

The Present Is the Gift 🎁

What's poppin', people? It's Dante — just hopping off the bus here. Look at how beautiful it is this morning. Check out the color of the leaves.

You know, photography provides so much joy in my life. The ultimate gift in life *is* the present. Ironically enough, the present *is* the gift.

Christmas is coming, this joyous season — and I just love life. I think ultimately what photography provides me is this abundance of love for life. The goal of the photographer, I believe, is very simple: **to fall in love with life each and every day.**

For me, having this camera with me all the time lets me embrace the *spirit of play* throughout my day. It lets me embrace the mundane and see everything with clarity. Through the camera, I have a dialogue with the world. Through the camera, I have a reason to get up in the morning. There's this overflow of energy that moves through me — this overflow of love, this overflow of joy.

I'm literally watching a black squirrel climb a tree right now under this cotton candy sky. Moments like that remind me that the idea of play is missing in the modern world — where everything is work, everything is toil, everything is about maximizing productivity.

But to have something that lets you play, that lets you *see*, that lets you fall in love with life — that's critical. Photography gives me that ability to return to day one every day. Like I'm just a big kid with a camera, seeing everything again for the first time — where everything is new, everything is fresh, everything is in flux. **You can't make the same photograph twice.**

Is that not such an abundant thought? That photography has infinite possibility? That there's so much novelty in life?

We're living in one of the most abundant times to ever be alive — with all the technology, the ability to hop on a plane from the U.S. to Tokyo, or even just the simple fact that a bus shows up to take you where you need to go. We have so

much.

But it's not about the stuff. The camera's great, sure — but the best things in life are free. All you really need to do is open your eyes and *see*. Open your heart and *feel*.

Strip away the noise. Strip away the distractions. Use photography as a way to fall in love with life again. Embrace the spirit of play. Stay in the present moment.

Because this — right here — **is the gift.**