

You guys

Amanda Petrusich
New Yorker

very sober. The line for chicken fingers was, per my calculation, fifteen times longer than the line for beer. Swift has for years been a savant of what I might call “you guys” energy, a chatty, ersatz intimacy that feels consonant with the way we exist on social media—offering a glimpse of our private lives, but in a deliberate and mediated way. When Swift addressed the seventy-

quired her to bear-hug them for safe transport, I started laughing harder than I have laughed in several years.

As the night went on, I began to understand how Swift’s fandom is tied to the primal urge to have something to protect and be protected by. In recent years, community, one of our most elemental human pleasures, has been decimated by COVID, politics, technology, capitalism. These days, people will take it where they can get it. Swift often sings of alienation and yearning. She has an unusual number of songs about being left behind. Not by the culture—though I think she worries about that, too—but by someone she cared about who couldn’t countenance the immensity of her life. In her world, love is conditional and frequently temporary. (“You could call me ‘babe’ for the weekend,” she sings on “’tis the damn season,” a line I’ve always found profoundly sad.) On the chorus of “The Archer,” she sings, “Who could ever leave me, darling? / But who could stay?” Toward the end of the song, she adds a more hopeful line: “You could stay.”

As she sang that “you” on Saturday, she raised an arm and pointed directly to the audience. Swift has written many

Date: 2024-12-22
Words: 14
Time to read: 1 min

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