's gash on his head)

RANDY

Wow, I didn't realize how hurt I was. Are you guys gonna help me more?

EFFORT

We are going to help you more than you know!

RANDY

I'm glad, that was quite a fall I took.

(RANDY Looks up at the cliff)

RANDY

So am I really dead?

ATTITUDE

Well... Yes

EFFORT

And No

FOCUS

The thing is... you might be Dying.

Controllables

But we can't tell you.

RANDY

Dying? I feel fine! I mean except for the gash on my head. My arm hurts a little too. Maybe I should find my way down this mountain.

(As soon as he exits a man comes in center stage with a letter and screams center stage, the noise makes Rand come back)

RANDY

Mr Kaines? Is this one of those flashback things again?

FOCUS

Indeed it is.

ATTITUDE

The man who hired you when you had nothing.

EFFORT

He gave you everything you wanted if you worked hard enough.

RANDY

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And took it all away when times got tough for him. (*RANDY takes the paper from Mr. Kaines*)
Look! He's holding my letter of termination.

ATTITUDE

For him, that was one of the hardest decisions he had to make. You were his favorite employee.

RANDY

If I was his favorite then why did he fire me?

FOCUS

Like you said times were tough. He had to let someone go for the survival of the company, and you weren't meeting deadlines.

RANDY

So your saying he liked me, but I was a bad worker?

EFFORT

That's exactly what we're saying. Just because your're a nice guy doesn't mean you're a valuable one.

RANDY

Hey! Aren't you supposed to say that I am valuable?

ATTITUDE

You're right. You are valuable, but you have to show others that.

EFFORT

You have to be confident in yourself for others to be confident in you.

RANDY

So what you're saying is if I would've just bucked up and gotten some work done I would've saved my job?

FOCUS

That's exactly what we are saying!

ATTITUDE

You're not learning fast but your're learning!

(RANDY puts the letter back in Mr. Kaine's hand. Kaine walks off stage, and EFFORT puts a velcro brace on RANDY's arm. When Kaine exits WAITRESS enters holding a 100 dollar bill, she's screaming with joy.)

RANDY

It's that waitress! Hey, I thought I did a pretty nice thing! There's no way yall can say me giving her 100 dollars was a bad thing.

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EFFORT

It's not.

FOCUS

You actually did something good today.

ATTITUDE

Congratulations you are already on your way to rebuilding your life.

EFFORT

Rock bottom is a pretty solid foundation.

RANDY

Your're right it is.

ATTITUDE

I think you're ready to wake up.

RANDY

What?

FOCUS

Just remember, it will be ok.

RANDY

What are you talking about waking up?

EFFORT

It'll be ok.

RANDY

No, it won't! Just explain to me what's going on?

WAITRESS

It'll be ok.

(The set changes and reveals that RANDY is sitting in a hospital bed with the WAITRESS at his side. The controllables have exited but have left their candles on stage.)

RANDY

Wha- Where am I? I was just.

WAITRESS

You're awake! I was rafting and saw your body on the shore. I'm glad I found you. With that blow to the head you had, you would've been a dead man!

RANDY

Thank you so much! This might sound silly but I'm kind of glad this happened. I kind of have a new perspective on life.

WAITRESS

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Well, you know what they say, “there’s no better foundation than rock bottom”.

RANDY

Speaking of that, you think there's an open position down at the diner?

WAITRESS

Possibly, let’s slow down and get you better first.

RANDY

You're right! I just need to control the controllables. I should be happy I'm alive and feel excited to turn my life around.

WAITRESS

Hey, maybe you did learn something falling off that cliff.

RANDY

Well, I did! I met my fears face to face. They taught me a couple of lessons.

WAITRESS

I really don't know what that means but I'm happy for you! It looks like you need some sleep. I'll see you tomorrow.

RANDY

Sounds great! I'll see you then.

(RANDY closes his eyes and the WAITRESS exits. The controllables enter and pick up their candles. The stage lights go out again. The only illumination is coming from the candles. The controllables all blow out their candles at once ending the play.)

THE END