

Coffee Talk: Two Sugars One Life Brandon from Walmart

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The person who showed up for me during one of the worst moments of my adult life was a Walmart employee named Brandon.

I don't know Brandon's last name. I don't know if he still works there. I don't know anything about him except that when I was having a full biological meltdown in the basics section, heart racing, hands shaking, vision tunneling over two identical white t-shirts, Brandon didn't panic.

He got me a chair.

He brought water.

He said, "Take your time, man. I'll be over here if you need anything."

Then he just stood nearby. Not hovering. Not asking questions. Not making it weird. Just present. Available. Calm.

If you've ever been rescued by someone who had absolutely no obligation to rescue you, you know this specific kind of gratitude.

Here's what gets me about Brandon: he showed more emotional intelligence in that three-minute interaction than I'd demonstrated in six months.

I'd been "powering through." Skipping meals. Running on coffee and cortisol. Ignoring every warning sign my body sent because I was too busy, too important, too whatever excuse I was using that week. I'd been terrible at taking care of myself.

And Brandon, a stranger in a blue vest making probably not enough money, saw a guy losing it over t-shirts and thought: *chair, water, space.*

That's it. That's the whole intervention.

No advice. No “have you tried deep breathing?” No “everything happens for a reason.” Just practical help and the gift of not being alone while my nervous system rebooted.

Sometimes the hero isn't the person with the credentials. It's the one who shows up with a chair.

I think about Brandon a lot. Not in a weird way. In a “what would Brandon do?” way. When someone's struggling, Brandon doesn't need to fix it. Brandon just makes space for it.

When someone's falling apart, Brandon doesn't ask why. Brandon gets a chair.

When someone's clearly not okay, Brandon doesn't pretend not to notice. Brandon says, “I'll be over here if you need anything.”

We spend so much time trying to have the right words. The perfect advice. The solution that will make everything better. Sometimes what people actually need is a chair, some water, and someone who'll stand nearby without making it weird.

I never got to properly thank Brandon. By the time I'd pulled myself together enough to be coherent, he was helping someone else find lightbulbs. Just moved on to the next thing like he hadn't just been a small hero in my personal disaster movie.

So this is for Brandon. And for everyone who's ever been a Brandon for someone else. Who saw a stranger struggling and thought “how can I help?” instead of “not my problem.”

Accepting help from strangers isn't weakness. It's wisdom.

And for everyone who's ever been me in that moment, falling apart in public, convinced you're the only one who can't hold it together: there are Brandons everywhere. You just have to let them help.

Here's to the Brandons. The quiet helpers. The chair-bringers. The ones who show up without being asked.

Cheers, Clayton

Coffee Talk 2.0: For everyone who's ever been saved by a stranger with a chair and zero judgment.

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