

# Orioles magic, cotton candy chips, cousin fun, love for pizza, and a sloth (7 Quick Takes)

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The Orioles suffered a terrible loss—23-2—on Saturday evening, but you can only go up from there. And who wants to be a fair-weather fan? So, we headed to Camden Yards on Sunday afternoon to cheer them on against the Astros.

It turned out to be a fantastic game. My sons and I went with my father, my younger brother, and two of his sons, and we sat in the mezzanine—which in Baltimore we pronounce with a hidden L, “the mezzaleen.”

My brother brought an enormous bag of popcorn and a bag of Gatorades for us to share. The children snacked and cheered on the hot dogs in the hot dog race.

We hadn’t been to an Orioles game yet this year, and I realized how much fun it is to be at the park. We’re headed to another one with different cousins next week, but this time we’ll sit in the bleachers and try to catch a few home run balls.

Oh, and the Orioles won! The O stands for optimism.

~2~



Although my brother was determined not to spend money on food at the stadium, I did tell my boys I would buy them each one treat. Our 9-year-old asked for cotton candy.

After he had eaten about half of it, though, he started looking for a way to share it with the rest of us. He created cotton candy chips, pressed carefully in the plastic bag into a slightly crunchy, slightly chewy, totally sugary snack.

I'm not sure the idea will take off, but he had plenty of takers in our section of the park.

~3~

We live in Baltimore because it's home, of course. But one bonus is that my parents are here, which means that when the cousins come to visit them, they also come to visit us—but don't actually stay with us.



This visit our sons could not get enough of their cousins. They wanted to go over and play constantly—board games and baseball and football. It's a beautiful thing when your brother can go pick up your children from the summer sitter and take them for hours to play with cousins—and everything seems to go well.

When we set out on our adoption journey to our sons, I could never have guessed how many cousins they would have who are around their ages. But there are so many. And I love seeing how much they enjoy one another.

~4~



I have yet to buy any school supplies, and please don't ask me about whether we've finished the elementary school summer reading assignment. But I did manage to get hair cuts for our boys, and I've started trying to get people in bed before 10 p.m., so I am willing to admit that school will be starting.

We just hired our afterschool sitter too! I'm feeling better about the school year—though I'm a little nervous about this whole middle school thing. But I'm quietly nervous because our sixth grader seems to be OK with all of it. And he's the one who is organized enough to remind me that we need to go school supply shopping.

~5~

I slipped into the Enoch Pratt Free Library's central branch the other day, and it's gorgeous. It was always beautiful. Then they started the construction to make it even lovelier. Somehow as I tunneled my way through plywood hallways created through scaffolding, I forgot just how beautiful it was.



Well, the scaffolding is gone. And the library is extraordinary. The Pratt is celebrating the renewed/restored/refreshed space next month, and I can't wait to go back and explore more. We love going because we get to say hi to my sister, the stellar Aunt Shai, but she wasn't there when I stopped by. So now I really have to go back.

~6~



Our fourth grader has developed an enthusiasm for Pizza Hut pizza. He wants it all the time.

This interest started on a trip down the New Jersey Turnpike a few months ago. We stopped in a rest stop on our way home from New York, and my son spotted a

personal pan pizza. I don't know how long it had been sitting there under those lamps to keep it warm, but our boy scooped it up and enjoyed every last crumb on the drive home.

Now he's discovered that Pizza Hut isn't just in New Jersey. It's everywhere we are.

Life is so good when you're 9 and you love pizza.

~7~

My cousin Kelly is getting married next month! Last weekend I had the chance to go to her bridal shower. I had looked at her registry and was trying to decide what I wanted to give her. Then I walked into a store and saw the perfect gift: a sloth jar. I didn't hesitate. I picked it up and went straight to the register.



I stuck a gift card inside just to round things out and added a flyswatter, my signature bridal shower gift. Kelly loved it. She and her fiancé are using it as a dog treat jar for their dogs.

Gift giving is one of my absolute favorite things. And getting to give Kelly a sloth jar was particularly fun. Now I can't wait for the wedding.

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