It was never supposed to be like this . Everything was supposed to be different. We had our turning point; it may not have been divine intervention, but the Cleveland fans were treated to what appeared to be an epiphany on the evening of July 26th. For all intents and purposes, the season hung in the balance , pending the result of this one game , the rubber match in a series between the first place Tigers and third place Indians at Progressive Field. Through six innings of play, the Indians had looked very ordinary, mustering up a single run on just three hits against Detroit's dominant ace, Justin Verlander.

However, what took place in that seventh inning was extraordinary to most, but nearly pedestrian for fools like myself, who allowed themselves to believe there was something very real about these 2012 Cleveland Indians. Down 3-1, Indians starter Zach McAllister surrendered a 1 out walk, then a Quentin Berry single, which put runners on the corners for the "intimidating when sober" Miguel Cabrera. That was enough for Manny Acta to close the book on the former Yankee farm-hand in favor of his right-handed specialist, Joe Smith. With Verlander cruising, Smith and the Tribe couldn't afford to allow another run to cross the plate, and Smith didn't disappoint, inducing the 5-4-3 double play to keep the game within reach with the season in critical condition.

From there, it was up to the Tribe offense to find a way to plate two lousy runs, and maybe chase Verlander from the game. Having defeated him earlier in the year, lightining had already struck once for the Indians against Verlander, even the rosiest of tints on an optimist's glasses couldn't promise any nice things to come. But, it didn't take long for lightning to strike twice. Verlander doesn't make mistakes often, but he left a fastball up in the zone to Carlos Santana, and Santana drilled it over the wall in the right field. 3-2 Tigers, but the always dominant

Verlander suddenly looked vulnerable.

Then, Travis Hafner came to the plate with a grand total of 9 dingers through 98 games, plus two hitless at-bats on the evening. He only saw one pitch from Verlander as well; again, a fastball up in the zone. Hafner's tenth bomb of the year traveled to what I would consider more right-center field than Santana, but it tied the game at 3, and it was starting to look like the reigning Cy Young/MVP had put money on Cleveland on this night.

Next up, was Jose Lopez, who was either designated for assignment or batting clean-up for the Indians in this peculiar 2012 campaign. He's swinging at the first pitch, which he pulls foul down the left field line. He goes down in the count, no balls and two strikes, after Verlander grooves a curve ball in the zone. He belts a single to right field on the 0-2 offering, and suddenly the go-ahead run is standing on first base.

This is where the gloom and doom rears its ugly head. Casey Kotchman kills the momentum with a lazy fly ball to center, only to be out-done by Shelley Duncan flexing his warning-track power with a very non-intimidating flyout to Berry, who was standing on the front of the left field dirt. Shin-Soo Choo keeps it alive with a single the other way, and it was up to Asdrubal Cabrera with two outs and two on.

He pokes a single between first and second base, and demonstrates some savvy on the basepaths, trying for second base on the late throw to get Lopez at the plate. Now, the throw was correctly cut off by Prince Fielder, and it looked like he could have reached out and tagged Asdrubal running by him, but Cabrera saw there was no one covering second, and dove in easily. It was the aggressive play we'd all been yearning to see from the Indians all year. They had a 4-3 lead, and were suddenly showing signs of knowing what it takes to be a winner. It

was good baseball, and it was encouraging.

The division-leading Tigers were imploding in front of our eyes, but we wouldn't shed a tear for them. Jason Kipnis, the eighth man to bat in the inning, would be the next to arrive at the party. His first inning sacrifice fly to plate Choo was all the offense the Tribe had in them before the seventh inning stretch. He knocked a soft, playable liner in the direction of Ramon Santiago, the Detroit shortstop, but it was not meant to be the third out, and Choo scored. 5-3 Indians lead, and this game was in the hands of the bullpen, the good part of the bullpen.

Nothing is ever easy when it comes to Cleveland sports getting it done in the big moment, but nobody told Vinnie Pestano about that. He sprinted in from the bullpen to retire Prince Fielder (flyout), Dmitri Young (flyout), and Brennan Boesch (strikeout swinging) on 17 pitches. The 1-2-3 inning was huge because it gave Chris Perez a buffer in the Detroit lineup before he'd see the likes of Miggy Cabrera or Fielder, and he'd need it.

After stranding Santana's leadoff double in the home half of the eighth, the Indians closer needed to record his three outs without allowing 2 runs to score. He'd blown two saves all season, and it wouldn't have been ideal to surrender number three to the 7-8-9 portion of their division rival's order in this key game.

And, so it began. Alex Avila with a double to right; that brings the tying run to the plate. Ramon Santiago eases the tension, whiffing on four pitches. But, before we can catch our breath, Perez walks Omar Infante on four pitches, and we're back to the top of the order. Austin Jackson hits the 1-0 pitch right at Asdrubal Cabrera for the Taylor-Made double play, and the Indians win...

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