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mannpome
david kirschenbaum

“I heard we had scalpers,
which is really exciting,”
before she says,
“Mike, we need you again,”
to the fan that answered her call for “someone to play bass in the key of F on
‘I’m with Stupid’ (during the first encore),
or we’re going to just stand here.”

And he gingerly removes her bass from the stand,
Leans over and says a few words to Patrick Warren,
Who opens up his music on top of the organ so Mike can follow along,
And checks with the guitarist to watch for changes.
And the band goes into a slowed down version of her biggest hit,
“Voices Carry,” from her old band, ‘Til Tuesday,
and 1985 pre-schoolers are bopping along,
singing the chorus,
14 years after I caught the end of their opening set for Hall & Oates that May,
at Long Island’s Nassau Veterans Memorial Coliseum,
after getting a speeding ticket for going 67 miles per hour
heading north on the Meadowbrook Parkway.

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vi.

When she finishes,
before the first of two, you-know-they're-comin' encores,
she motherly says,
“Get home safely,
and wear your seat belt,”
and walks off stage.

The roadie turns on his mini-flashlight,
checks the equipment,
and she returns to fans yelling out song titles,
before she says,
“Why doesn't someone just say ‘Telescope,’
and we'll pretend we're taking your request?”
A dozen people yell out ‘Telescope’ as the band gears up.

for wanda phipps

i.

“Another fourth of July,
dah-dah-dah-dah-dah-dah.”

Two lines into her first New York City solo show in 3 years,
Aimee Mann muffs the second line.

“We’re a little fucked up right now. I’ll tell you about it later.”

“We’re doing this three-week tour to support the EP,”
she says after finishing the first song.

“We’re in the van driving from Chicago to Ann Arbor,
doing 70,
and a drunk driver,
doing 100,
hits us.”

A little nervous laughter from the crowd.

“It’s not funny,” she says through a grin.

v.

She goes into “Long Shot,”
the first song off her last album, 1995’s *I’m With Stupid*,
sings the first line,
You fucked it up
and then muffs another second line,
as the band stops, and she uplooks her memory
and they start again.

iv.

“Pat Warren and Brendan O’Brien took their first trip to New York City last year,
when they were on tour with Michael Penn,
who is my husband.

And both of them had never been to New York City before,
and were on 42nd Street and Broadway,
and knew where they wanted to go,
but didn’t know how to get there.
So they hopped in a cab and said,
‘Take us to Times Square.’”

“So the van skids,
then we fishtail,
and then we roll over,
three times.

“But we were wearing seat belts,
these little miracle-belts
that keep you from dying when you’re supposed to.

“So we had to rent a van,
but could only get a minivan and a rent-a-car.
Me and Pat Warren went in the car,
and we followed the minivan.
Then lightning struck the car,
and it died.

“So if you see sparks tonight, it’s one of us.”

ii.

“And I’m buying it back from Interscope,”
she says about her hoped for September album release.
“They rejected it. They said,
‘You know, she can be a big star,
if we just change the music.’”

She plays one of her two new Elvis Costello collaborations
from the 7-song EP—
“on sale in the back.
And there’s a mailing list and T-shirts back there, too.
That’ll make my road manager happy now.”

iii.

“We’re going to cheat on this one,” she says.
“We have a drum loop,”
and nods to the engineer to cue it.
“See how much better we sound already?”