No, this is not a coronation. It'll take more than a two-week hot streak and a couple game-winning homeruns to turn a former prospect's dusty cocoon into a butterfly. But for Tribe fans desperate for a feel-good story at the end of a lost season, the ballad of Andy Marte just might be one worth latching on to. Andrew Clayman sings that ballad in his latest look at another Indians Ghost of Prospects Past, Err, Present.

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As with any great coming-of-age drama, Marte's quest for success and self-discovery had to hit rock bottom before starting its ascent. In his particular case, that lowest of lows came this past February, when the then pennant-minded Indians placed the disappointing third baseman on waivers, and 29 other teams turned their noses at him. Even at a bargain basement price, Marte's once "can't miss" status had somehow cascaded to the level of "can't risk," landing the 25 year-old in Triple-A Columbus to presumably dissolve out of existence like Alex Escobar before him.

In some ways, the decision to waive and essentially give up on Marte was a bit of a surprise-not because he'd shown any indication of being a viable Major Leaguer, but because Shapiro and Wedge had previously seemed terrified of Marte becoming the next Brandon Phillips; the failed prospect that magically becomes an all-star in another uniform. From an observational standpoint, this was an incredibly irrational concern, considering how clueless Marte had looked

at the plate and how rarely total prospect reanimation actually occurs. If anything, the paranoia about abandoning the Marte experiment spoke to a greater lack of confidence in the Cleveland coaching staff to develop its own players. But that's neither here nor there. The fact was, their worries were for not, because no other team-not even the Pirates-felt like giving the former top tier spec another shot on a 40-man roster.

By no coincidence, Marte wasn't even guaranteed a starting job in Columbus this spring, with Wes Hodges standing atop the depth chart at third base. However, as Hodges battled some injury problems, fate lent Marte a lifesaver.

Even during his days as a highly touted farmhand in the Braves system, Marte never hit for a higher average than .285 in the Minors. And since 2006, he had failed to reach an OPS of .800 as a Triple-A hitter. But in 82 games for the Clippers this season, Marte hit .327 with a .963 OPS, 18 homers, and 66 RBIs. He hadn't just rediscovered his old self; he had reinvented himself-better, stronger, eh, not exactly any faster. But you get the idea.

With the trades of Victor Martinez and Ryan Garko, first base became Marte's new pathway back to the Majors, and he arrived with the general understanding that this could be his last shot-not just with the Indians, but possibly anywhere. Another .221 BA / .583 OPS like he managed in 235 at-bats in Cleveland last season, and his goose could be cooked. Marte needed to prove whether he'd truly turned a corner a la Phillips, or had merely solidified himself as a modern day Jeff Manto- only as good as Triple-A pitching allows him to be.

By now, even the most venomous Marte haters of years past felt he had earned one more chance. When given it, though, Andy didn't appear to be in any rush to usher in a new era. On August 18, three weeks into his latest Big League stint, Marte was hitting at a sadly familiar .175 clip, unable to steal at-bats away from the equally intimidating Chris Gimenez (.167). In 10 starts since that point, though, Bruce Banner became the Hulk, and the phoenix-like rise of Marte was upon us. After Saturday night's game, Marte is now hitting .417 (15 for 36) over the course of a 10-game hitting streak, with 3 homers and 12 RBIs. Sure, it's a tiny sampling, and even Marty Cordova hit like Tris Speaker for a week or two. But it's still pretty hard not to feel encouraged when you compare Marte's current 2009 numbers (.289, 3 HR, 15 RBI in 76 ABs) to his 2008 stats with the Tribe (.221, 3 HR, 17 RBI in 235 ABs!). With about one-third of the at-bats, he's already matched the power and run production he showed in 80 ballgames during a dismal '08. At the very least, Marte's little 10 day burst might have put him back on the waiver wire radar for other clubs this off-season. And at the very best, it might have put him back in the family portrait of the Tribe's 2010 roster.

If we assume that Marte really has figured it out this year, the question should become, "just when is a bust really a bust?" Marte's constant comparison point, Brandon Phillips, was 25 when he was traded to Cincinnati in 2006. Coming off a season in which he hit .256 at Triple-A, and 3 seasons removed from hitting .208 in 112 games for the Indians, Phillips had crossed over the prospect threshold and been officially decried as a "bust." But as Brandon would help remind us in '06, and as Franklin Gutierrez and Russell freakin' Branyan have somehow showcased again this season, being a bust is not equivalent to having an off switch. Or even if it is, it doesn't mean that switch can't be turned back on under the right circumstances. For some, it takes a change of scenery. For Andy Marte, it might simply have been the embarrassment of being unwanted that finally brought him into focus.

Or then again, we may simply be witnessing nothing more than a fluke-a short-term aberration from a player who "is what we thought he was." I prefer the former explanation, but I also took a lot of flack for signing Marte to my fantasy league team, so it's kind of a personal issue.

Final Thought: When this season started, what would you have placed the odds on Andy Marte being one of the most interesting storylines on the Tribe going into the home stretch?