Just one episode left. And per usual, the next to last episode of the season was a very good one. Two brutal murder scenes, no Artie or Janice, and the Vito issue finally gets resolved (6-ball, corner pocket). Mitch is back for his weekly recap of what went down last Sunday night. His reviews are always hysterical, this may be one of the funniest things I've ever read though. Get ready to be informed. Get ready to laugh.

Na, na, na, na. Na, na, na, na. Hey, Hey. Goodbye!

Adios, Vito. Your waddling, confused ass (with or without imbedded cue stick) will not be missed.

In addition to that satisfying event, there was nary a Janice or Artie to be seen this evening. This makes for an excellent episode no matter what else happens.

Recap. Things are not pleasant at Casa de Mafia as we start the show. Carmela has just learned that AJ was fired from his job at Blockbusters (three weeks earlier) for stealing promotional items to help finance his clubbing habit. Tony comes in mid-grilling and is just as upset. Of course it isn't AJ's fault…at least according to AJ, as he first blames the "religious fanatics" at Blockbuster and then tries to pass himself off as an Eco-Hero for rescuing the promotional items from the dumpster. AJ needs to do something to help the environment…because for 19 plus years that kid has just been harming the environment by wasting oxygen. Carmela laments her fate, rejecting Tony's assertion that AJ's problem is that he's spoiled, stating that AJ's equally pampered classmates seem to be doing much

better. She complains about AJ's "dead, nihilistic streak", while both she and Tony silently wish he had gotten that vasectomy right after Meadow's birth.

To make matters worse for Tony and Carm, Meadow pops into their bedroom at 1:30 AM to announce that she's heading out to California to be with Finn as he restarts dental school, confusing her parents and most of the viewing audience after all the problems they seemed to be having the last few weeks. "What problems?" says Meadow, as if the whole thing was some weird fantasy her parents invented. I can almost hear David Chase saying "nevermind" in a Gilda Radner voice to all of us wondering where that plot line was going. Looks like Jason Barone will be all alone with his broken heart and kneecap.

That's it…the good child is gone, leaving Mommy alone in the house with Damien's slack-assed doppelganger…so Carmela decides it's time to leave the continent entirely and take advantage of a one-week trip to Paris she won at a silent auction. Tony insists he can't take a week off, so Carmela decides to take Ro with her, leaving Tony to do "what boys do" in her absence. Heh. Like getting blowjobs from plastic chested strippers while driving the Escalade and listening to AC/DC. Excellent touch playing the song "Simple Kind of Man" in the background when "Debbie Does Tony" got out of the car.

We have a Vito sighting. The Round Mound of Abscond surprises Tony at the food court of a local mall, wanting "back in" (poor word choice, Vito). He'll give Tony $200K and set up shop in Atlantic City running crystal meth and hookers (or hooker on crystal meth…which seems to be a redundant statement). Tony is less than thrilled, but doesn't immediately say no.

Next on the Vito Jersey Tour is a visit with the wife and kids. Vito's story for the kids is that he's a CIA spy just back from Afghanistan, and possibly needing to go on another undercover mission (Key West?). Yeah, I'm sure Vito blended in

wonderfully in Kabul, but given that it's supposed to be the CIA, maybe it is something they'd do. Right after they'd send Chris Rock to try to blend in with the people in China. The bullshit Vito flings to his wife (and earlier to Tony) isn't much better. He's not gay…it was just a bad reaction to blood pressure medications. Right. I had a bad reaction to meds the other week…I turned into a short Korean woman for a few days until my system got used to it…my dogs were very frightened (but looked delicious…good thing the meds also took away my appetite). On the other hand, Vito must still have enough meds in him to inspire a call to Jimbo to tell him he misses him…an admission that is promptly rejected.

Phil hears the rumors of Vito's return, and is not a happy man (is he ever?). He calls for a meeting with Tony to confront him about it…pissing Tee off in the process. Nice touch meeting at the statue of Lou Costello. I was really hoping Phil and Tony would go off on some version of "Vito's on First"…but that might have been the Cuervo talking to me at the time. Despite Tony's dislike of The Hairdo, he realizes that Vito is just not worth the trouble with the New Yorkers, so he tells Silvio that it's time for him to go, and to let Carlo do the job.

Hold up on that carwash, Carlo. Seems Phil and the boys go there first, resulting in another classic Sopranos gross whacking. Two NY goons grab Vito in his hotel room, hit him a few times, and then tape up his mouth so he can't scream when…

Phil comes Out of the Closet! Literally. Now that was just too cute of a touch from Chase to have the Hairdo hiding in the closet until Vito was gagged. The rest of the scene plays out with few words and some great acting from Joseph Gannoscoli and Frank Vincent showing Vito's fear and desperation and Phil's quiet rage. Vito's death by cue-stick beating is mostly shown out of the picture, with the camera focused on Phil's clenched hand. So we say goodbye to the most obnoxious fat gay man since Harvey Fierstein.

When the news breaks to Tony and the boys, there's not much said in defense of their own guy, so Tony let's them know that Phil will probably get a pass from him on it, since he was planning to have it done anyway. However, he reveals another side to Sil, wanting to punish Phil by hitting him in the wallet rather than doing a "tit for tat" hit on his crew. Great idea, but fate has other plans. Fat Dom, one of the goons that whacked Vito, comes to the Pork Store to drop off a payment to Silvio, and proceeds to gloat about the Vito Whacking to Sil and Carlo. They put up with it for awhile, but after the second comment about "Carlo's lipstick" being found on Vito, they've had enough and we get the second gross whacking of the night…with Sil hitting Fat Dom over the head and then Carlo stabbing him four times with a large carving knife. I sure hope they remembered to wash it off before going back to chopping garlic with it.

Interspersed with all these happenings was Carmela's Paris trip. As it turns out, it was the real life mirror of Tony's "who am I, and what am I" dream sequences during his coma. Carmela is overwhelmed by the culture and sophistication of the city…and who can blame her? It's not like she gets a lot of culture in Mobland, and going from a New Jersey suburb to Paris is about the same as going from BFE, West Virginia to…anyplace with electricity and indoor plumbing. But with Carm, the arts and atmosphere of the City of Lights lifts her spirits like nothing she has seen before, and I can identify somewhat with the emotions. My first trip to Europe had me walking the streets of Edinburgh, Scotland with the same looks of astonishment in seeing sites that existed back when the U.S.A. was still nothing but wilderness. OK…I was also astounded by having twenty pubs within walking distance of my hotel, but that's another story.

Having the searchlight on the Eiffel Tower echoing the searchlight Tony kept seeing during his Finnerty coma was a great touch as well. But while Tony had moments of consciousness interrupting his scenes, Carmela has a disturbing dream where she sees Adrianna walking a dog on the streets of Paris…but then she is told by a gendarme that Adrianna is dead. So much for my pronouncement a few weeks ago that she bought Tony's b.s. about her. Carmela seems rejuvenated when she gets back home, but I get the feeling we'll hear more of this on the season finale.

Tony's feelings for AJ finally come to a head with Melfi the night after coming across a stupidly giggling AJ sitting in his underwear chatting online. After sitting in her office silently for what appears to be several minutes, T blurts out "how about the fact that I hate my son?" Yeah; you and everyone else on the planet, Tony. Tony blames some of this on Carmela, claiming that it was her stopping him from beating AJ into line that made him the way he is. Then Melfi screws up that great line of thought (seeing AJ bitchslapped by Tony) by stating the Truth; Carmela did to AJ what Tony wishes Livia would have done for him…protecting him from an abusive and unloving father.

So Tony tries a different tact. He gets AJ a union job down at a construction site…a real job requiring manual labor and not the "no-show" job he scored for Finn. "It's Winter!", whines Prince Enabled, to which Tony responds with a well stated "dress for it". When AJ protests further, Tony responds by threatening to take his car, then his clothes, his room, and his food. For emphasis, Tony takes AJ's old football helmet and smashes the windshield of AJ's SUV. Tony tells him, "I love you and want what is best…but DON'T put me to the test." And it looks like the 15 watt bulb finally went on in AJ's head…as Carmela sees him the next day heading out for his first day of real work in his entire life.

In the history of The Sopranos, the next to last episode has often had major whackings and intense set ups for the last show. Junior and Livia's hit attempt on Tony in Season 1; Richie Aprile's death by Janice in Season 2; Jackie Junior's meltdown in Season 3 (although he wasn't whacked until the last episode that year); and then Adrianna buying the farm last season…so the precedent was obviously there to have Vito go this week. What happens in two weeks is pretty much anyone's guess…but I have high hopes that it will be another classic sendoff to another interesting season.

Best Line: Carmela: "He (AJ) was fired". Tony: "From Blockbusters? They have fucking Rhesus monkeys working as managers there."

Best Scene: Two great whacking scenes. Not up to the Richie Aprile or Ralphie Cifaretto killings, but satisfactory nonetheless.

Most Humorous Scene: Phil and his wife at the Spatafore's house after the Vito whacking. While Phil's dowdy wife was yammering on and on about how unnatural gays were…a Mr. Universe pageant was playing on the TV. Great visual.

Latest Whacking Odds: Total guess with just one episode left, but this will be the preliminary odds for next season

1) Phil (odds – even) – It may not happen until next year.

2) Uncle JuniorMummyHead (odds – 4:1) – Haven't seen much of him…so maybe this gets resolved in a Tony B. sort of manner in the last show.

3) Bobby: (odds – 10:1) – Still the odds on favorite for the regulars of Tony's crew

4) Benny Fazio: (odds – 12:1) – I keep hoping.

5) Johnny Sack (odds – 20:1) – Could set up a bigger power vacuum than already exists with him in prison.

6) Little Carmine (odds 25:1) – He seems to be trying to be the peacemaker on the next episode. Which may not be a wise decision.

7) Artie (odds – 50:1) – Maybe the rabbit from “Monty Python and the Holy Grail” can find him. Run away! Run away!