I don't know what's more dumbfounding. That the Indians are scoring two runs a game IN COLORADO. Or the fact that Jeff Freaking Baker has beat us with his bat two nights in a row. Understandably, Buff is surly today, and knows of no other way to describe just how maddening this Indians offense is to watch besides for comparing it to a favorite book of his when he was just a young Buff. And in addition to his game wrap in today's B-List, Buff tells us we may have seen The Very Worst Plate Appearance In The World from an Indians hitter last night.

FINAL SCORE

Indians (33-39)	(4th		7.5 GB CHW)	0
Rockies (30-42)	0	1	0	1

W: Francis (3-6) L: Laffey (4-4) S: Fuentes (12)

Seriously, how do you go TO Colorado and score two runs per game? Doesn't that kind of define "lame?"

1) Phaedrus wept

In one regard, the fact that Aaron Laffey was able to post yet another Quality Start bodes well for the Indians in this season and beyond: for all the humidorification and such that has taken place in Colorado, the fact remains that it's a challenging place to pitch. More importantly, this marks the third consecutive good (and Quality) start for Laffey after his preposterous 8-run shenanigizer against Texas at the beginning of June, so that start is looking more and more like a fluky thing, borne of the Texas winds and the pernicious influence of Milton Bradley and Ramon Vazquez. This start was actually Laffey's third-worst on the season, allowing three runs: seven of Laffey's ten starts ended with him leaving the mound after giving up no more than two runs.

One disturbing trend in Laffey's starts is that this marks the fourth consecutive start in which he's allowed a home run: the Texas start is well-documented, and this one was a solo shot, but it's still home runs allowed by a primarily groundball pitcher, and as such isn't very encouraging. Still, Laffey's 12:5 GO:FO ratio is excellent, his best in quite a while (since May 4), and he induced three double plays, which is obviously outstanding. The 8 hits, 3 for extra-bases, aren't good but this marks only the third start this season in which Laffey has allowed more hits than innings pitched.

In one way, Laffey is clearly not as "exciting" a long-term prospect as Fausto Carmona, in that he simply can't throw as hard and has less of a reasonable projection as a pitcher who can get people to swing and miss, but at age 23 (younger than Carmona) and left-handed, Laffey has enough on the ball (including a sparkling 2.98 ERA and a 1.20 WHIP) to be considered a good pitcher already, with a chance to sustain this into the foreseeable future.

One quick note about Laffey's third run: with an 0-2 count to Omar Quintanilla and two outs, Laffey threw an unhittable sinker under the strike zone, a pitch that would likely have bounced before reaching catcher Kelly Shoppach. It was a perfect 0-2 pitch: if he takes it, so be it, and if he swings, well, what the heck is he going to do with it? Omar Quintanilla is not Vlad Guerrero. He's going to ground out or foul it off or miss it entirely, and that's the point of that pitch.

In fact, Quintanilla was able to bloop the ball just over shortstop Jhonny Peralta, and with two outs, Jeff Baker was running on contact and scored the Rockies' third run. Yeah, it's an earned run and Omar did a good job and blah blah blah, but ... geez, I can't get all up in Laffey's grill for that one.

2) The Very Worst Plate Appearance In The World

As Casey Blake fought closer Brian Fuentes tooth and nail to work an 0-2 count to 3-2 before triumphantly singling to center, Raffy Betancourt lounged on the bench secure in the knowledge that he would not be asked to bat. Not only is Betancourt a relief pitcher with little more major-league hitting experience than a canned ham, but he'd completed his second inning of work and would have been lifted from even his pitching duties after the inning (if Cleveland were to rally to force Colorado to bat in the bottom of the ninth). Sure enough, with Blake on first, Eric Wedge called upon one of remaining pinch-hitters, right-hander Andy Marte to face the left-handed Fuentes.

Marte took the opportunity to watch the first pitch, which was out of the

zone. This is prudent, seeing an unfamiliar pitcher's delivery, and Marte has shown some plate discipline this season. Of his 50 plate appearances, he has hit the first pitch only two times and been hit by one of them. His performance against right-handed pitching has been borderline hilarious, with a .108/.108/.108 line that defies belief, but against left-handers, Marte has held his own with a .333/.500/.444 line that would be more impressive if it encompassed more than 12 plate appearances.

(An interjection: 12? Twelve? He has twelve plate appearances against left-handed pitching? Twelve? Really? That's it? I mean, what is the point of having this man on the roster? Really. Twelve? Oh, wait, now it's thirteen. Well, that's different.)

Fuentes threw the next pitch into the extreme lower-left quadrant (nonuprant?), just at the knees, just on the outside corner. I mean, that's a pretty nice pitch. Just the sort of thing a good closer throws. What are you going to do with that pitch? Maybe you can show extraordinary bat control and use an inside-out swing to poke it into right field, but that's a nice pitch.

Marte did not show extraordinary bat control.

In fact, he PULLED THE BALL.

Now, this is just infuriating. You cannot pull that ball. Marcus Thames would not pull that ball. There is no way TO pull that ball with authority.

That's pretty much the point of that pitch: The Pitch You Cannot Pull.

He pulled it. Right to Garrett Atkins. For a **double play**.

Congratulations, Andy Marte, you just had **The Very Worst Plate Appearance In The World** !

3) ***Once a week we take a holiday and go nowhere***
-- Lethargarian, "The Phanton Tollbooth"

One of my favorite books when I was young was "The Phanton Tollbooth" by Norton Juster. In it, a bored young boy named Milo receives a mysterious gift of a toll booth and is transported into a wonderful land of imagination and colorful characters that eventually gives him a new appreciation of life. Of course, at the time, I completely sloughed over the intended meaning and focused on the worderful characters and lands, but Juster wasn't necessarily writing the book to prosthelitize.

After passing the gate at Expectations, Milo finds himself in a grey, dingy land known as the Doldrums. The Doldrums are a featureless, monotonous place populated primarily by the Lethargarians, who have busy schedules that involve dawdling, daydreaming, and taking early-mid-afternoon naps. Looking on the Map of The Lands Beyond, you can see how Milo is able to travel, in Juster's words, "mile after mile after mile after mile after mile after mile after ..."

(The actual passage takes up about a third of a page, successfully conveying just how variance-free and plodding like in the Doldrums is.)

And thus, we describe the Cleveland offense as it makes out after out after out after out after out after out after out after ...

4) Saved from Infamy

Andy Marte's plate appearance (The Very Worst In The World!) prevented me from waxing as poetically on David Dellucci's amazing pinch-hit performance in which he parlayed a 2-0 count into a five-pitch swinging strikeout. With a man on first. And nobody out.

If this sounds familiar, consider an appearance long ago, all the way back to ... the previous game ... in which Dellucci's five-pitch strikeout helped thwart another rally.

If asked, I have a recommendation for tonight's game.

5) *Once a week we take a holiday and go nowhere*
-- Lethargarian, "The Phanton Tollbooth"

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dingy land known as the Doldrums. The Doldrums are a featureless, monotonous place populated primarily by the Lethargarians, who have busy schedules that involve dawdling, daydreaming, and taking early-mid-afternoon naps. Looking on the Map of The Lands Beyond, you can see how Milo is able to travel, in Juster's words, "mile after mile after mile after mile after mile after mile after ..."

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6) Box Score Follies

Raffy Betancourt gave up a single to Wile E. Taveras that travelled almost all the way to the shortstop, then, despite throwing to first nine hundred thirteen times, allowed him to steal second base. Taveras is fast and a good basestealer, and the base was his 31st on the season. Still, Kelly Shoppach's throw was beyond terrible, bad enough to end up in center field, and Taveras took third on the play.

The next hitter lifted a fly ball to center that scored Taveras. This was considered an "earned run."

Now, it is true that the next hitter also hit a fly ball to center. Perhaps the scorer believed that Taveras would have tagged from second to third on the first out and scored on the second. But that sure seems like an unearned run to me.

7) This having been said

Betancourt faced seven hitters and retired six of them: Taveras' hit was the only one he allowed, and he beat it out because he is really fast. That's a pretty nice outing by the monitor lizard.

8) *Once a week we take a holiday and go nowhere*
-- Lethargarian, "The Phanton Tollbooth"

One of my favorite books when I was young was "The Phanton Tollbooth" by Norton Juster. Looking on the Map of The Lands Beyond, you can see how Milo is able to travel, in Juster's words, "mile after mile after mile after mile after mile after mile after ..."

And thus, we describe the Cleveland offense as it makes out after out after out after out after out after out after ...

9) A Moment of Clarification

Taveras' stolen base was one of two the Rockies executed, and each led directly to a run, as Jeff Baker's first of the season was followed by Quintanilla's aforementioned RBI single.

Can someone remind me of which catcher between Victor Martinez and Kelly Shoppach was supposed to be the **defensive**
upgrade on the other? You know, because the one was so terrible at throwing out basestealers?

10) A more-clarifying Moment of Clarification

Thanks to everyone who pointed out that the "ground rule double to first" was really a ball hit down the line well past first, but was touched by a fan down the right field line. I suppose the Game Log was making a distinction between that case and the more-classical "ground rule double to right" which bounces over the outfield wall.

11) *Once a week we take a holiday and go nowhere* -- Lethargarian, "The Phanton Tollbooth"

One of my favorite books when I was young was "The Phanton Tollbooth" by Norton Juster.

And thus, we describe the Cleveland offense as it makes out after out after out after out after out after out after out after ...

12) Bears mentioning

Casey Blake had a pair of hits and scored a run.

Shin-Soo Choo had a pinch-hit sacrifice fly after a passed ball put runners on 2nd and 3rd with one out.

Aaron Laffey collected his first major-league hit.

I hate Jeff Baker.

13) ***Once a week we take a holiday and go nowhere***

-- Lethargarian, "The Phanton Tollbooth"

... out after out after out after out after out after out after out after ...