

## So I Take Pictures

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So I take pictures. It's just my thing, you know? This camera hanging off my neck, it's basically an extra limb. It's a Canon, not the best quality, but it gets the job done. So if you're nervous in front of a camera, stick around for about a week and you'll be over that fast. It's just a thing I do. What I mean to say is, it's for sure a thing I do, but I've also got a good reason behind it.

See, I've got a bad memory. It's really bad. I don't mean the kind of bad that can't remember whether you had eggs or if you had cereal for breakfast; I mean the kind of bad where I do something cool or fun or wild or whatever, and I can't remember a thing. Like if something happens that you want to tell a big wicked story about, and everybody you tell is laughing or mesmerized. Like if you're on the bus or L or something telling a story, you're telling it pretty loud because of the buildings and lights and the tunnel whipping by, and strangers lean in to listen, and they laugh, too, out loud, and it breaks that weird silence that happens when people ignore each other on the train. You all exchange nods and everybody gets it, like a neat kind of a connection or something. Those things, those stories, they're the kinds of things I forget.

So the good thing with that is, I'm pretty fearless. I don't really have a lot of baggage or issues or anything, because if something bad happened, I really just can't remember it. Which is pretty cool. Like I've got this scar on my leg. I don't know how it got there. It's kind of long, a purpley-brown color, and it sort of dips in a little bit under my knee. Haven't a clue. It makes me pretty easy to talk to. I might snap your picture in the middle of it, but once you get used to it, you won't even notice.

Because, if I'm going to remember something, I have to take pictures of it. That's just the way it is. My mom tells me I was like that

even before I lost my memory, back when I was a kid. For my birthday that year I got one of those little Kodak cameras, you know, the single-use ones made of yellow cardboard and hard plastic. I just took pictures of everything; our gray cat getting into the garbage, the cranky old lady scowling at us out of her window from next door, lightning bugs we caught and kept in these little wooden, screened-in bug boxes, Barbie dolls, roller skates, my friends playing on the swing set, practically everything and I never stopped. Maybe you could even call it my passion. I kind of like that word: passion. It implies a zest for life, which I like to say I've got.

So every couple of weeks, like when I'm feeling nostalgic or however you call it when you're wishing for memories, I just grab out my old photo albums and look through them. I've got a whole shelf of them lined up in my bedroom, twenty-three to be exact. People like to give me albums for birthdays and Christmas, so I've got all colors and sizes. So when I'm looking for memories, I'll recognize almost everybody, and I'll see myself in some of the pictures, and we'll all be doing something and occasionally I can remember little parts of what it is we're doing, but most of the time I'll have no clue at all. So usually I just make up stories that go along with the pictures. It's pretty neat, you know, because I guess I'm lucky I've been a lot of places. Got a big diverse array of stories I can make up, like I can write my own life out, you know?

So, don't worry, you'll get used to me snapping your picture all the time. Comes with the territory.

Here, smile.