Larry Hughes has finally broken out of his worst slump of the season, and his improved play of late has coincided with coach Mike Brown moving Larry to the starting point guard role in the absence of Daniel Gibson. But is it the long term answer? Possibly, at least for the rest of this season, says Papa Cass. But he cautions us not to get too excited. History says that Hughes will inevitably revert to the player thats driven Cavs fans nuts over the last two seasons.

Stop the presses and rub some lotion on your overwrung hands. On the 120th-some-odd day, the clouds parted and the basketball gods spoketh:

"For yea, unto you in the city of Cleveland is born a point guard. And his name shall be called Converted One, Holy Bricklayer, Wonderful Penetrator, Prince of Injuries. And he shall saveth thee from playoff failure."

Who is this enigma, this Larry of Cleveland?

Thirteen million dollars a year is supposed to buy you consistent high production. It's supposed to buy you a foundational player. It's supposed to buy you LeBron James' chief lieutenant.

Instead, the high-priced acquisition of Larry Hughes has bought more questions than answers.

Hughes is one of those players that does everything -- with the exception of spot-up outside shooting -- pretty well, but doesn't do any one thing well enough to become a frontline star in the NBA.

He's a good defender, but his All-NBA defensive team selection two years ago was an aberration. He's not in the class of Ben Wallace or Ron Artest. He's a good penetrator, but Steve Nash he is not. He's a good passer, but not a ballhandling wizard. Unless you count those three years in Washington, when he was a ballhandling Wizard. (Sorry, bad joke.)

Throughout his career, Hughes has been a kind of mismatched part wherever he has gone. There is no question he has the talent and skills to be a major cog in a contending ballclub, but it always seems that the Hughes you think you are getting is never the Hughes that arrives on

your doorstep.

The Cavs thought they were signing a second-tier wing player when GM Danny Ferry wrapped up a whole lot of money in Hughes two years ago. As a shooting guard, he's been an underachieving dud. So, slowly, the Cavs began playing Hughes more and more at the point. Then Dan Gibson went down with a toe injury, the Cavs came out and named Hughes their starting point guard until further notice, and hallelujah, the gates to heaven sprung open.

In what might be the most convincing case yet that LeBron hasn't been the biggest sandbagger on the team this year, Hughes charged into the starting point guard's gig like a kid tearing through presents on Christmas morning.

Against the Raptors and Rockets, he put up the kinds of numbers I'm sure Danny Ferry envisioned when he opened the bank vault to pay Hughes.

We have a point now guard, right? Forget Mike Bibby, the man we need has been on the roster all along. Let's start fantasizing about signing Vince Carter this summer.

mmmmmmmm ... LeBron, Larry and Vince ... (Homer Simpson gurgle).

Wait, snap out of it! It can't be that easy, can it? It's not just that we have less than a week's worth of Hughes' point guard play to go on. It's that for most of the season, Hughes has been part of the problem, not part of the solution.

When LeBron spent weeks and weeks pouting over the offense, where was Hughes? Using his veteran influence to get LeBron to suck it up and play? No, he was pouting right alongside LeBron.

When the rest of the team settled for clanging perimeter jumpers off the rim, did Hughes try to take control and push the ball inside where no one else wanted to go? No, he was the biggest rim-chipper of them all.

But when the point guard position opened up and Hughes had a chance to handle the ball more, he was right there, pawing at the door like a dog waiting to be taken for a walk.

Hughes might be helping the team more with his sudden spike in play, but in reality, it's pure selfishness that's motivating him. Give him more touches, he tries harder. Force him back out on the wing, it will be right back to I-don't-give-a-crap basketball.

In order to save any hope this team has of making a deep playoff run, Mike Brown might be forced to keep Hughes at the point for the rest of the season. But before you crown him the savior of the offense, remember he's helping the team on his terms. If he sulked once, he's probably going to sulk again at some point.

It's good to see Hughes finally being productive. But he has a lot of penance to pay to make up for what has largely been a wasted season. And, for once, injuries aren't the culprit.