

[00:00:00] <music>

Annie: Hi friends! Welcome to another episode of That Sounds Fun. Our Christmas episodes are always some of my favorites. I'm your host Annie F. Downs. I'm so happy to be here with you today, back in the office in Nashville.

And don't forget, stick around till the end of today's episode because we have got our That Sounds Fun Network podcast host telling us their very favorite Christmas snacks. And you need to try these. So stick around till the very end.

Before we dive into today's conversation though, I want to tell you about one of our incredible sponsors, [Athletic Greens](#). Listen, tis the season for all the sickness, but you know I've come to love and trust AG1 by Athletic Greens to help me boost my immune system and hopefully ward off all the things.

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Intro: Okay, today on the show are my New York City besties: Ginna Claire Mason Moffett, Mary Kate Morrissey Blake, and Meredith Toering. Okay, you know, GC and MK very well already, but you have been asking to get to hear Meredith for a long time, and I hear you. She is finally here today.

We all sat down just a few days before I left New York to recap my two months of living here. Yes, I loved it. And yes, I cried so much.

These friends really were the catalyst behind me even thinking about moving to New York for a little while. So this was really fun and sad to rehash how it all played out with three of my best friends. Y'all know, if you've been listening along to AFD in NYC that so many things about these two months surprise me and have

made me think and taught me and grew me. And you'll get to hear me process some of that with them. They came with their questions too.

So here is my conversation with my New York gals, Mary Kate, Ginna Claire, and Meredith.

[00:02:37] <Music>

Ginna Claire: Do you like my jacket? It's part of the Annie F. Downs ABLE Partnership.

Annie: Hey.

Ginna Claire: And we got them when we were on tour with you in Wisconsin.

Annie: Welcome back to the pod, by the way, GC and MK.

Ginna Claire: Oh hey. Hey, hey.

Mary Kate: Happy to be here.

Annie: Mei, highly requested.

Ginna Claire: First timer.

Annie: Highly requested on the pod.

Meredith: Let's go. Here we are.

Annie: Do you do a lot of podcasts? Have you done podcasts?

Meredith: In my former life, yes.

Annie: In your former life as a what?

Meredith: When I lived in China.

Annie: Oh, people would have you on a lot?

Meredith: Yeah. I would do like here's the life in China situation.

Annie: Oh, okay. But not really since you've been in New York, Mei?

Meredith: Not in New York. This is my first New York podcast.

Annie: Hey.

Mary Kate: Oh my.

Annie: A trumpet. You see your skills are unlimited.

Meredith: Very exciting.

Annie: Okay, let's start here. We're gonna talk about... this is the Monday after I get home from living in New York.

Ginna Claire: Yew.

Mary Kate: Don't go.

Meredith: Don't do it.

Ginna Claire: How many times have I texted you this week and been like, "Don't go."

Annie: I know. I know. I don't want to cry this early. Let's talk about how we are friends, how we know each other. So I think the genesis would be the two of y'all. Y'all were friends first.

Mary Kate: GC and I?

Annie: Yes. Did y'all know each other...? Oh no. Is that not true?

Ginna Claire: Did y'all meet? I think y'all met. Well, y'all met first.

Meredith: We were friends before they were friends.

Annie: Really?

Meredith: Yeah. Because I think we were doing IF:Gathering things like 2014, 2015.

Annie: Oh, okay. We were first. Okay. So Mei and I were first through that and then y'all met through *Wicked*?

Ginna Claire: On tour.

Mary Kate: GC and I met through *Wicked* on tour.

Ginna Claire: Yeah. We were standing by in separate companies and then we got to join together on the road.

Annie: Did you have to audition together?

Mary Kate: No.

Annie: They just said, "You're the Elphaba, you're the Glinda. Make it work."

Mary Kate: But they really do put a lot of thought into the pair. At least they make it feel that way or seem that way. GC had a friend who was up for it, who she's really, really close with, and I was like, "This girl's gonna hate me because I'm coming in and her friend is not."

Annie: Oh sure.

Mary Kate: And her friend is absolutely incredible. But somehow I hit it and I was like, GC is not gonna be my friend. She's gonna hold a grudge against me forever."

Ginna Claire: And then I got there and she was like, "Hello, new best friend." So the first-

Annie: I think that's her opening line with everyone, which makes us very lucky.

Ginna Claire: The first time we rehearsed together was we were... she already got the part. So the first thing we ever did was sing *For Good* together. And that's when I say I fell in love with Mary Kate. And then we went out and got burgers and beers that night, or later that week.

Annie: What city were y'all in?

Ginna Claire: Cincinnati.

Mary Kate: Cincinnati. I mean, nati. Cincinnati. I'm sorry.

Ginna Claire: That's how we usually call it. Cincinnati. Actually, it's real cute. It's real cute.

Mary Kate: I love it here.

Ginna Claire: And they have a really good restaurant there called Maplewood. But it's actually sweet that we kind of fell in love in Cincinnati because then they fell in love in Cincinnati.

Annie: Really?

Meredith: That's true.

Mary Kate: I want to do the setup, and you can take over. Meredith was going to a baby shower in Cincinnati and I was like, "My friends there on the *Mean Girls* Tour."

Annie: Were y'all already friends? Oh yeah. Sorry. I guess we need to do that next. Mei, how did we meet?

Meredith: We met because I was in New York City on a 12-hour layover on my way back to China. And were you doing Visas. I was doing visas, and you said, "My friend is in *Wicked* the Musical, you should go see *Wicked* The Musical. So I went to go see *Wicked* The Musical. And we have a mutual friend who was working backstage at *Wicked* as well, and so we just connected.

Ginna Claire: Well, it was crazy too because our mutual friend was dressing me at the time and she was like, "Oh, my friend, Meredith, came to the show last night." And I had like run to get the train after the show, so I didn't even go to the stage door. So actually, I saw that y'all were... Annie and Mei were mutual friends on Instagram. And then-

Annie: That's really how you trust people. Because you're like, "Bob Goff knows Annie Downs. I'd love to be friends with Annie Downs. Annie Downs knows Meredith Toering, I'll be friends with Meredith."

Ginna Claire: Absolutely. So I actually messaged her-

Annie: You're a reference friend person.

Ginna Claire: Yeah. I was like, if you're still into... Like, "I'd love to meet you. I've heard so many wonderful things about you."

Annie: And this was what? 2-

Ginna Claire: '19?

Meredith: 2019.

Annie: 2019.

Ginna Claire: So she came to the stage door and then I met her and I said, "Whenever you're ever in town working on Visas, please come stay at my house. Like, don't get a hotel. Come hang out with me." Because she's, you know, very lovable. And she took me up on it. And I think it was like two weeks later she came.

Meredith: Literally I was doing weekend trips to America from China.

Annie: Oh my gosh.

Meredith: At this phase in my life.

Mary Kate: What's really crazy is we were doing a gut rental on a house. Sorry, this is maybe too much information now.

Annie: It's great.

Mary Kate: But Monday was my day off from *Wicked* and Mei happened to be on in town a lot of Mondays. And that's when we were going and doing house meetings and house projects. So she ended up helping us make so many decisions about our house.

Annie: Oh, that's hilarious.

Mary Kate: From flooring to tile to paint colors.

Annie: Oh my gosh.

Mary Kate: And then fast forward, which is a whole other podcast, but she ended up getting to live in our house for a couple years during the pandemic, which was bananas. Anyways. So fast forward pre-pandemic, Meredith has a baby shower in Cincinnati. I'm like, "Oh, my friend's on the *Mean Girls* tour, my best friend. You guys gotta meet. You'll love each other." Okay.

Mary Kate: So then Meredith came and saw the show.

Annie: Not only were you on the *Mean Girls* tour, you originated the role of Janis in *Mean Girls*.

Meredith: Absolutely.

Mary Kate: I'd rather be me, baby. And Meredith was like... I think actually you texted me, Annie, and you were like, "Hey, my friend Meredith is there. You guys should get a drink after the show. No pressure though. I know you blah, blah, blah." And I was like, "Oh no, I'm down." There was a party that night that I was kind of like procrastinating going to anyway. So Meredith parked up at some Irish pub right across the street. I think actually where we got burgers for the first time.

Ginna Claire: And that's why it's so full circle.

Meredith: It's so full circle.

Ginna Claire: So it's Nicholson's. It's right across the street from the Arinah. That's where we had our burger and beer date. And then that's where y'all went.

Mary Kate: And Meredith bought me two gin and tonics. And I remember being like a little bit... I don't know what happened that night that we just talked and talked and talked for like two hours.

Meredith: For long, yeah.

Mary Kate: And then we took this photo outside and I was like-

Ginna Claire: I remember it.

Mary Kate: "I think you just made a best friend." She was like, "I'll see you again." And I was like, "I feel like that's true.

Meredith: It's true.

Mary Kate: And then fast forward like one month later I'm playing Chicago and she's like, "Ugh, I'm stranded at O'Hare for 24 hours." I was like, "Come hang out with me."

Meredith: "Come hang out."

Mary Kate: And we had a big sleepover and then that kind of turned into lots of sleepovers on tour. So she was kind of visiting you on Mondays, like you must've been visiting me on like Wednesdays or whatever. I don't know. I was like-

Ginna Claire: This is crazy.

Annie: Meanwhile, her permanent address is my house in Nashville.

Meredith: It's crazy.

Annie: It's crazy.

Ginna Claire: Like a beautiful spider.

Meredith: Beautiful little circle.

Annie: And y'all are the reasons I live here.

Mary Kate: Crazy.

Annie: The three of you. Tell me why y'all moved to New York.

Mary Kate: For the industry.

Annie: Did you know like MK was part of like, I'm gonna go to college and then I'm gonna go to New York City?

Mary Kate: Forever. Yes.

Annie: Really?

Mary Kate: Big time.

Annie: Okay.

Mary Kate: I was like, "That's where I have to be. That's what's alive. That's where musical theater is the capital. That's the capital of musical theater, the Broadway. So I was like always New York, never LA. I was always like, "I'm going to New York. I'm going to New York. I'm gonna live in New York. I'm gonna do the big Apple Thing."

Annie: So what year did you move here?

Mary Kate: I moved here in 2011.

Annie: Oh my gosh.

Mary Kate: Yeah, January of 2011.

Annie: So you're about to be at like 13 years of living in New York.

Mary Kate: Mm-hmm.

Annie: That's like pro. Everybody says after 10 years is when you're a pro.

Mary Kate: Yeah, I've been here for a very long time, but I did go in and out touring. But yes.

Annie: Still had an address.

Mary Kate: Yeah, had an address.

Annie: When did you get here, GC?

Ginna Claire: I moved to the state of New York in 2013, but I didn't actually come to the city until 2015.

Annie: Were you the same? When you were done at Elon, were you like, take me to New York?

Ginna Claire: Yes.

Annie: Okay.

Ginna Claire: I moved to New York a month after graduation, but we were in Binghamton, New York, which is not close to New York City. It's a four-hour Greyhound bus ride.

Annie: Why were you there?

Ginna Claire: Because that's where Eric was an air traffic controller.

Annie: Oh, got it.

Ginna Claire: So I would take a bus and audition and then get back on the bus and go back to Binghamton.

Annie: You would take a bus for four hours?

Ginna Claire: Mm-hmm. Go to a dance call, get cut, jump back on the bus. Thank you, Port Authority. Bananas.

Annie: That's Incredible. What year did y'all move to the city?

Ginna Claire: I came here when I got the standby for Glinda in *Wicked* on Broadway. So that was fall 2015.

Annie: Okay. Wow. How did you end up in New York, Mei?

Meredith: Well, I got stuck here thanks to something we call the Cocororo. But I found myself here Christmas 2019 and then couldn't go back to China. And then-

Annie: It was that early. It was Christmas of 2019 that China was not letting people come back.

Meredith: Well, I came home for Christmas and then they closed borders like January 20th and my flight was supposed to be January 22nd.

Mary Kate: Wait, for anybody who doesn't know, can you just give a synopsis? Why were you in China, Mei?

Meredith: I lived in China and I ran a foster home and cardiac program for babies with complex congenital heart defects. Now live here.

Mary Kate: Now live here.

Annie: A lot of our friends know you because your home was where Rebekah and Gabe Lyon's daughter was before they adopted her, Amanda Bible Williams'

Meredith: Toby.

Annie: Toby.

Meredith: And [Boss Kim's?] little girl, Shiloh.

Annie: Yes. A lot of our friends were able to adopt children from your home.

Meredith: Yeah, there's a whole little community of my China babies who are now transplanted to Nashville and all around the states, which is sweet. But yeah, I came here and kind of bounced around throughout the early pandemic and then officially made New York City home about a year and a half ago.

Annie: Oh wow. That's when you got your apartment.

Meredith: Yeah, I guess like just a little over a year ago. But yeah, crazy.

Annie: That is crazy.

[00:11:59] <Music>

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That link and pretty much every other link you could ever hope for are in the show notes or in Friday's AFD Week in Review email. So make sure you check those out.

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[00:14:31] <Music>

Carlos: Hey, I'm Carlos Whitaker from the Human Hope Podcast and my favorite holiday snack quote-unquote is, say it with me, Champurrado. Do you know what Champurrado is? It's like a chocolate-based warm, thick Mexican cup filled with chocolate love that has a little bit of masa. It's thick. It is so good. It's my mama's recipe and I love it every Christmas Eve.

Annie: Okay, now back to our conversation with Ginna Claire, Mary Kate, and Meredith.

[00:15:11] <Music>

Annie: What makes friendship really easy in New York?

Mary Kate: Just about nothing.

Meredith: Yeah.

Annie: Really?

Meredith: I would agree with that.

Annie: Nothing. Nothing makes it easy.

Meredith: I think New York is hard on friendship.

Mary Kate: I think New York is really, really hard on friendships because even though we all live in the same place, we rarely see each other. I think that there has to be a deep, grounded loyalty and ease of the friendship where if we... like I haven't seen GC since the 20th anniversary.

Ginna Claire: It's been a month.

Annie: Oh, of *Wicked*.

Ginna Claire: Yeah.

Mary Kate: We probably see each other like five times a year, but it's-

Ginna Claire: You're doing eight shows a week right now.

Mary Kate: Yeah. Yeah. Yes.

Mary Kate: But if there's an ease and understanding within the friendship, I think that's the only way the friendship can survive.

Ginna Claire: Stream of consciousness, text threads.

Meredith: And like being present in the ways that you can be present, whether it's like the stream of conscious text messages or the like FaceTime as you're walking to the train and you're just catching up for two minutes. Because it's so easy to be so busy in New York City all the time that everybody's... it's like we're all here, but everybody's in this orbit.

Annie: Also, everybody needs like a... There needs to be one friend in the friend group that's the Mei whose life... I mean, she comes to Jersey. She comes to-

Mary Kate: She comes to theater.

Annie: She comes to Dumbo. She comes like... It seems easier if there's one person who works at night.

Mary Kate: The glue.

Ginna Claire: Yeah. Totally.

Annie: Right?

Ginna Claire: Mary Kate's doing a Broadway show. I have two kids two and under.

Annie: And you live in Jersey.

Ginna Claire: And Meredith's delivering babies all the time.

Mary Kate: All the time.

Annie: That's exactly right.

Ginna Claire: So it's a little kooky.

Meredith: Yeah.

Annie: And y'all have other friends besides the three of us?

Mary Kate: No.

Meredith: No, not really.

Ginna Claire: Absolutely not.

Annie: Oh.

Ginna Claire: Here's the thing.

Annie: Interesting.

Mary Kate: I do have friends other than the three of us, but I feel like there's something about having friends that are like your real true deep heart friends. You know what I mean? I think you have an opportunity to be friends with a lot of people in New York City but there isn't an opportunity to have deep friendships.

Annie: Yeah. That's kind of one of the things I'd said to people before I left Nashville was I'm already too...

Ginna Claire: I know. Me too. I'm already like, don't cry.

Mary Kate: I told you I was melancholy. Here we are.

Annie: Is that I had like people I wanted to see once because I love them and they live here. And there were people that I want to see a couple times and then y'all are the only people that are on my calendar every week. I was gonna see you every week no matter what.

So I found that to be a rhythm that made friendships successful here is I knew when Wednesday night was coming that we were gonna text about something, whether we could do it or not, it was, are we gonna go to the zoo? Are we gonna go to a show?

Ginna Claire: Are we gonna go to New Jersey?

Annie: And we did.

Ginna Claire: We did.

Annie: But I think that seems really important here more than even Nashville because Nashville, yeah, you have to calendar things here if you want to be sure to see people.

Mary Kate: And when you were coming in, I was like, "Oh my gosh, I'm so excited that I'm gonna see my friends every week." Or I'm gonna text with my friends every week because weeks will go by when that doesn't happen. But they're still my heart...

Annie: Yeah, totally.

Mary Kate: You know what I mean?

Annie: Yeah, totally.

Mary Kate: It's just-

Ginna Claire: I remember being in college and being surprised when upperclassmen moved to New York and reported how lonely of a city it can be. And I think it's because people tend to come here for an agenda, for a career, for something that's gonna keep you really occupied. And I think it does take a lot of intentionality to say, I'm gonna see you at this place at this time.

Annie: But you met your husband here. So there was intentionality to... I'm sorry, I'm looking at MK while I'm saying that because you met Trevor, who we love-

Mary Kate: I know. Who saw you as much as I saw you.

Annie: I know. I know.

Mary Kate: He was like, "You better say on that podcast today that I'm Annie's new best friend."

Annie: I was like, I went to the Met with Trevor, we went to shows. Did y'all know I went back to the Met this weekend, by the way?

Mary Kate: Yeah.

Annie: Thanks to... I mean, it was all because Trevor took us to the Met.

Meredith: Had this amazing tour guide.

Annie: And had this amazing tour guide. Then I was like, I have to go back and see it.

Ginna Claire: I picked Trevor.

Annie: Yes, you did. Will you tell that story? I mean, I think we may have told part of it on the pod, but tell it. It is so good.

[crosstalk 00:18:59]

Mary Kate: ...Sheryl Crow musical that is no longer-

Ginna Claire: Right after tour. That was five years ago.

Mary Kate: Oh my gosh.

Annie: Is that true?

Ginna Claire: Yeah, we were doing a workshop and we went to Manhattan, I think.

Mary Kate: Yeah. We were like, Manhattan's to Manhattan.

Ginna Claire: Because it was kind of a post-tour cheers moment. And I looked at her Bumble profile and I said, "No, no, no. This simply won't do." And I said, popular again. And then I edited her Bumble profile.

Mary Kate: She picked out all her favorite pictures of me.

Ginna Claire: Mm-hmm and picked some cute little-

Mary Kate: And then she swiped.

Ginna Claire: And then I literally swiped on him.

Mary Kate: And we like sent the same message to everybody.

Annie: About the guys you saw?

Ginna Claire: We're going to Whole Foods, what can we pick up for you? Something like that.

Mary Kate: Something like that.

Annie: That's a great opening line. Did you think of that, GC?

Ginna Claire: No, Mary Kate is.

Mary Kate: It was from Master of None. But then she like held up Trevor's and I was like, "Wait, wait, let me, like... He was the only one I actually sent an actual message to.

Ginna Claire: He wasn't an actor.

Mary Kate: And you were like, "He's Christian, he's blonde hair, blue eyes. He's got a picture of his mom. He's perfect. He's got a job."

Mary Kate: I want to say... did he have a picture too with like his nieces and nephews? I was like-

Annie: Yes, such an important-

Mary Kate: Family man.

Annie: He has such a New York job too.

Mary Kate: Finance.

Annie: I like talking to him about that because there's this whole other world that happens below like 14th or something. I mean, I know his office is higher, but is-

Mary Kate: There's something below the theater District?

Annie: Yeah, yeah, yeah. And it's like, wow, he goes to work at 7:00 am.

Mary Kate: Oh my gosh, in a uniform. Sometimes I'll be like, "Who is that? He is like in a suit with a Patagonia vest and a barber jacket on top?"

Meredith: Oh my gosh.

Mary Kate: With a little briefcase. I'm like, "Who is that?" That's my husband.

Annie: I asked him... so we're recording this obviously before I've left New York, everyone's hearing this once I'm home. But I asked him how many times he's seeing... We were talking about seeing *Wicked* this week since you're on for the whole week. And I was like, "Will you be at Wednesday's show? He said, I'll be at all the shows. I was like-

Ginna Claire: Really?

Annie: My guy.

Mary Kate: Well, I think he's got people coming to... He's gonna show them around and stuff. He probably won't see every show, but I have a new option that I'm playing with. So I was like, I'll have to see if you can guess which one it is.

Annie: I can't wait. Oh, very exciting.

Meredith: What's the option?

Annie: I feel like we do, I mean particularly GC, but Mei and I have put our time in as *Wicked* attenders.

Mary Kate: Oh yeah.

Annie: And therefore... I remember one time-

Ginna Claire: I saw *Wicked* Twice with you.

Annie: Yeah. Oh my gosh.

Ginna Claire: You're the best person to see *Wicked* with because you're like, are we happy? Are we not happy? How are we doing? I'm taking the temperature of the *Wicked* actress next to me the entire time we're watching. That's exactly right. Mei, what's your favorite thing about living here in New York?

Meredith: I love how coming from a very, very big different cultured life that I lived, I love that New York has so many facets of that here wrapped up in the city where you can find any kind of food you want to eat, you can hear any language spoken, you can go and find community with any type of culture or people that you want to be part of. And I love that kind of big world that all comes together as one. So I love that about New York. And then I love that-

Annie: You don't go over to Chinatown as much as I thought you would. Or do you go in and you just don't tell me?

Meredith: There's Chinese people everywhere.

Annie: Yeah, yeah.

Meredith: And I make my little Chinese friends and I have my like... I have my Middle Eastern friends and my Chinese friends and my Southeast Asian friends. It's really sweet.

Annie: Truly Mei has more friends in this town than I think most people do.

Ginna Claire: It's amazing.

Mary Kate: It is.

Ginna Claire: I love hearing you speak Chinese too. It's worth going and sitting down at the Chinese Restaurant.

Annie: I mean at the parade on Thursday where she's like, "I'm just gonna text my policeman friend real quick." I'm like, "Of course. Of Course."

Ginna Claire: Oh my gosh.

Annie: Why wouldn't she?

Mary Kate: Casual.

Ginna Claire: Paul, the policeman. I was all in. Crazy.

Mary Kate: Thank you, Paul, the police.

Meredith: Thank you, Paul, the policeman if you listen to this pod.

Annie: Mei, what is the trick? Lemme tell you my observation of the trick of you.

Meredith: Oh great. Oh boy.

Annie: Is that you think every person you meet could potentially be someone you could help.

Meredith: Mm, I don't know if I intentionally think that. But-

Annie: Whereas there is a version of person that I don't think any of us are, that everybody you meet, you think what could they do for me? Mei seems to go, I wonder if I could do something for them. So everyone wants to be friends with her because she's always thinking, what can I do to help you?

Mary Kate: You are very, very giving.

Meredith: That's very kind of you to say. I think I see everybody as somebody who has so much inherent value and so many stories that I think a lot of people don't have someone to see that in them. And I love being able to be a person that sees people who sometimes don't have that otherwise in their life.

Annie: But the interesting part is you have some really famous friends too, and you do the same for them. You see that... like even those people that the world would be like, everybody sees them, they're like, not like Mei does.

Mary Kate: Yes.

Meredith: Well, I hope that's how people feel.

Annie: I think that's true.

Meredith: I always want people to feel like I'm just Mei and I'm just here to be your friend and just be me.

Annie: We're so lucky. We're so lucky.

Mary Kate: You're very easy to be with.

Annie: So you and I live in the best neighborhood. We live on-

Meredith: Oh, that's total deal.

Annie: Absolutely. That's where we're going. That's where we're going.

Ginna Claire: Can we say best neighborhood on the island? Does that make you feel better?

Meredith: Oh, do you know that we call it the upper best side?

Annie: Because GC lives right off the train in Jersey.

Ginna Claire: Just a 30-minute commute in. Not a big deal.

Annie: No. And then, MK, you and Trevor live in Dumbo

Mary Kate: Yes.

Annie: Which is Brooklyn.

Mary Kate: Just one stop off the train in Dumbo.

Annie: And just for people to know, if they don't, because I didn't know till I really was here that like Manhattan is its own island. And Brooklyn is not on that island.

Mary Kate: No, it's not.

Annie: What is Brooklyn on? The rest of New York? Is it just on a land pass?

Mary Kate: Oh gosh.

Annie: It's not its own island, is it?

Man: It's on Long Island.

Mary Kate: It's on Long Island.

Annie: It's on Long Island. Phone a friend. Producer, phone a friend

Ginna Claire: Cut to me just answering that.

Mary Kate: It's on Long Island. That's Right.

Annie: Okay. So we technically live on three different land masses.

Ginna Claire: It's true. The Tristate area.

Mary Kate: It's a tristate area, I guess. So like, even if your friends live in New York on the Upper West Side, it still took me like an hour to get here.

Annie: So far. Oh, did it? I'm sorry.

Mary Kate: It's okay. That's just what it is. It took me an hour to get here.

Ginna Claire: Yeah, totally.

Annie: Oh boy.

Ginna Claire: Because we're coming from the Jerz.

Annie: Thank you. Tell me what you love about living in Dumbo.

Mary Kate: Oh.

Annie: You and Trevor are Dumbo evangelists.

Mary Kate: Yes, we are big, big Dumbo people. Dumbo is just right on the water. Best view of Manhattan.

Meredith: That is true.

Mary Kate: It's so unbelievably beautiful. It's like all of these old warehouses. I live in an old soap factory that they turned into condos and apartments. And there's just excellent restaurants, excellent nightlife, excellent coffee shops, playgrounds, art, the carousel. There's like everything you need to feel really, really city, but also it's like people who live in New York live there. It's not like all tourists.

Annie: It's very easy to get to Manhattan.

Mary Kate: Yes, totally.

Annie: It's literally one subway stop that goes underwater.

Ginna Claire: And you like it so much, you're like, I think I'll get married right here.

Mary Kate: I got married on the bus. I was like, well, I guess we'll just park this thing right here. Let's do it.

Annie: Everybody, right here.

Meredith: Right here in my backyard.

Ginna Claire: Right on the... come on home. Come to my backyard.

Annie: It was amazingly organized. You did a wonderful job.

Mary Kate: We only invited like 20 people, but then there were like, you know, 500 on the steps in their masks-

Annie: Yes, yes, watching.

Mary Kate: ...videoing.

Annie: That was so good. Do you want to say what city you live in?

Ginna Claire: Sure. I live in New Jersey in the burbs. I live in South Orange. It's like the south, but different.

Meredith: It has rolling hills.

Annie: It's beautiful.

Ginna Claire: I always said that I think I'd move back to the South someday and now I'm like, maybe the furthest I'll get south is South Orange. But it is green rolling hills like Middle Tennessee. And I think a lot of people when they think New Jersey, myself included, growing up in Tennessee, think of Newark, which we-

Annie: Or the Shore.

Ginna Claire: ...we love that air.

Annie: You love the shore.

Ginna Claire: We love the airports. And then getting to know Mary Kate I fell in love with the Jersey Shore and then, yeah, it's called the Garden State for a reason. It's gorgeous. But I love the Green Rolling Hills. I think I love New York City more being just outside of it because I can go in and really appreciate it and savor it and then go home to my car and a little bit of a yard. And we love our neighbors. We love our park. We love our location.

And the fact that I'm walking distance to two trains that can get me to Manhattan in 30 minutes is such a gift. And I can drive in in 30 or 40 minutes if there's no traffic.

Annie: Sorry

Ginna Claire: Yeah, if there's no traffic, which is great. It feels like freedom.

Annie: Mei, what do you love about the Upper West Side?

Meredith: I love the community. I love the coffee shops. I love the trees and the brownstones and the accessibility to the parks. I love that it's like New York City life, but it almost feels a little bit suburban, where you run into your neighbors and you know the people around you. And you're also just like 10 steps out my door. You're in Riverside Park and you're, you know, surrounded by trees and people and kids.

Annie: That's what amazed my parents is when we went to Midtown for Broadway shows and then we're up here where I live, they were like, this is not what we pictured.

Mary Kate: Suburbia.

Annie: There's like 10 people on the sidewalk, not 10 people on your spot on the sidewalk.

Meredith: Totally.

Annie: Which is the way it is in Midtown. And it's fun. But it's so much calmer up here.

Ginna Claire: But it's still alive.

Annie: Yes.

Meredith: It's still alive. That's the thing which feels different than like a suburb suburb where you're-

Annie: Nobody's on there.

Meredith: Where nobody's on there. It's still like-

Annie: That's right.

Meredith: You can walk outside at 10:00 pm and you'll find a place to go get drinks with your friends or you'll, you know, you can go where you want.

Annie: That's right.

Mary Kate: What I didn't have in Nashville growing up is public transportation. And the fact that you can get anywhere really quickly is so amazing. And I'm curious, what was your perception of public transportation before living here?

Ginna Claire: Oh, yeah.

Mary Kate: What is it? What was your perception?

Meredith: Going up the subway.

Annie: I love the subway now.

Ginna Claire: You do? And that's new.

Annie: Oh my gosh, I love it. I mean, because usually when I come I'm here for three days or five days and I'm like, I don't want to be underground when I'm here for such a short amount of time. But when you have to get somewhere fast-

Meredith: Truly.

Annie: I was in a car trying to get to Madison Square Garden... Mei was so proud of this. I was in a car trying to get to Madison Square Garden for a show and the Uber driver, when I'm looking at my phone, it's gonna take 22 minutes or eight minutes on the subway. So I said, "Thank you, and I got out right there and I jumped on the subway and I was there in eight minutes." It was so much better. And it's \$2 and 90 cents for your first 12 rides in a week and then it's free.

Meredith: And then it's free.

Annie: So it's unparalleled access.

Mary Kate: I haven't figured out that part yet.

Meredith: Just use the same card on your Apple Pay every time and then it just stops charging you.

Annie: Yeah. Yeah.

Mary Kate: Oh, my gosh.

Annie: It's unbelievable.

Meredith: Pro tips.

Annie: So I love it. And where I have lived, I'm the same as you. I can get to the 72nd station or the 81st station and it's so easy. And the BC or the 1, 2, 3 gets me everywhere.

Mary Kate: I'd love to hear you talk about this. When I'm on the subway, I feel like it's a uniter of people. Like people of all different classes and backgrounds. It seems like everybody jumps on because you're gonna get there the fastest.

Annie: That's exactly right. It is hearing every language. It is experiencing every culture. It's beautiful. Yeah. I mean, it's what I talked about in AFD in NYC Episode 6 about all the bodies are together. And you can't unexperience that.

[00:30:06] <Music>

Sponsor: Hey friends! Just interrupting this conversation one more time to share about one of our amazing partners, [Hiya Health](#). Okay, I love when we have things to recommend for my MiniBFFs. And this is one of them. Hiya Health is such a great way to get kids to take their vitamins.

Typical children's vitamins can often end up being candy in disguise. They're filled with two teaspoons of sugar, unhealthy chemicals, and other junk. So that's why Hiya was created. The pediatrician-approved superpowered chewable vitamin your kids will love.

Hiya is made with zero sugar and zero gummy junk and helps to provide the full body nourishment kids need, and they still taste good. Hiya is pressed with a blend of 12 organic fruits and veggies, and then filled with 15 essential vitamins and minerals. Plus your first shipment comes with these cute little stickers for your kids to stick on their bottles. And Hiya is also sent straight to your door so you don't have to worry about another thing on your shopping list.

We've worked out a special deal with Hiya for their bestselling children's vitamins. You get 50% off your first order. To claim this deal. Go to hiyahealth.com/thatoundsfun. That's hiyahealth.com/thatoundsfun. And get your kids the full body nourishment they need to grow into healthy adults.

Sponsor: And as long as we're talking about my MiniBFFs, I've got another great idea for them. It's our amazing partner, [KiwiCo](#). They have some of the cutest crate projects that your kids can build on their own or you can work on them together. Like there's this super cute baking set where they learn about fractions or get a lesson in physics while they make a basketball catapult. Literally, there are so many options.

KiwiCo has nine different subscription options for different ages and subjects. So there's something for everyone. And when you give KiwiCo it is so much more than gifting a box of toys. It's the gift of discovery because of their hands-on

experiences and giving kids the tools to learn about topics that they love, from dinosaurs to rocket ships. The projects truly are fun and stress-free. So you can enjoy quality time with your kids while tackling projects together.

The day the KiwiCo box arrives will be your kids' favorite day of the month. Kids can discover everything from the science of magic to engineering a domino machine and more. There's no commitment, so you can pause or cancel anytime. Discover hands-on fun with KiwiCo.

Get your first month free on any crate line at kiwico.com/thatoundsfun. That's your first month free at kiwico.com/thatoundsfun.

Hannah: Hi guys, it's Hannah here from Unexpected with Hannah Love, and my favorite treat for the holidays is a warm pecan pie. It's my memo's recipe and it never fails to hit the spot.

Annie: Okay, let's go back and finish up my New York conversation with Ginna Claire, Mary Kate, and Meredith.

[00:32:54] <Music>

Annie: Okay, we have a couple minutes left. Y'all each brought a question for me as this is our recap of my life in New York City.

Ginna Claire: Don't go.

Annie: Mei, you start.

Meredith: Okay. Well, not to go super deep.

Annie: Oh boy. Here we go.

Meredith: And you can take this as deep as you want to. But what is something that you didn't know about yourself before you lived here and experienced it as a, like, I'm living in New York and not a "I'm a tourist of New York"? What's something that you're taking home to Nashville being like, I'm proud of myself because I know this about me or I feel like this is something?

Annie: That's a great question. Thank you. What do I know about myself? I think a 25-year-old Annie wouldn't believe how much I thrive in New York.

Meredith: Wow.

Annie: I don't think she... I don't think she... I don't think she would've tried. She didn't, so proof.

Meredith: Here she is now.

Annie: And Here she is now. So I think part of it is this like I always knew I liked the energy. I didn't know I liked the sustained energy of it.

Meredith: Totally.

Annie: And two months in... I mean, we've laughed about this, but like I told, Mei, I think I Mei have told all of y'all this, but about a week ago, so seven weeks into my eight weeks, I was like, Okay, I'm tired.

Meredith: She hit the wall.

Annie: I was like, "I can't do anything tonight. I'm tired." And she was like, "It is about time." So that happened. And then the Sunday after my family left after Thanksgiving, I just kinda like stayed at my house all day and just like had to recover from hosting and from being and going. I mean, I FaceTimed with my family and everybody was tired. I mean, we were all exhausted from those five days. So I think I didn't know that the way it makes me feel for over three days would last if I lived here. And now I do.

Meredith: I love that.

Annie: Sheesh. Okay, here we go. GC.

Ginna Claire: I'm so proud of you. Well, man, now I feel like I need to change my question.

Annie: You don't have to.

Ginna Claire: I got a text yesterday from Jim Moy who invited us all to come back to Tony's again this year, which is where we were all last year.

Annie: Oh, for New Years.

Ginna Claire: We were all there last year for New Years.

Mary Kate: We gotta do that.

Ginna Claire: And that's when the conversation happened with Mary Kate and Annie, where Annie felt convicted to come do this big New York City adventure.

Mary Kate: I bullied you into it.

Annie: Oh, what a gift.

Ginna Claire: So lovingly. Anyways, I wish... if we all want to go back again.

Annie: I was about to say, are we gonna do it?

Mary Kate: I feel like we're doing it.

Annie: Okay.

Ginna Claire: We can. Jim, I guess we're in.

Mary Kate: Hey, Jim.

Annie: Jim, you heard it here first.

Ginna Claire: We would like to sing on New Year's Eve.

Annie: Well, not us. Well, you maybe, but we'd like to attend.

Annie: Sorry.

Ginna Claire: Just hearing about that sort of moment of conviction and how it sort of spurred you to action in that moment, fast forwarding to, you know, this New Year's Eve, which is approaching, how do you reckon with what that moment of conviction last year? And what are things that you've experienced here that you can tangibly take back with you to Nashville?

Annie: You know, our friends heard this on Friday in the last AFD Week in Review, but y'all haven't heard this yet, that just like... don't let anything hold you back. So that's what I'm taking home with me is just like, no, that thing does not stop you anymore. The thing that stops you doesn't stop you. And that's not just you being me, that's just like you being all of us.

Like, think about why you're saying no to something. And if that is a thing that is just a... if it's a wall, figure out what to do with it. And if it's just a hurdle, get over it. I think that's what I'm taking home with me is a new... I mean, there's a lot I'm

taking home with me that we can talk about not on a microphone yet. But part of it, and there's a lot I'm not taking home with me because of what we're not talking about on a microphone yet like Tupperware's full of stuff.

I don't think I've gotten to tell y'all this yet, but last Sunday at church, I was saying to the Lord, like, "I don't know how all this works. I don't know how what I feel like I want to do is gonna work. And I just feel like the Lord was like, "If you say yes, I'll work out the details. But will you say yes."

I'm taking that home to this like unknown, but an unknown that is not scary and unknown that is like... all I know is I feel like there was this option to say yes and I'm going to say yes. And then we're gonna look back in a year and then go, that's probably why. That makes so much sense. You know, that kind of thing. So that's what I'm taking with me.

Ginna Claire: I can't believe it's been almost a year since that happened.

Annie: Wild.

Mary Kate: My cherry on top question is I want to know what musical you've liked the best.

Annie: Oh, I will answer that.

Mary Kate: Announcing that you haven't seen *Wicked* yet this trip.

Annie: Saving the best for last is *Wicked*: the musical at Gershwin Theater. I was blown away by Purlie Victorious. It is extraordinary. The acting and the no intermission and the... it's extraordinary. The lines they've memorized, somehow they managed to amaze you with their talent and you never leave the story. I don't know how. It is... I kept being blown away by their skill, but I was never out of the story.

Mary Kate: Wow.

Annie: So that's probably my top one is Purlie Victorious. And it's not a musical, so that's interesting. *Gutenberg!* is hysterical. *Gutenberg!* and *Merrily We Roll Along* for people coming to New York, that is not a show that I imagine will ever travel. So see those.

Ginna Claire: Not with this guest.

Annie: Yes.

Meredith: For sure.

Annie: Yes. And *Merrily We Roll Along* I liked it. I told you the night of, MK, that I liked it and it made me sad. But then it crescendoed for like a week of sadness where I was like-

Ginna Claire: A slow burn.

Annie: ...I have to see that again. That was the worst thing I've ever seen because it's the best thing I've ever seen.

Ginna Claire: Yes, exactly.

Annie: And it broke my heart and I have to give me back. Those are the ones that really... and *MJ*. *MJ* was right when I got here. I saw it twice as quick as I could. It's spectacular.

Ginna Claire: And I just want to say for when hopefully Greg Gatsby goes to Broadway, which I think it will forever and ever. You saw it.

Annie: I know.

Ginna Claire: On Broadway.

Annie: Broadway. At the Papermill Playhouse. I know. Thank y'all for making that happen.

Ginna Claire: New Jersey's finest.

Annie: Okay. MK, what you got for me?

Mary Kate: Mine kind of rips in with GC's. I know you've talked about what you've learned from it, what you're bringing back home, but I want to know what you would say to women who are looking, who are dreaming of an opportunity like this and what advice you would give them from giving yourself permission.

Annie: So two things come to mind when you say that. One, do it. Just do it. I mean, I said in the AFD in NYC last week, I was like, so here's what I'm gonna tell you to do. Everything. Do everything. And yet I would also say plan. It helped a ton that I had a conversation with my team in January.

Mary Kate: Yeah, totally.

Annie: Like we didn't talk about it publicly until probably September. But my whole staff and my friend group, and y'all knew I was coming October, November, and January. That helps I think. I think versus going like, I'm going to New York next Thursday, you know? Instead going like, okay, here's the thing I'd like to do. Here is an on-ramp to that thing.

Mary Kate: Totally.

Annie: It helps your community, it helps yourself, I think. I think there's a jarring thing that happens when you make a decision and suddenly everyone has to deal with it. Because it's not just my life, it's my friends' kids' lives that were affected. It's my church that was affected. It's my family, my friends, my coworkers. There were a lot of people humbly that were affected by me not being in Nashville.

So I think giving people time and telling them the whole truth. I said from the beginning, As far as I know, my full life will not be in New York. I think my life still happens in Nashville. And I think there'll be a hybrid version moving forward. So I think telling people the truth helps a lot too, of going like, "I've always wanted to do this and MK invited me to be a woman of my word. So I got to do it." But I gave them, I gave myself and my community an on-ramp to it versus like, "Get ready. I'm gone next week. Survive it."

Mary Kate: And it was cool to be a friend in the moment when... I mean... first of all, your friendship means so much. But also you had been talk... every time you were in New York, you said, "Man, I just wish I could live here. Man, I wish I could just come here and just write. Man, I wish I could just have my coffee shop. Man. I wish I..." And then on New Year's Eve, I was like, "Prove it."

Meredith: Do it.

Annie: I know.

Mary Kate: You have everything.

Annie: Are you proud of me I did it?

Mary Kate: I'm so...

Ginna Claire: You did it.

Mary Kate: Proud. You proved it.

Annie: Yeah, I proved it.

Ginna Claire: Woman of her word. That's saved girl.

Annie: Gonna be a woman of my word.

Ginna Claire: If you go back to the first podcast we did April 2018-

Annie: Oh my gosh. '18.

Ginna Claire: You said it, that you wanted to live here.

Annie: I did.

Ginna Claire: You did.

Meredith: Full circle.

Mary Kate: You had been saying it. And as friends we flagged it. So I think the other thing is like flag what you're hearing from your friends. Just do that.

Annie: That's right. Jonathan Merritt has told me since probably 2012. He says, There are people who come to New York and they like it, but they don't want to live here. There are people who come and don't like it. And then there are people who come and you go, you could do this. And he was like, you could do this. And I was always like, thanks, bye. Getting on my plane. But not this time.

Well, I mean to be the sappies of all friends... Sorry, I've cried this whole episode. Y'all are doing great. Y'all are the best part of this city for me, for sure. I've told people so much that I feel so thankful that I have best friends in Nashville and I have best friends in New York. I have best friends in Atlanta. I mean, I just have gotten to... y'all. I mean, I never had to sort out my people when I got here because y'all are already my people. And that made living here very easy. And you all bent your lives. I mean, GC you like came into the city so much.

Ginna Claire: It was awesome. It was awesome.

Annie: I'm so grateful. But you would show up between shows and Mei you just bent your life for everyone. So thank you for adding me to that. But y'all just bent your lives to fit me in and that just means the world to me. So I'm so thankful. I have loved living here and a lot of that is because of y'all.

Meredith: We love having you here.

Annie: Thanks.

Ginna Claire: I think you're gonna come back and visit a lot.

Annie: I think I'm gonna visit a lot.

Ginna Claire: I think there's something that's special about the planning piece that you shared is like, because you told us in the middle of January last year, we got to also look forward to it all year.

Meredith: We looked forward to it all along.

Annie: Yeah.

Ginna Claire: It was really awesome.

Annie: It was a long countdown.

Ginna Claire: I know. It was like, what's on the bucket list? What are we doing? Where's the natural place...?

Mary Kate: To plan early so we can all be amped about it.

Annie: That's right.

Mary Kate: ...for the whole year.

Annie: Well, I love y'all. Thank you for doing this podcast, for riding an hour to get here. Love both of your hearts.

Mary Kate: So fun.

Ginna Claire: It's New York.

Annie: Thanks for making New York my home.

Mary Kate: Love you.

Annie: I wouldn't have done it without y'all. I love y'all too.

Ginna Claire: Love you.

Mary Kate: Love you.

Meredith: Love you.

[00:43:57] <Music>

Outro: Oh, you guys, don't you love them? I know. Just the best. I'm so thankful for them. I'm just so thankful. I'm so thankful for these two months. Hey, listen, if you haven't gotten to listen to the AFD in NYC episodes, there are seven of them. They're very easy to find. We have a Spotify playlist or you can listen and wherever you're listening to this right now. You can go back to Friday and see episode seven. And we have all the episodes linked in there. So if you want to hear real-time as it was going, that is how you can hear more of the New York story.

If you need anything else from me, you know I'm embarrassingly easy to find. Annie F. Downs on Instagram, Twitter, Facebook, home in Nashville. Anywhere you need me, that's where you can find me.

And I think that's it for me today, friends. Go out or stay home and do something that sounds fun to you. I'll do the same today. What sounds fun to me is seeing my friends and coworkers in Nashville. I'm so glad to be back. So that's what sounds fun to me.

Y'all have a great week. We'll see you back here on Thursday with an awesome episode. I mean this holiday season we are not playing around. Y'all, we've got super chef, Darnell Ferguson from the Food Network. Y'all are about to love him. He is preaching to us. So we'll see y'all on Thursday.