As the Indians slide continues, Buffum offers his thoughts on last night's game and how the White Sox pull further away, and how the pitching and baserunning continue to be a nightmare.

My vitriol fades
As ennui comes to the fore
Damn, that's annoying

1) It's craptacular!

Jason Johnson's last outing was very, very poor, but this one was only poor. Really, through five innings, he had given up nine hits but only one walk, had struck out a guy an inning, and was nursing a 6-4 lead. He was only hovering around 80 pitches, but it seems disingenuous to claim that he was settling into anything resembling a "groove." More like "hanging on by one's bloody cuticles." Hey, he's the fifth starter, we were spoiled early in the season. Heck, we were more that halfway through our third KC pitcher at that

point.

So I'll give some credit to Inertia Man for recognizing that Johnson was losing any hopes of effectiveness and pulled him after putting the tying run on base. What I can't give him credit for is bringing in Danny Graves. Look, Graves has had some good outings. I like a good comeback story as much as the next guy. And I was all ready to get up in arms about needing a ground ball in that situation (1st & 2nd, none out) and it turns out Graves had a great GB/FB ratio. But Buck was on a mini-streak, breaking out of a homerless slump, and Graves induces ground balls with timing disruption rather than stuff. Would Jason Davis (with a similar GB/FB ratio) have fared any better, seeing as he came in and gave up a double, single, and HBP to his first three batters? Seems unlikely. I would have done it anyway. Bring in Mota and his Blind Dart Show? Guthrie and his AAA fastball? Merely Big Bob in the sixth inning? (Good idea, bold idea, never going to happen idea)

Ultimately, the point is not that I Hate Danny Graves or Jason Davis Has No Chin or anything like that. No, the point is that facing a crummy hitter on a crummy team, there was *no one* you'd bring in out of the pen who gave you the *remotest* confidence that he'd get us out of the inning unscathed. And, in fact, we got rather scathed indeed. Here's a nice point (thanks to Steve Hubbard for the pointer): Danny Graves came into the game with a 4.61ERA. That's not particularly good. It was, however,
significantly below the team ERA (now 5.39). I'm not sure I can put the bowel-loosening terror of those numbers into words. How about, "GAIEE?!"

2) Who are you, and what have you done with John Buck?

John Buck came into this series hitting a brisk .193, with two hits in his last eight games. He drew one walk, drove in ZERO runs, and struck out NINE TIMES. Against Cleveland, he is 5-for-6 with two HRs, a double, a walk, 5 RBI, and no Ks. And his head is completely cylindrical.

I hate him.

3) Well, yeah, I know who you are

Scott Sauerbeck came in to face the left-handed portion of the sixth inning. Walks one, Ks one, gives up a run because Jason Davis pitches like a maroon. Four strikes in ten pitches. Is anyone surprised by this? Can we call up a lefty now?

4) Take two, they're small

Not content to get everyone a hit, six of the nine Indians' batters had TWO hits apiece. Hey, that's good! The three guys who didn't? Some piker named Hafner (one hit), some goober named Martinez (one hit), and Jhonny Peralta, who can hardly be blamed because he got like three strikes in five plate appearances. Four of the hits went for extra bases, including a triple by Speed Ball Hafner (and another leadoff triple by Grady). That's good, right?

5) Duck, duck, goose(egg)

No! It sucks! Because we left 12 more guys on base! Including SEVEN in scoring position! We had 21 baserunners (2 HBP), didn't ground into any double plays (more on that later), and scored SEVEN RUNS. (KC wasn't a whole lot more efficient, but they got more hits and got to face Cleveland pitching)

6) Forget the head, I want the entire circulatory system, just in case

Remember when I asked for the head of the baserunning coach? It didn't work. Somehow the Indians read from the *Necronomicon* or some H.P. Lovecraft tome

and brought the headless guy back to life, and he may actually have gotten *worse*. (In his defense, few reanimated headless corpses improve, independent of profession. Trust me on this one.)

Do you know how fast you have to be to score on a popup to deep short? Empirically, you have to be faster than Grady Sizemore. Do you know how hard it is to hypnotize defenders into letting you wander aimlessly to the next base? Empirically, you have to be more skilled at it than Casey Blake.

Do you know how terrible a baserunning coach you have to be before you are flayed in public, or at least sent to the minor-league affiliate in Ulan Baator, Mongolia? Empirically, there is no such level of badness. Apparently it is an asymptotic thing, always striving for the theoretical limit, never quite reaching it. (We're real close.)

7) Walk this way!

Jhonny Peralta had an 0-for-1 night at the plate, which sounds like a bad pinch-hitting performance (the idea of Peralta pinch-hitting for Vazquez causes an uncomfortable mixture of hysterical laughter and stomach convulsions), except he walked FOUR TIMES. Wowzers. This is a bold, new strategy from Buddy Bell: walk the .259 hitter to get to Hafner and Martinez. Or, it could be that KC pitchers are, in fact, not terrific control artists. Given that I've never seen the words "bold" and "new" in a sentence with "Buddy Bell" before this, I'm leaning toward the latter. (The two HBP and 2 WP may have influenced me here.)

8) Silver Lining Dept.

Jeremy Guthrie actually pitched well, inducing three groundball outs in a scoreless

1-hit inning. Nine of his eleven pitches were for strikes. Woo fucking woo.

9) Hand me the binoculars

The White Sox won again and now lead the AL Central by seven games. I walked out on this movie once, what else is on?