This just in: Cleveland fans have a lot emotionally invested in the Cavaliers this year. After watching the Browns and Indians crash and burn yet again this year, fans are clinging to the Cavs as apparently the only thing saving them from suicidal thoughts. And losing three of four games during Thanksgiving week already has alot of Cavaliers fans out on the ledge.

Visit the Papa Cass weblog at http://papacass.blogspot.com/

This just in: Cleveland fans have a lot emotionally invested in the Cavaliers this year.

After watching the Browns and Indians crash and burn yet again this year, fans are clinging to the Cavs as apparently the only thing saving them from suicidal thoughts.

When fans get this way, they tend to fly off the handle one way or the other depending on what the last few games have shown. A few wins, it's title time. A few losses, the wails of torment can probably be heard in parts of Ontario.

The latter is true of Cleveland fans this week as the Cavs have lost three of four, which could have very easily have been a four-game losing streak had Damon Jones and LeBron James not made a few clutch buckets against Memphis.

Now, the Cavs are some combination of the Hindenburg, Titanic and Edmund Fitzgerald: Doomed, cursed, flawed, hexed, vexed and bound for the draft lottery. Larry Hughes will never be healthy again, Eric Snow isn't even an NBA player, Zydrunas Ilgauskas is Eurotrash, Damon Jones can't guard a mannequin and LeBron James is secretly counting down the days to free agency, even though he just signed a contract extension.

Before the New York Post starts printing LeBron trade scenarios and you seriously consider jumping off the Main Avenue Bridge, let's just take a step back and relax. Let's try to view this latest swoon through objective eyes.

You need to ask yourself, is this much different than previous seasons?

The Cavs home record is a stellar 6-1. They are a lackluster 2-4 on the road. At home, they

do all the things good teams are supposed to do. They close games out, they play good defense in the fourth quarter, they rally from huge deficits, they shoot well, they play with energy when the game is on the line.

On the road, they fall apart in the fourth quarter. They cough up huge leads. They get intimidated. They look for the easy way out.

It's the same inconsistent shenanigans they've been pulling for several years now. If last year is any indication, it will get better as the season goes on and the games become more important. But that's not to say these early season swoons don't hurt them when the playoff positioning battles heat up in late winter.

So let's get to the two questions everybody wants answered: Why is this happening, and what can be done?

The answer to the first question: Quite simply, there isn't enough leadership on this team.

Believe it or not, there are kinks in LeBron's armor. Defense might be the most obvious, but there is a point where LeBron's lack of experience does hurt.

If the Cavs do truly take on LeBron's mentality from a game-to-game basis, it's no wonder why they struggle against less-than-marquee competition.

This is an area where the fact that LeBron has been so good, so soon might actually be a hindrance. He hasn't learned to bring a sense of earnestness to games where it doesn't occur naturally. In spotlight games, on national TV against big-name competition, he can look nearly unbeatable. When the competition doesn't inspire him to play at full speed, he kind of settles back into jump-shot mode and so does the team.

That's not all on LeBron. Like his star pupil, coach Mike Brown also doesn't have a lot of experience as a leader and might not demand the right things from his players all the time.

Brown is a very good tactician, but too often, he appears to try to find the answers to all the team's problems on the dry-erase board. Sometimes, a struggling team doesn't need an adjustment on how they're setting the high screen. Sometimes, they just need a good kick in the pants.

There is no question that, if they are providing the required effort, the Cavs can beat any team in the league on a given night. But frequently, the effort just isn't there.

So how do they fix it? Obviously, the only long-term solution is to gain teamwide experience and hope that the light bulb goes on eventually. But we're concerned as much about the short term, making sure this team doesn't regress from last year's 50 wins and playoff series win.

The short-term solution might be to bring in a seasoned veteran, preferably one who has won a few championships and still has some game left in the tank. Someone who can provide the

leadership role that LeBron and Brown are struggling to consistently fill, and veterans like Eric Snow and David Wesley are too far in the background to fill.

The want ad would read: "Must be to this team what Nate Thurmond was to the Miracle of Richfield Cavs."

I don't have a particular player in mind, and I'm not about to formulate trade scenarios. But it looks like leadership-quality veteran could really help this team win more consistently.

We'll see if Danny Ferry agrees, and what type of maneuvering he can do in the next several months.