Eron, Matt, and Cedar's 2024 Missive

Summary

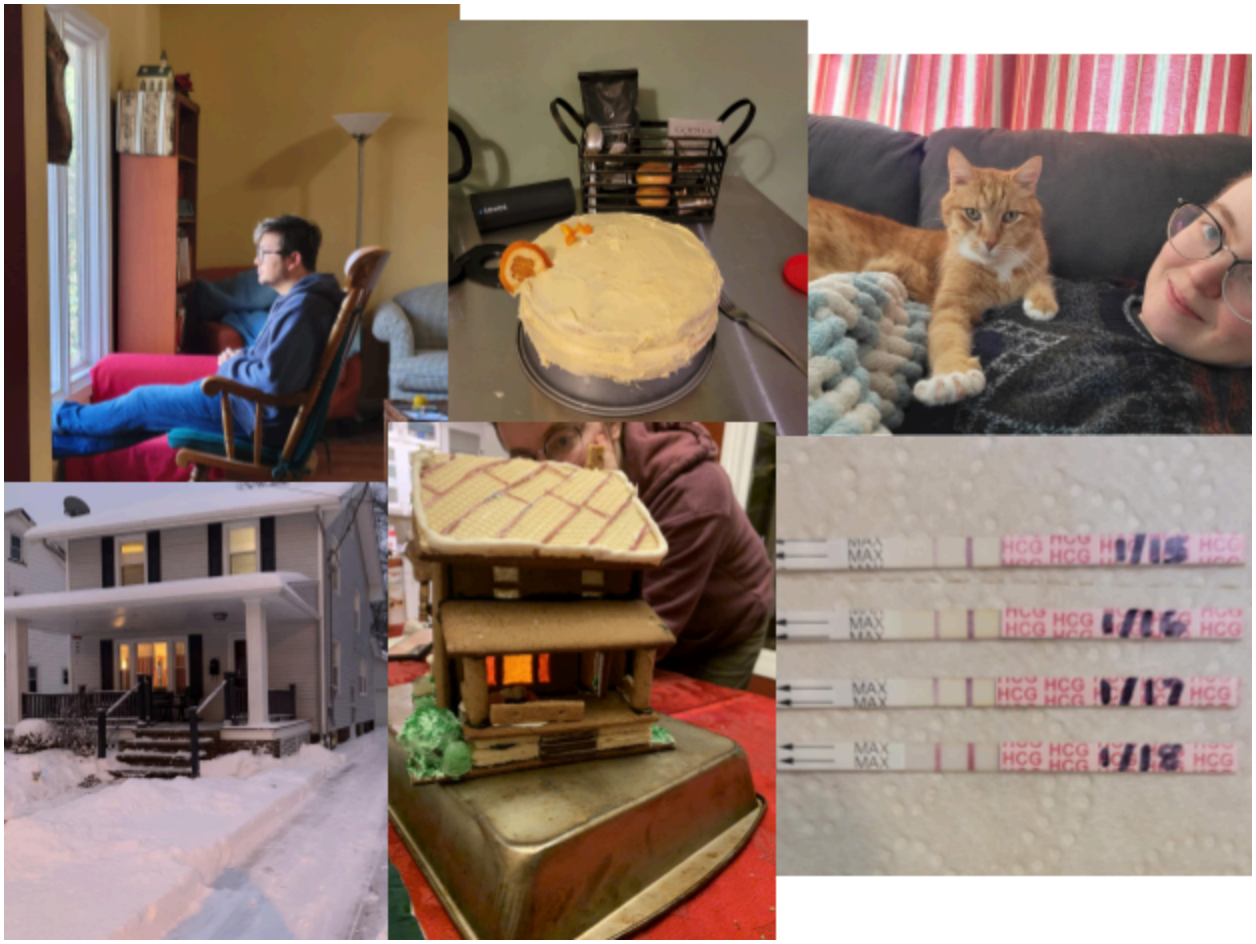
January | February | March | April
May | June | July | August
September | October | November | December

Games/Books/Shows of the Year

January 2024

We (re)join our adventurers in Stone Mountain, GA, with Amy, David, Allen, and Risa celebrating the new year. The new year started with nibbling at the gingerbread house replica of their new home, board games, and coffee (Matt got a new espresso press…). Eron and Matt returned to Ohio and filled January with a blend of friends, professional activities, and adulting. Carolyn joined us for many a Super-Smash-Or-Other-Game-And-Pizza hang; Eron Zoomed (Skyped? Conference called? Was rendered on a computer screen?) with Lissa. Eron went to candidate interviews and both E+M submitted for the annual Society for Music Theory (SMT) conference. Matt published an article in *Music and Science* and a book review in *Music Theory Spectrum*. The electricians replaced the service panel and added a few outlets throughout the house (which involved the power being out for a few hours). Matt found a free chair on facebook marketplace for the nursery… though carrying it up the stairs and through door frames made Eron exclaim something about that chair dying in this house. (Also, Eron was sick with a cold.)

Oh, and we found out about a forthcoming (/impending) baby!!! *All baby news will be separated in the last paragraph of the month*.



February 2024

Knowing about the upcoming baby, we wanted to fill February with activities out of the house. We went to the orchestra (ft. our pals Beethoven + Haydn), started our charcoal drawing class, saw a performance of Messiaen, *Quatuor pour la fin du Temps*, and we went to Moe's (a particularly stressful time making us nearly late for the Ash Wednesday rehearsal). February is also Eron's birthday month!! To celebrate, Eron wore their new overalls (from Amy+David), M+E went on a walk, and Jaz made an incredible funfetti cake—unfortunately, as part of our friend contract, we had to share with Lena and Carolyn. Eron also reflected on a past-note from her 20yo self. Other social events in February included dinner with Paul and Sue down the street, seeing Noah's diss. defense runthrough, talking to Braden, and our routine research club with Christa (occasionally ft. Miguel). Matt got a new tattoo, got yolk all over his hand to prove a point, and Eron had to cancel class due to scary brake noises (Miata brake pads).

Baby news:

Eron had her first ultrasound and we told our families about the baby. At this point in the pregnancy, Eron tried to convince Matt that the names “Lysander” and “Ubiquities” are good baby names. Matt tried to convince Eron that “Tao” and “Kazuya Mishima” are good baby names. After feeling pretty awful from 4:30 to bedtime every day, Eron finally achieved the universal sign for pregnancy in the media: they threw up on 2/21. Matt told his work about the pregnancy so that he had plenty of time to get leave approved for Spring 2025.



March 2024

Thanks to a raise from Oberlin, our protagonists made the decision to start getting our house regularly cleaned by someone else! This was timely, since March started with hosting visitors: Mom Chiu, Papa Chiu, and Adam came to visit and very helpfully sleeved all the cards for Eron’s new copy of Ark Nova, just in time for Eron to feel too sick to play. Adam also brought Matt some housewarming coffee that happened to be from a coffee shop in Maryville, TN (where Eron’s grandparents live!). We had a lovely visit with good chats, Suika, and some walks by Coe Lake. Now that they’d gotten rid of those pesky family members by feigning

illness, E&M then began a tradition of regularly playing a truly staggering quantity of Ark Nova. Matt taught an organ lesson to the president of a landscaping company. We hosted Hanisha and Jacob on their way to the South Central / Southeast theory conference—and got a sneak peek of the talks! The birds emerged and reminded everyone that being outside is nice. Inspired by that, we went to the Cleveland Zoo and enjoyed petting animals (not all of them). Eron was getting absolutely clobbered by the semester thanks to morning sickness and general malaise. What would help with that? Being observed by a lot of colleagues! (Actually, they had really helpful feedback.) We got lunch with Molly & Jonathan, participated in Palm Sunday at Bethesda on the Bay (refresher: that's the church Matt plays for), and Matt had a spring break that neither of them really remembers. Eron hit the second trimester and spent her spring break pulling up all of the carpet in the living room instead of catching up on the debilitating grading backlog she'd accumulated while feeling ill. (A pox on whoever decided to use staples, brittle tack strips, and slightly melty underlayers on carpet.) We celebrated becoming STUDENT-DEBT-FREE! Matt played The Widor™ for Easter Sunday faster than he practiced it and then we enjoyed a wait-free Easter brunch at Cleveland Vegan.

Baby news:

March was a big month for baby news! We had a second ultrasound for 12 weeks, where we were stunned to see a human-shaped fetus wiggling around. We also heard a heartbeat on the Doppler at the 13wk prenatal appointment, which was exciting! It's totally normal for it to be very quiet; calm down, Eron! March is also the month where we entered the second trimester, which thankfully meant that after about five weeks of claiming to be "on the up" from morning sickness, it finally went away. (10/10 placenta.) All the maternity-clothing-free stores at the mall suggested just "buying bigger pants." Matt met with someone about parental leave, which was promising, right? Eron told the Oberlin faculty about the pregnancy and applied for fall maternity leave. We got our NIPT testing back and were thrilled to find out that baby's genes were low risk… and (unless baby eventually tells us otherwise) a girl!



April 2024

"Let's overthrow an emperor!" -Amy Lovell

Pangaea split, the atom was formed, Pluto orbited the earth 5 times, the birds flipped their shit, and we (David and Amy w/ M+E) sat in wonder at fiction made real during the total solar eclipse. Of equal excitement (not really), after having scoured Crystal Lake in Urbana-Champaign, IL for wood ducks (a shy and visually striking water fowl—see previous years; local birders gaslit us by saying, "they're everywhere… look in the trees"), we finally clearly saw one (and Matt snapped a photo of it). We then made the trek to the land of Matt's people (Connecticut) for Ashley (née Fong) and Stephen Coppola's wedding—escape room puzzles were done, food was eaten, fun was shared, everyone felt strangely emotional about Take on Me. We found out that Adam was going to Japan to teach English through the JET program! Before that, we committed ourselves to enjoying slug soup with Adam, Alex, Melody, and Louis on Wednesday evening. M went through an intense but short lived period of chess and chess puzzles, and E got to be in the department photo (eternalizing a very small baby bump)! Molly and Jonathan had folks over to eat Swedish waffles: in addition to jam (lingonberry?) and whipped cream, the waffles were made delicious by Jonathan's waffle machine—for which he specifically installed an EU Type F outlet. We had a bonfire with Jaz, Lena, Lauren, Anna, Jesse, and Carolyn! (Matt boffed his vegan dog 😕(thanks UTF-8).) We

met up with Eli and Miriam on their way through the area (at Carolyn's) and reminisced about our first beers.

Baby news:
thump thump … thump thump …
BABY IS GROWWWWING!!!



May 2024

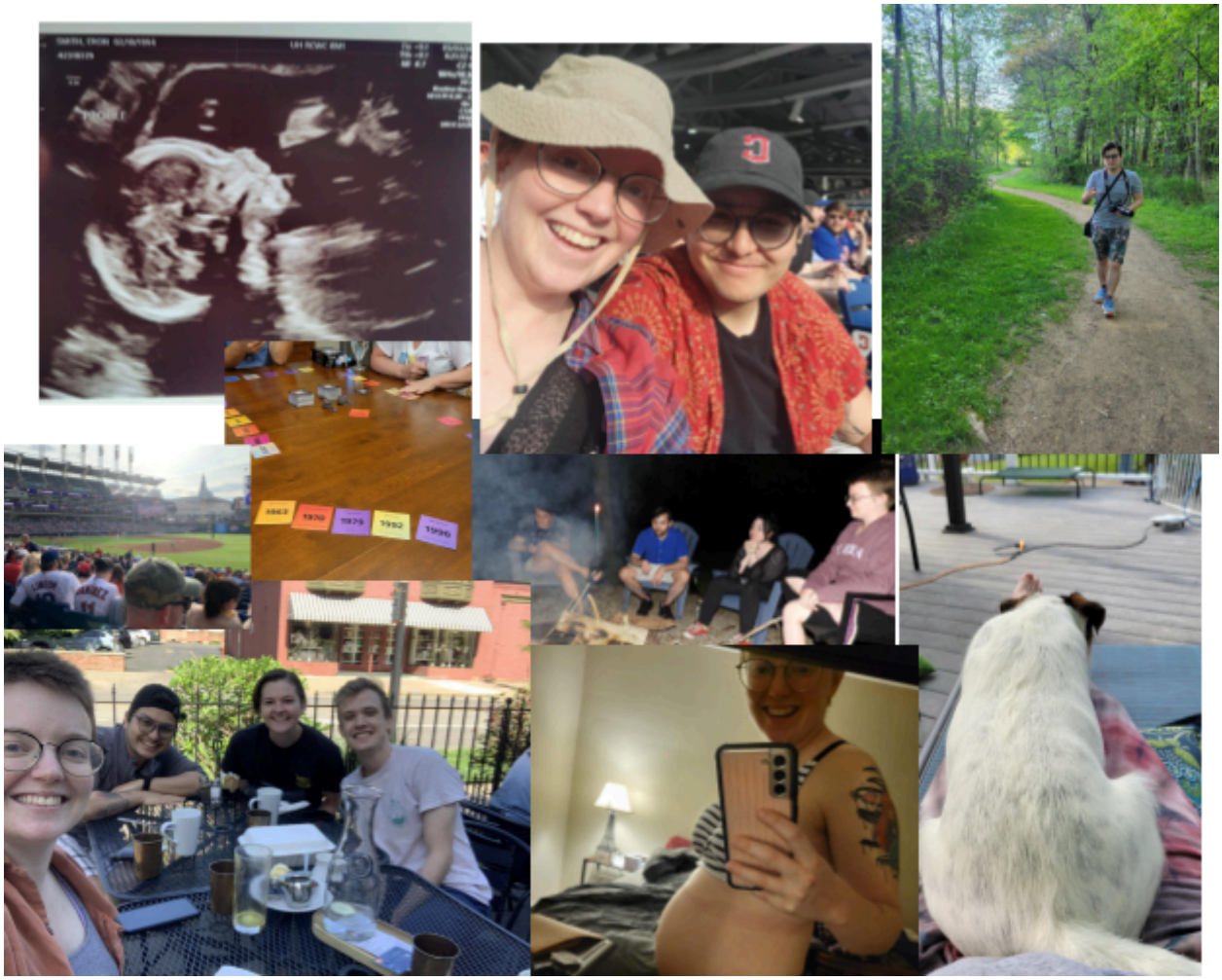
May saw the end of both Eron and Matt's academic semesters! In Oberlin news, we found out that David Falterman would be Eron's sabbatical replacement (yay!) and celebrated Brian Alegant's retirement. We traveled to the exotic locale of Muncie, Indiana for Music Theory Midwest at Ball State University. We roomied-up with Lena and had great chats throughout the conference. Eron gave a kickass paper on last choruses, and Matt bravely chaired a session in the face of insufficient microphone coverage, later being elected the secretary of the conference (not because of his chairing). M+E attended a Guardians game, Matt did a lot of weeding and (unsuccessfully) started a garden. Eron met up with two other pregnant pals

through Bethesda on the Bay Lutheran (coordinated by Marla) and administered aural skills placement tests for Oberlin.

Soon approaching was their #BabyMoon (like a honeymoon) to Portugal! They made their way to the east coast by first driving through the Ol' Stomping Ground(™)—that is, Rochester, NY. While there they stayed with Lauren and Sven! In addition to wonderful chats, they ate at Mad Hatter and played Dutch Blitz. (We cemented our positive opinion of Sven and continued our positive opinion of Lauren.) After ROC, they continued east to the Chius, enjoying "[walks] by the ocean" (DNCE, 2015), roasting marshmallows, and many games of Hitster.

Baby news:

We had the anatomy scan and were relieved to find out that everything was growing as expected! (Being a human is absolutely bananas.) Eron passed the earliest point of survival for baby and we both felt somber and excited about it.



[[PORTUGAL BABY MOON!!!]]

June 2024

PHEW! We were back from Portugal and exhausted. We found out that Eron being out of breath was due not just to pregnancy or the constant elevation changes in Portugal, but… COVID (Eron's third time. womp womp).

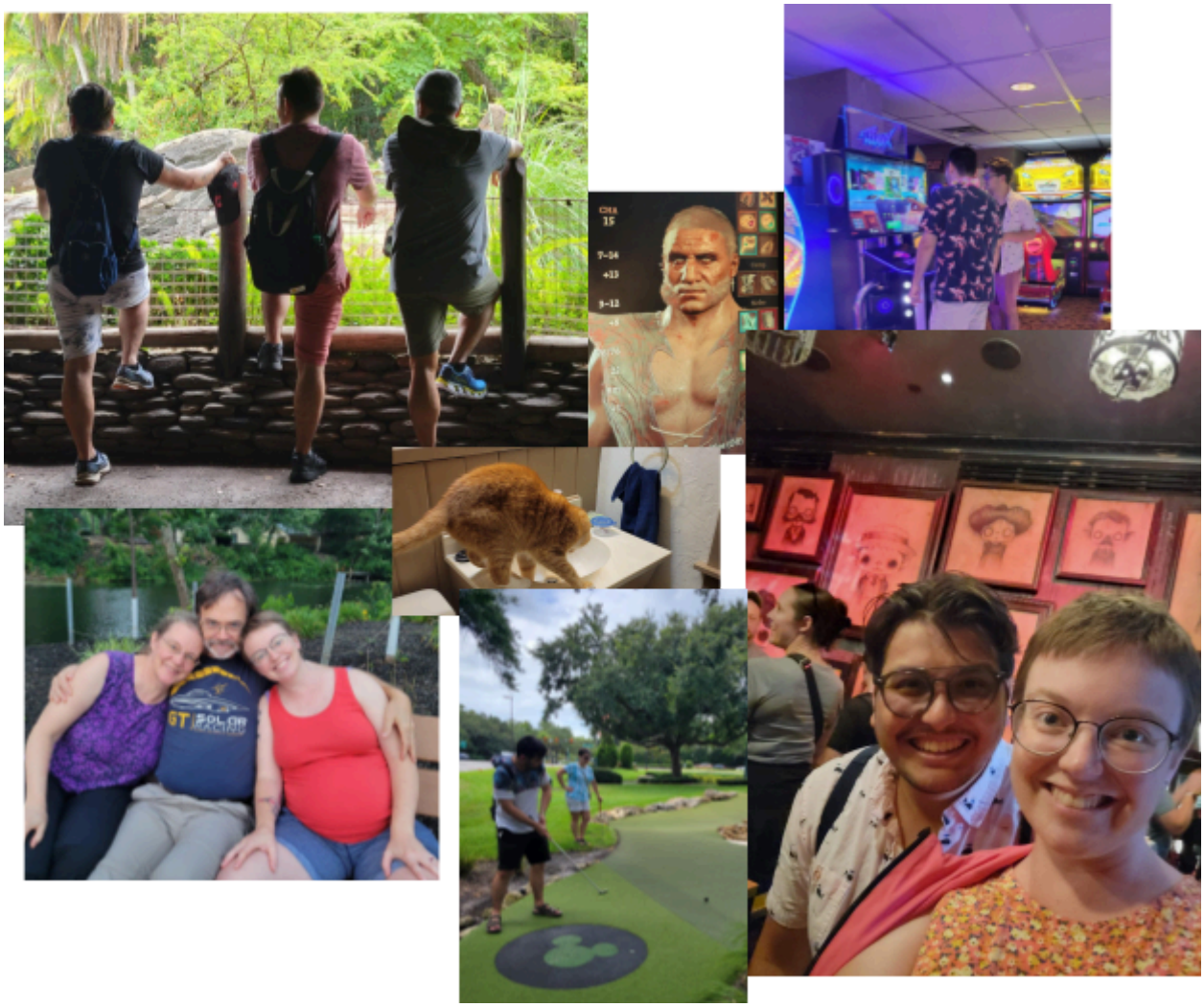
Christa and Miguel got married (WOOT WOOT!!!)!!! They had many merry gatherings across the world in the many places that people like to gather to be merry, one being Black River (Wine Shop and Bar)©. On his way from paddling the… Finger Lakes?, our old short-term roommate David stopped at our house and immediately crashed on our couch, allergy medication in hand. And it wouldn't be a new month if we didn't try the monthly Feve brunch menu (with the Longs!). Noah visited too!!! So we enjoyed walks and conversations w/ Noah+Jaz+Lena. In between all the excitement this month, Matt played for a funeral and Eron reviewed their first ever MTO article.

Time had come for the Chiucation ("all I ever wanted"). They went to Disney with Alex/Adam/Mom+Dad Chiu and stayed at the All Star Movies, Animal Kingdom Lodge, and the Beach Club resorts. They spent time in the sun, drank coffee on the balcony, didn't get impacted earwax, bought Gideon's cookies, played Guitar Hero, watched Bluey, asked how much clocks are worth, watched fireworks, and laughed like children (Matt in particular) playing with bed sheets. Matt honed the art of "RonJonning" his brothers with a large number of stickers. Eron was grateful for the number of bathrooms at Disney and, as a consolation prize for waiting in lines without going on rides, got to be escorted out of the Star Wars ride as a "spy" and bond with another person who was pregnantly waiting for their party. She particularly enjoyed going in the pool this year.

They arrived back to Ohio. Thanks to Eron's hard work ripping up the carpet, we got the floor inspected by a self-identified hardwood nerd and set a date to get it refinished. Thankfully we only needed to focus on one house project at a time… just kidding. The gutter fell off the house's front facade—I guess you can say we really blew the roof off the place… (spoiler: we did in July). Eron's parents visited to drop off the family cradle that Eron's grandpa made for her to sleep in(!), and helped us attempt to prop up the gutter temporarily before getting it inspected. Unfortunately, they were obligated to enjoy time together to pretend the visit was more than a logistical handoff. The visit featured lengthy walks and a trip to El (T)Orito (IYKYK). Eron's dad also got his first ever MRI this month (love you Daddw. -E).

Baby news:

Because Eron had Covid, we had our regular OB appointment virtually and had to schedule two additional ultrasounds for 30 and 36 weeks. Eron also had to take the terrible gestational diabetes test (where you drink sweet syrup and feel crappy with no water for an hour). No gestational diabetes… but yes anemia! :(Iron supplements really kicked her butt. Just when she hadn't been feeling nauseous…



July 2024

July was a month of friends, family, and intense nesting! Because of the gutter situation and the general state of our roof when we bought the house last year, we got two quotes to

replace it.[1] Eron moved around a lot of furniture out of what was previously the office and now would become the nursery. After celebrating July 4 with Carolyn and some pizza and games, we drove through Rochester again (hello, Sven!!!) on our way to Connecticut… on our way to Stockholm!!! We flew to Sweden for Molly & Jonathan's wedding. Flying internationally at 30 weeks pregnant was terrible, the ice bar in our hotel was so much fun if overpriced, we accidentally took a train to Uppsala, Matt loves vegetarian-friendly fast food places, and most importantly, the wedding was incredible and full of fun novel traditions like "tipspromenad" and "nämen" and "drinking a lot of alcohol." After staying just long enough to mess up our circadian rhythms and tear up the dance floor (though we were no match for Sylvan's endurance), we flew back to New England and immediately celebrated our family baby shower with the Chius! It was a lovely event full of cute woodland creatures, parent gear, treats, and a lot of poignant moments thinking about growing baby.

Not enough traveling!!! It was time to go to Michigan for the Smith/Lovell/Chiu/Stiegler (henceforth SLCS) family vacation. Amy and David felt left out that Allen/Risa and Eron/Matt were driving to Muskegon (and the Crowdstrike issues messed up all the airports), so Amy and David sent their suitcase full of Ticket to Ride: Legacy on the plane and decided to road trip 13 hours. That aside, we had a happy little weekend together with Wingspan, night walks on the beach, everyone consensually touching the baby bump, and tasty food. We returned to Cleveland and wrapped up our online Avatar Legends campaign just in time for Adam to leave for Japan. :(The remainder of the month was full of catching up with friends: a Feve brunch with the newlywed Molly and Jonathan, a logistically difficult but enjoyable brunch with a passing Xeno and Eleanor, Thini Thai with the Longs, Matt's birthday, and a catchup call with Lissa! The Olympics started and we crossed our fingers for exciting climbing… and a promising job interview for Amy.

Baby news:

In baby news, Bug was extremely wiggly and increasingly large at this point! We could feel and even see some kicks and enjoyed trying to figure out which body part was poking Eron in the ribs (and bladder). We toured the birth center at St. John, including the Holistic Birth Suite(!), and assembled a crib. Oh wait, except they sent us the wrong part. Okay, *now* we assembled a crib.

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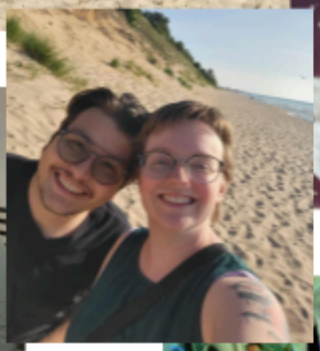
[1] One group had the scheduler arrange an appointment with a packet and sent a project manager with business cards and a uniform. One group called and said "we're in the area; can we take a look?" and showed up with a truck that was 50% rust and 50% ladders. Both roofing companies gave reasonable estimates and demonstrated competency in their own ways. We chose the cheaper one.


BECO

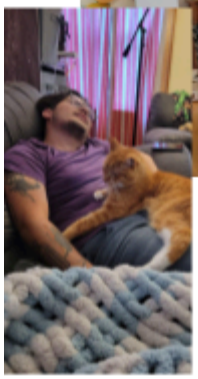




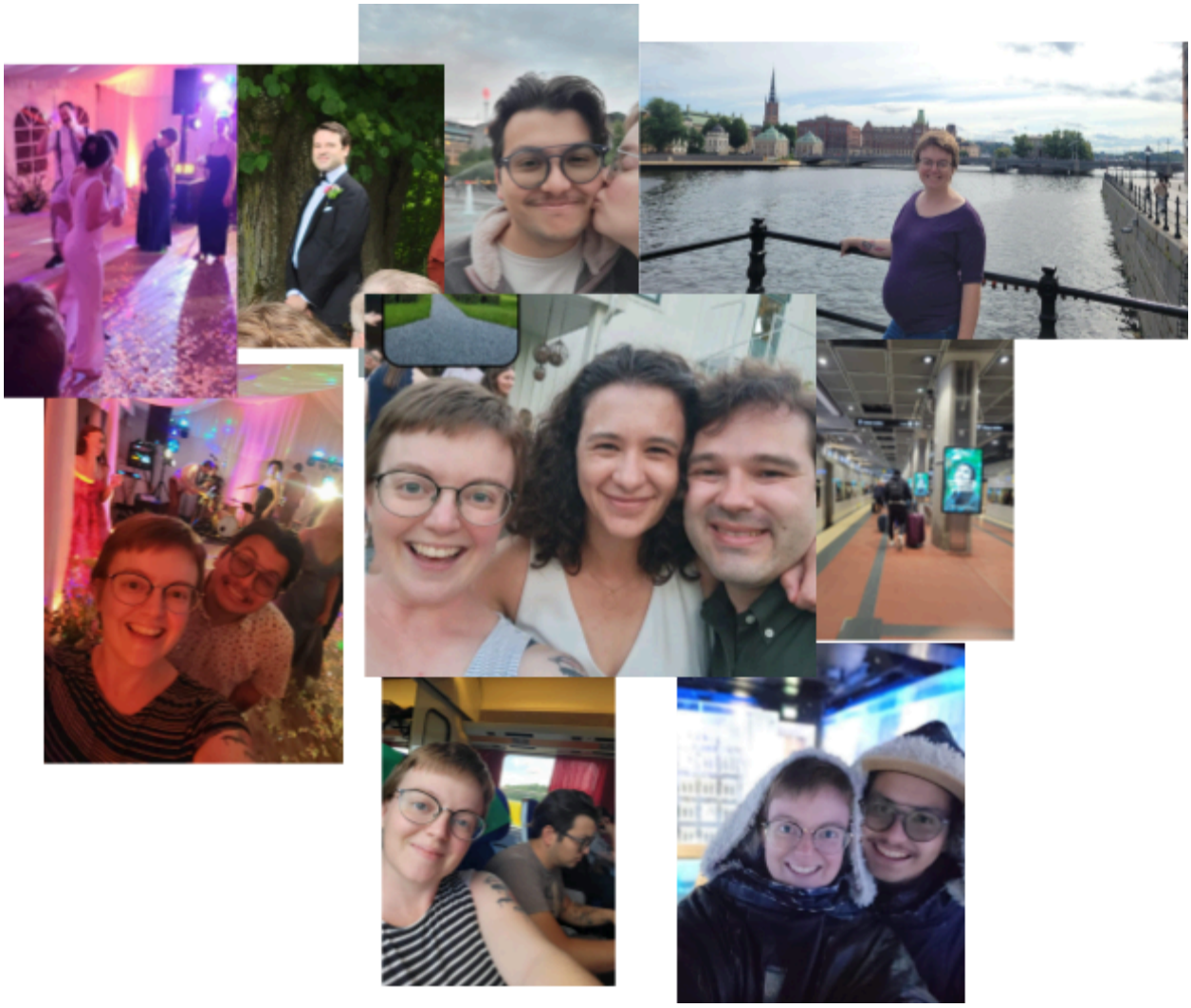












August 2024

"August is always the best. It's so aggressively warm" (Matt, writing this).

Howie and Avalon and David moved to the area (not all living together)!!! We celebrated a housewarming with Howie+Avalon and Edie; we also played Wingspan w/ David (and his bois) in what must be the worst apartment-to-rent quality ratio to exist.

At the beginning of the month, we watched some Olympics, put a car in the shop (ugh, we do this so often…), did a blind taste test with chips (ft. Jaz, Lena, and Carolyn), Matt played for a funeral, Eron caught up with Braden, ate at El (T)Orito with David, and we Zoomed with Lukas! There were horrible storms that knocked out power towards the lake, so Avalon crashed with us—a good bonding time while Howie taught youngins to hit things. We went to the Cleveland International Piano Competition w/ David and Avalon to see two of the

finalists play Beethoven 4 (y not 5???) and Brahms 2 (y not 1???). We went to MoJo's to cooperatively beat the Fire Spanker™, and, per their recommendation, went to see Come From Away at Playhouse Square the next week.[2] We got dinner and Dortmunders w/ Eric and Jojo at Moosehead (Matt wore his Bluey shirt that day)! We won trivia with Howie & Av and David and Carolyn—Cedar (in utero) wears the belt. Eron surprised Matt with an anniversary date (ugh, Eron is the utter best). We went for yum cha (Mitty claims this is the best yum cha place in the U.S.?!) and then to a board game cafe (Tabletop), playing Patchwork and Furnace.

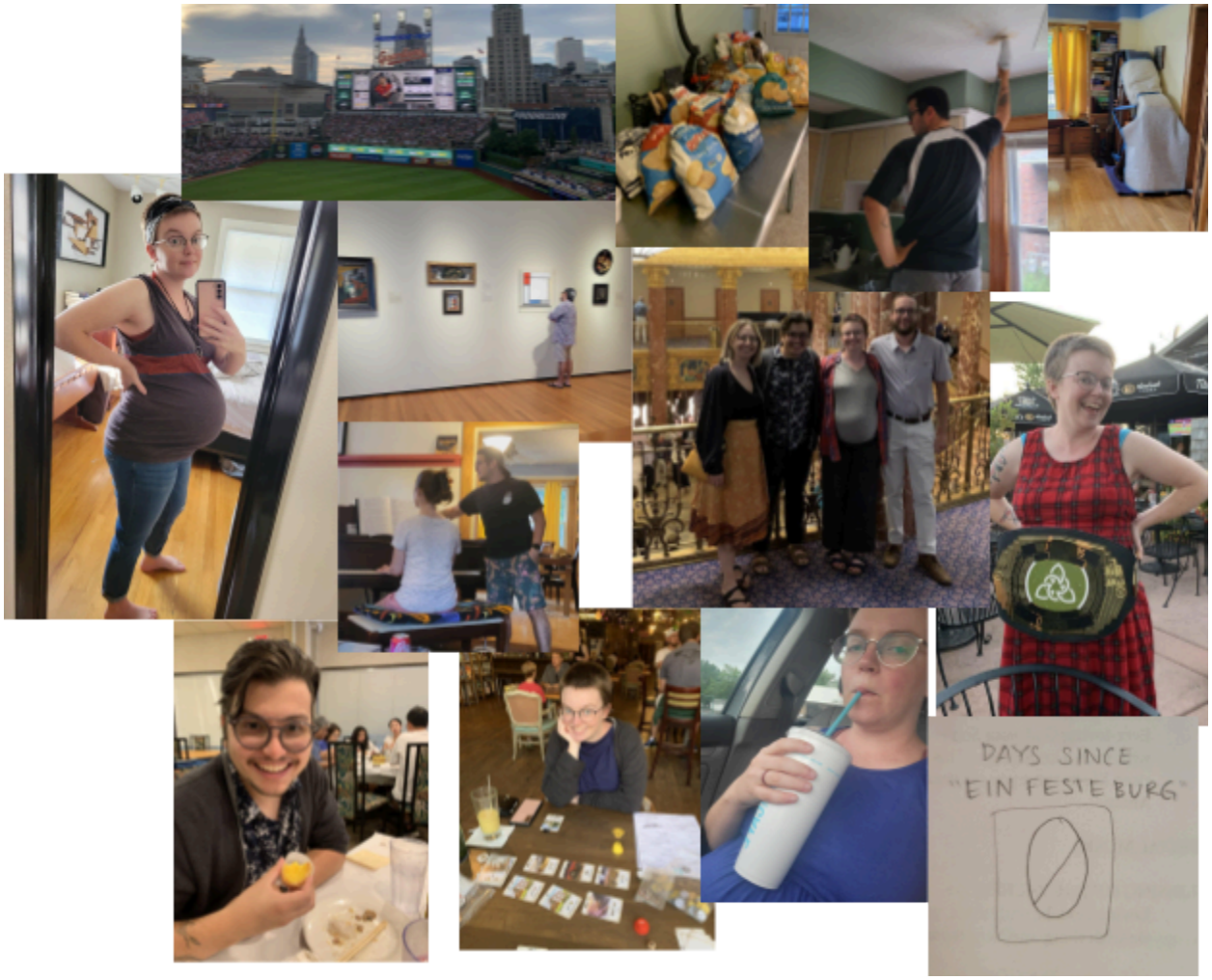
Term started for Matt (and maternity leave started for Eron)! … Terrible doom and gloom news as BW announced 22% of faculty cuts (and the cookies were brought to another building :( ). On the bright side… Lena, Jaz, and Lauren threw us a baby shower! We sorted fruits and veggies like a developing fetus, answered some trivia, wrote future letters to ourselves, ate snacks, and caught a cat (Moose) who ran outside.

We followed through with the roof and floors: they got the roof done in a day (to be paid off through the next year…), got the piano moved, got the floors done, and got the piano moved back. Ensuring the cleanliness of our house and to keep our pride in check, we got a new housecleaner who did a good job but reminded us in subtle ways that we are horrible, disgusting, messy people and deserve misery. Wallowing in misery, we went out for late-nite pie and assorted tails—cock and mock—at Rood with Christa and Miguel (and they got us a cute car from… either Costa Rica or Colombia. We need to ask which it was (◕▭◕✿)). We went to a Guardians performance (qua game) on dollar dog night with Howzers (except it wasn't dollar dog night). To relax and relieve hip pain and the horror that is PUPPP rash, Eron decided to draw a bath—ah yes… repose… but actually, the overflow drain flooded into the kitchen downstairs and stained the ceiling and we needed to call Jason to help (thanksssssss!!!).

Baby news:

E+M went to a childbirth class with an irresponsibly obnoxious couple (who knew we weren't the protagonists in their lives?), and returned later that month for an infant care class (ugh and the couple is still there!). What we learned: food before 1 is just for fun, cesarean videos are graphic, putting diapers on a baby is easy, DON'T SHAKE THE BABY!, and breathing/stretching exercises for birthing! (Most of those exercises didn't have time to come in handy, as it turns out, but feeling prepared reduces birth anxiety!)

[2] We waited for a drawbridge and Eron didn't get to pee lol.



September 2024

Baby was coming any day now, and BW's cuts were a looming threat… so we needed to stay distracted and busy! We went paddling with Carolyn and David on the Rocky River, enjoyed Cleveland Oktoberfest with David, went to BW happy hour, and enjoyed a couple of dinner and brunch dates together. The church choir threw Eron a surprise baby shower with ice cream. The trivia host at Hop Brothers was impressed every week that we showed up with Eron still pregnant.[3] The entire aisle at Home Depot looked scared at Eron trying to sit down on the floor to get the bottom drawer of furniture bolts. Matt furiously tried to wrap up his article for submission and got his TDaP and flu shots. Eron wrapped up a couple things for the Theory & Practice journal and the housekeeper came one last time. Amy accidentally

[3] On what would turn out to be our final pre-parenthood trivia, baby got the hiccups in utero, which was interesting.

group-called Eron and Matt while Matt was in class, a hilarious false alarm for labor. Matt's car had some error codes, so Eron took it to Midas and waited all afternoon and paid $1500 for it to be fixed… except it wasn't fixed, it was now making a horrible sound that they claimed wasn't their fault and would require another $1500 fix. We took it to our trusted local mechanic who confirmed that yes, it was, in fact, Midas's fault, and fixed it for free. (Everyone get your car fixed at Ron's Berea Auto©.) After having had her bag packed for over a week, Amy arrived to be a part of the birth support team (renting a car for us to use in the meantime) and joined us for dinner and games with Molly and Jonathan on Friday the 13th. Well, baby felt there was no point in waiting if Amy and Matt were both available. At 1:40 on the 14th (39+1 for the birth story nerds), Eron went into labor.

[Abbreviated birth story for those interested; skip to * below if that's not for you.]

Eron had trouble sleeping and felt a little crampy, so decided to do a cat-cow stretch… which abruptly broke her water. Making a mad dash to the bathroom to reduce mess, she woke up the team and immediately began having contractions and threw up. Matt called the night line and got put on hold, after which they thought he was reporting a stroke(?). Finally they got connected to the midwife, who recommended coming in when the contractions were 3 minutes apart. That didn't take long and they all drove to the (wrong entrance of the) hospital at 3:30 or so and checked into the Holistic Birth Suite™. Eron was already 5 centimeters dilated, which was encouraging given how intensely things had started. Zofran also helped the general mood, by which we mean a lack of vomiting. Labor progressed over the next few hours with increasing discomfort relieved greatly by a super luxurious jacuzzi, a really lovely and validating team of healthcare workers, and nitrous oxide during contractions. Pushing went well but caused some decelerations in baby's heart rate from the umbilical cord position, which was terrifying. All was well in the end: the new love of our lives, our baby entered the world crying, sticky, healthy, and loved at 8:44am on the 14th.[4] (It was a largely positive and empowering birth experience, aided in no small part by its ideal length!) We named her Cedar Aloisi Chiu-Smith.

*

Our lives had (have!!!) changed forever and so have we! Everyone cried. We told family the news. Eron got breastfeeding lessons from the nurses and she and Matt enjoyed snuggling the strong little one. Amy (now Gamma) got to hold the baby and reminisce on how similar her

[4] Eron did not enjoy being repaired, but did enjoy gawking at her and Cedar's placenta. Humans are so neat.

birth experience was with Eron. Cedar got weighed and got shots and eye ointment and hearing tests. Matt got a sub for his church service, canceled Monday class, and learned that changing a diaper is in fact not easy when it is a real baby. Eron learned that no logic would soothe the torture of hearing your baby cry and catapulted into the hormone crash. Cedar let us know that no arms could be restricted by a mere swaddle and took a long birthday nap. Mom and Papa Chiu (now Grammy [later to become Geggy] and Yeye) arrived to meet their first grandchild, bringing buckeyes and snacks for the ravenous Mama Eron. The hospital days went slowly and quickly and without much sleep. Eron's terrible pregnancy rash made a final surge, her milk came in, and she learned about peri bottles and sitz baths. Matt became the first parent to get pooped on and learned where the blue stripe appears on diapers. The pediatrician cleared us, the midwife cleared us, and we took our tiny, tiny baby home in a giant car seat.

Matt went back to work exhausted and Amy pulled the entire weight of the household for both of us. Cedar went to the (first) pediatrician, who somehow managed to make Eron feel terrible despite the baby being in perfect health. Cedar gained weight like a champ but Eron was a horrifying ouchy milk cannon so we went to the lactation consultant, where Cedar decided to nap instead. A week postpartum, we discovered the joys of the Boba wrap and went for short walks. The umbilical stump fell off and we all freaked out. Eron went back to the lactation consultant and got some good tips on how to be a less ouchy horrifying milk cannon.

We loved our baby and did not love the lack of sleep. Cedar hated the cradle and just wanted to be next to Mama. Eron's arm went to sleep from hanging it over the side of the cradle literally all night so Cedar could feel human contact. Amy slept on the floor in the nursery. We tried preheating the cradle mattress. We tried tilting the cradle mattress. We tried changing the thermostat both up and down. We slept dangerously in a chair by accident—okay, that's not good. Eron asked the (second) pediatrician about how to reduce bedsharing risk because they were desperate for sleep. The pediatrician scolded that there was no such thing and quipped that it was better for Cedar to cry now than for the parents to cry later when she died. Ashamed, Eron cried a lot despite Cedar being alive and well and educated herself about the Safe Sleep Seven (thanks Megan for the resources). We got a new swaddle that allowed Cedar's arms to be out by design (thanks Megan for the suggestion… do you sense a theme?). Phew. Baby sleep is tough. Who knew??

Our lives were so different suddenly! We could hug without the baby bump, but barely had any time to. Eron's awful rash finally went away. Cedar HATED having her diaper changed and

HATED having a bath and loved being held and worn. Matt was trying to survive his semester as a new dad while not even being sure if BW would keep him on. Eron cried every single night at sundown about being a terrible parent, being a good parent, loving her child, missing Matt, the ultrasound picture looking like Cedar, how much her parents must have loved her, and basically everything else. Amy and Eron played a lot of Unrailed while the baby napped. We took SO many pictures. We learned about different brands of diaper cream. We googled lots of stuff and Eron got slightly better at going up the stairs again. How had it only been two weeks?

Amy left and Matt's parents arrived. Just kidding, Amy came back because her flight was canceled. Okay, *now* Amy left. (The cancellation was because of Hurricane Helene, which forced Eron's grandparents prematurely out of their house a few weeks ahead of their planned move.) Matt's parents stayed, held the baby a lot so the new parents could nap, and did a lot of household chores. Eron and Mom Chiu died laughing over a horrific baby poop incident involving the phrase "surely she's done now, right?". Cedar's social security card arrived in the mail and Eron learned how to freeze a baby's credit. Somewhere in here, it became October.

October 2024

Mom (temp. Grammy) and Papa (Yeye) Chiu looked after the baby and Eron and Matt went out for a hot date (to get ice cream). Cedar was logical: the wooden sleep machine wasn't as good as warm, snuggly bodies—still, she was improving at sleeping on her own. Mom Chiu left, and Eron had her first day with Matt at work without help—it was so easy, obviously (except for her terrible stomachache…). Eron joined a lactation support group that met every Thursday and went to her 6 week postpartum appointment, where she got referred to physical therapy and remembered how much she missed being cared for by good providers. Eron's dad (Daddw) came to meet Cedar (Oct. 11)! On their handful of days, they went for walks; Cedar learned that bass voices are the best to go to sleep to, and that harvest festivals are awesome.

The three of them enjoyed many-a-social gathering before winter (objectively the worst season –Matt) arrives. The new season of British Bakeoff started and they watched remotely (and synchronously) with Jacob. They went apple picking, rode in the cargo of a truck, and made apple pie with David. Matt used the leftover apples to make apple crisp for the neighbors Jim and Shauna to thank them for mowing our lawn. Oberlin came to Berea! Christa and Miguel brought mac and cheese casserole (embracing the midwest) and kale salad. Jan and Christa got crepes with Eron at La Crêpe—Matt stopped by to see the baby, of course.

Megan, Sylvan, and Adrian brought lentil soup, and Adrian met the cats and asked a lot of "what happened???" It was October, so one must really "burgle some turts" (watch "Over the Garden Wall"). Howie and Avalon hosted Carolyn and M+E+C for an outdoor watch party of the show (H&A's neighbor Jenn made a drunk cameo…). For Halloween, Matt wanted to plan a joint costume as the "Erlkönig" (Cedar being the elfking (of course)), but they settled for a headless horseman costume: ain't that just the way.

Oh, and Eron picked up Calliope after months of being in the shop.

November 2024

Buckle up!

Cedar had her 2-month shots, which were terrible. (Eron is still genuinely processing the emotional impact of her little scream.) The pediatrician did a great job of convincing us that the shots wouldn't make a difference in the danger of our upcoming travels with her and trashtalked another patient for cosleeping. Cedar slept really terribly and E&M had a massive argument about how to handle it in the middle of the night that resulted in Eron sleeping downstairs to give Matt an honest go at soothing the crying little one. Woof. If anyone is curious, 5–8 weeks were the hardest part of parenting so far. Silver lining: At least we had Lauren and Sven visiting!! It was great to have company during the trials of a peak-fussiness-era little one. We enjoyed eating, catching up, wonderful conversations, and going for nature walks with David. You didn't forget that Matt is in the middle of his semester during all this, right? And we're STILL at the beginning of the month, folks. We voted in the presidential election, which for once involved standing in a long, hot, sweaty line. Oops, except Eron forgot her ID, so she got to wait in it twice while Matt solo parented a fussy baby for an hour. Our last choice of president and our last choice of senator both got elected anyway. Not our month, huh?

Finally time for some joy! We traveled to Jacksonville, FL for SMT. Cedar actually did pretty well on the flights and we really enjoyed seeing our theory friends and staying in the conference hotel for the first time. Matt presented a poster about macroharmonic embeddings for analysis with a very cool spinning animation. Eron gave a standing-room-only talk about last choruses and definitely should've read Drew Nobile's book first. We both went to some talks that we enjoyed and didn't for various reasons. We skipped the keynote to hang out with Noah, which was a great choice. We also walked around Jacksonville a little and enjoyed a local fair, a mediocre coffee shop, and an art museu—just kidding, Cedar glorked all over the sidewalk. (But she slept pretty well in the pack & play at the hotel!) We came home

and hosted Allen and Risa, who *would like to see the baby*. We went to Feve brunch and the Cleveland Aquarium (featuring some very large fish and a surprisingly excellent shark tunnel). Cedar enjoyed being a mech pilot, being held, and hearing large parts of Les Mis sung to her. At some point this month, Eron Zoom-met with a Berklee songwriting professor (Ben Camp) to talk about their article, establishing an ongoing new professional connection.

Okay, everything is different and hard. Eron attempted and quickly gave up on trying to see the Oberlin tenure-track interviews after incidents involving more glork, Cedar's sleepy commentary on a job talk, and not knowing where the interview lunch was. Matt continued teaching in the face of doom and gloom at BW. We got pizza with Carolyn, but didn't get to play many games because baby was upset. We got dinner and drinks with Howie and Avalon, which consisted of socializing in shifts while holding an inconsolable little one. Why the hell do people have kids? Oh my god, WAIT, she's smiling. At us?? On purpose??? 10/10 parenting is the bomb. oooooooOOOOO! OOOOOooooo. A classic joke every time.

The annual family travel gauntlet begins! We celebrated pre-Thanksgiving with the Chius, where everyone but Adam (sorry Adam) got to meet Cedar—and in Alex's case, make fun of her. We ate delicious food and enjoyed great company, an absolutely phenomenal pie by Gum, and the Alex's-room-turned-strange-hospice-room-turned-objectively-beautiful-baby-friendly guest bedroom. :) Cedar loved smiling for Grammy [later to be Geggy] and couldn't care less about Mama and Baba. Hmph! Then it was time to go to Eron's family gathering at Sterchi Lodge, excuse me, alternate-Sterchi in Tennessee (thanks, Hurricane Helene). Amy and Matt took the L and car-tripped with Cedar, who hates the car now… but we finally got to Wafloy, where we played many, many games, Matt tried to speedrun learning the accordion, and everyone but Cedar was disturbed by a loud fire alarm alerting us to a dangerous bagel. Matt finally got to try pickleball, which was just as eventful as he was hoping. Eron successfully staged an elaborate plot involving ridiculously busy restaurants to get us to go to Cici's Pizza. Phew!

December 2024

It's the holiday season, which meant… More lactation group for Eron, and Matt played for a funeral! (An interesting way to start the season, I guess…) Eron sold the red rug that they bought and only used as a cat puke receptacle. Cedar rolled over (WOOO!!!), but is impressively inconsistent with her ability to do so. David was shipping off (well, first he's flying, then driving, then climbing, then shipping off), so they tried to fit in as many hangs and board games with him as possible. Eron got interviewed by a KU grad student on their research and background. They went to Black River to meet up with the Longs + Megan's

parents. Molly, Jonathan, and Sam were there too—everyone under the age of 2 loved Sam's orange hat.

Then the holiday travels started! They first drove to Columbus to fly to CT for Matt's family. Cedar flew surprisingly well and she *for sure* will stay that way. After arriving in CT, Adam (visiting from Japan!) got to meet Cedar. "Further," Gum got to hold and see Cedar a lot this get-together! They went to get smoky drinks and tasty meals at a restaurant by the water, took photos with a polaroid, wore matching PJs, supported the UCONN Huskies, and wore Japanese jackets that say "Oppression"(?).[5] On Christmas Day, they enjoyed festivities with Kathy, Chuck, Karen, Katie, and the nuclear Chius. M+E put Cedar down for bed (for the first time… with varying success) and spent evenings playing with family. They drummed a lot to anime soundtracks, played Ninja Turtles, and played various board games (including Marvel-unpainted-miniatures game).

They then flew from CT back to Columbus where they celebrated the holiday and New Year with the SmovellStieglers. No one lived in Columbus, but two sets of families were living in the Midwest, so… Mulberry Cottage it was! They played many-a-game, including AmyBurstsIntoLaughterAtCrashingTrainGeniuses, Dutch Blitz, Ticket_2_Ride, and Nuun Purunbo Buun. They continued celebrating Chanukah and take an American Gothique photo. Allen and Risa flew out, leaving the Chiu-Smiths in the horrible company of the Smovells. Although they did watch Cedar so that M+E could have another Hot Date™ at an Italian restaurant which was actually a sushi restaurant. They got Cedar stuck in the roof.

Does Cedar ever get out? Find out next time on … The Missive 2025!

[5] There was, however, a moment of fear when the future brother-in-law of Adam's girlfriend (Melody) gets COVID. In the end, no one else got COVID.

Our Favorite Games/Books/Shows of 2024