

Friends and Flights Transcript

Artists Jane Kirby and Erin Ball

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Videography by Josh Lyon

This transcript is the text from the audio portion of the Skeleton Park Next Door 2021 installation "*Friends and Flights*". This is a conversation between Erin Ball and Jane Kirby. The audio is played as a loop.

Jane and Erin 0:00

Don't make sense. We're recording. Do we want to start with the land acknowledgement then? Sure. Do you want to do like one sentence each kind of back and forth?

Yeah, that makes sense.

Erin 0:21

Do you want to start? Do you have any? I have no preference.

Jane and Erin 0:26

We would like to acknowledge that we are white colonial settlers born here. Oh, I wasn't born here. So that's it. Okay. What about one of us born here? Go for it. We just say living here. Again, we would like to acknowledge that we are white colonial settlers living here on the traditional territory of the Mississaugas of the Ojibwe.

Erin 1:07

In 1701, the Dish With One Spoon Treaty was negotiated so that other nations could share the land for hunting.

Jane 1:25

Today, people from Anishinabek, Haudenosaunee, Huron-Wendat, Métis and Inuit

communities reside side by side with settlers and recent newcomers to the territory called Katarokwi. Also known as Kingston.

Erin 1:39

For us, moving forward with justice in mind means learning and remembering the true history of this land and creating good connections with Indigenous communities who are here today. To go into descriptions or how we met

Jane 2:16

When I was about to move to Kingston, I think it was 2012 and I was living in Halifax. I basically thought that moving things in my head was giving up circus, but I was like frantically emailing all these places that I thought they might let me train, including some of the gymnastic schools and one of them got back to me and said that there was this person, Erin Ball who was running a little circus school out of their gym, and I should be in touch with with her. And so I told this to my partner, and he said, Erin Ball, I know an Erin Ball in Kingston, I wonder what the same person? So we looked up a picture of you and? And, it was like definitely, she has lots of tattoos, like that could definitely be her. And so, so that was kind of neat,

because I actually, you know, learned quite a bit about you, before even meeting you. Yeah, so that's like my very first memory of Erin.

Erin 3:32

Love it. My first memory is Yeah, somebody? Well, first of all, I was yeah, running a small.... My first memory, I was running a small circus studio out of the loyalist gymnastics club. And it was just me teaching and running these classes. And yeah, I really wanted someone to train with. And somebody who worked at the club told me that they had received an email from someone who was moving to Kingston who did circus. And I was so intrigued and so excited. And I can't remember if you then emailed me or if they forwarded me your email. But yeah, at some point, we became friends on Facebook, and I was really excited that you were moving here. And yeah, I remember checking out your photos and seeing some acrobatic pyramids, human pyramids. And I was like, "Oh, that's Jane and I'm so excited", white, long blonde hair.

Erin and Jane 4:47

I don't know what else to say. For your description. Let me try that. Again. These things have changed over the years. I think You have bangs, right? I just probably did. Yeah, I had babies around that time. Do you remember the first time we met in person? I don't really I was trying to think about that. Like, I feel like I just moved here. Then the next thing I remember is we were spending a lot of time together.

Erin 5:22

I don't have a memory of the exact first time. I'm sure it was probably at the gymnastics club. Yeah, I just know, there was a lot of like, okay, let's pull out our schedules. And we're training this day, this day, this day, and you would ride your bike over to the gym.

Jane and Erin 5:40

Yeah, and I remember like, early on in those first few months, we drove down to Vermont. Back in the days of using a map. I was a really terrible navigator and I think we somehow took we took a wrong turn. Like going towards Montreal way out of our way. Cuz I think I was like, Montreal, like that's near Kingston. Yeah. So I

Erin 6:20

It was fun. Actually, I think what it was, we had a GPS, but I think we went through areas where we didn't have service. And so we got lost. And then yeah, eventually found a paper map. Maybe that was actually the problem. Yeah. But then I think, yeah, we went into like a service center or something. And they gave us this map. Those trips, so fun, all the circus.

Jane 6:52

Then we started making a duo act together. I don't remember exactly when we started, but it would have been probably on that trip.

Erin 7:18

A lot of playing around with aerial silks and making shapes and can another human hang from this shape.

Jane and Erin 7:26

Yeah, I totally remember at one point, like, just thinking about the fact that like, I'm not normally like this intimate with anyone other than my partner, right. Yep, we know each other pretty well.

Jane 7:47

Yeah, I even remember on one of those trips, I don't think it was that first one. But we'd go back and forth to Vermont and train pretty regularly in those days. I think on one of those trips, we were training and I was like hanging upside down close to the ground and our coach was there and coach is talking to you. And I think you walked by me and I like, I wasn't looking at you. But I like moved my leg out of the way. And I remember the coach being like, Did you see that? Like, do you realize that you're like that attuned to her? You like moved your leg without even like, without any like visual or auditory cues that she was about you were about to kick her in the face.

Erin

Wow.

Jane 8:30

So yeah, that's like one of the things about being circus partners is you do, like learn about each other in this way that's quite different than you learn about other people.

Erin 8:48

Wow.

Erin 8:52

And the time oh my gosh, that. I don't even remember exactly how it happened. But you broke your foot. And we had a photo shoot.

And you were in the air class, and still holding me all the way up in the air.

Jane 9:19

Didn't you have to like Photoshop my foot though because I..

Jane 10:43

We actually did talk about, like, how to coach disabled folks at that time, like I remember talking about it and all the applications and and how I think we were both like a bit intimidated at the idea.

Erin 11:00

I was so intimidated. I remember specifically, I think, were we both at the training together at NECCA, the teacher training? And I remember there being a question about what populations do you want to work with? And one of the answers like, it was like circle, the different populations that you got to work with. And one was like the disability community, and I just remember being like, Nope, I have no idea how that would work. That changed for sure. I feel like I want to talk about Dalem's chalet. I don't know.

Jane 11:59

I think that what happened.... I think, did we make a last minute decision to go down and train in Vermont? The normal places that we stayed, we're all booked up. Right. So I remembered on a previous trip, like passing this like,

kind of cute, like, Swiss style chalet, like on the road into town. And I thought, well, I'll look that place up. Like maybe we can get a room there. I don't know how many of them like, there were a few of us that I booked rooms for? Yes, I felt pretty. pretty terrible when we got there. And it was a really, really,

Erin 12:40

it was so weird. I like what comes to mind when I think of it is like, B horror movie style feelings. I remember the person who was running it. I think David and I were there. Maybe you were in there too. But there. She was looking through her book rooms that were booked, trying to like move some people around or book us extra days or something like that.

Jane 13:10

Like really smelled maybe and so are like really, really smells. We were like trying to get different rooms that were not so let's see.

Erin and Jane 13:22

And yeah, we were trying to get into the rooms. She said she would have to look at the schedule. And that was that it was completely booked. But I could see the schedule and it was empty. And then I think there was some like, she didn't want to give people the keys. I noticed a little key. That was a weird thing. I remember that I couldn't have keys to my room. And then other people who were arriving from different places and arriving at different times. There were problems with them getting in. I feel like we were almost the only people staying in that thing we

have like at least 50 rooms like it was a weird thing. I wonder if that place is still around and operating. I mean probably not operating right now.

Jane and Erin 14:42

Why do you think? What do you think has changed and like what has lasted about our friendship? It's hard to put into words what has changed. I mean, it's gone through a lot of phases. You know, we were very, very close. And then I mean, a lot of things. I would say, from my perspective, there were, you know, stuff around trust and me being trustworthy. I went through, you know, major life transitions.

Jane 15:51

You know, I never remember feeling like, I didn't trust you. I mean, I remember feeling like you were gone. I didn't know that you were coming back.

Jane and Erin 16:06

But I don't know...I don't know if I ever felt like I didn't trust you. Definitely not something I felt. I felt like I was, like, before everything happened, you know, I knew stuff was going on with you. And I felt terrible that I hadn't, like, clued in to the like depth of what was going on. Or, you know, exactly what until it was like, way too late, basically.

Erin 16:43

So interesting. I mean, I took on this like, like, there was a lot of guilt, because I was like, you know, we are so close. And yet, yeah, there's stuff going on. And I'm not sharing with you. And

Jane and Erin 17:07

There were a few times where I almost wondered, like, in hindsight, I was like, Oh, my God, was she trying to get me to figure it out? At that point? And I just like, totally, not, honestly. Yeah. Not, intentionally or not, yeah, like, not that I'm aware of. But I do remember being at a party a few weeks before you went missing, or like maybe like two weeks before, and I think you were like, supposed to be there and like, didn't show up or canceled at the last minute or something. And someone asked me, how you were doing and I was like, I think not great. Like, I remember answering that. But I hadn't seen you in a while, you'd like cancelled a few trainings that we were supposed to do together. And yeah.

Jane 18:13

I also remember like a month before that, you sort of expressing what you weren't doing well, and then wanting to talk on the phone. But then I don't know if you just like changed your mind, but then like calling you and not being able to get through? I think yeah, I think that was true for someone else as well.

Erin 18:43

Yeah, I think. I mean, I don't have a ton of memories from that time right before. But now that you mentioned that I do remember there was someone else that I was like trying to reach out to and I think I was going through this like, I want to say something and I want to kind of change where I'm at right now. And then kind of like flip flopping back and forth and not being able to. And I was just

thinking, I wonder if the last time that we saw each other was that performance that we did at, what was it called, Art Zoo? Oh, yeah, with that then? I think so.

Erin 19:34

I remember. I think that was like one of my last times kind of going out and being around people before the woods and I wasn't doing well. There. And then yeah, after getting lost, and

Erin 20:04

I know one of the

Erin 20:07

first memories that I have, like,

Erin 20:11

kind of after I could talk

Erin 20:15

or at least listen, that I remember my mom saying that everybody had kind of like, really come together and something about like food and that you and David were really everybody was just trying to support each other and how much it meantt. Like,

Erin 20:46

a year of

Erin 20:48

for me, like, Am I am I here? I'm sure for everybody else as well.

Jane 20:57

Just remember, yeah. Coming to the hospital, and, you know, coming pretty regularly, but it was almost like every time I never knew what I was gonna like, what to expect, like what? Sometimes Wow, like you were so like, almost too alive, like hyper alive, but not quite yourself. So that I like didn't really know how to, like, I don't know, like, is this is this real? And they were like so many people. And like you talked about trust, and it was like, Oh, it wasn't that I didn't trust you. But I like didn't trust some of the other people rallying around you at that time, or their like intentions. Interesting.

Erin 21:38

I actually don't have memories of you being there. Except Were you there for the night that we watched frozen.

Jane 21:47

Oh, yeah, I came I wasn't there very long. And hard because I felt like so uncomfortable about the whole thing. Like who thought this was a good idea?

Erin 22:02

Ah, yeah. I do remember in the beginning. Yeah. Being so excited. Like, life is amazing. And then, yeah, big

Erin and Jane 22:16

crash. And then I remember the crash too. And I remember coming to see you and you just acknowledged anything like several times? Yeah. I mean, at some point, I just sort of lost track of you, like you kept getting moved in the hospital. And I like couldn't figure out even how to

come see you. And so I just stopped. Like occasional updates from your mom. Like, none of it really seemed real.

Erin 22:48

Yeah, that is a really good way to kind of understand real and I also feel like I've lost track of myself in there. What an interesting, interesting thing, though, you know, we were talking about like, disability and circus and like, where we were at before with that, and I feel like you had a much better concept of all about like, I remember we brought some people in and yeah, and just so interesting. Like, I, I remember thinking, this is all over for me. And that the highlight of my life had been that we created this duo aerial silks act, and I remember saying that to you, like, thank you so much. And that was kind of like my like, goodbye. I don't know what's happening from here, but this part is over.

Jane and Erin 23:53

Yeah. I mean, I remember I remember that. I think I remember trying to be like, no, it's not over like doesn't mean anything. I remember that. I like you. Yeah, you totally. We're not having having that at that point. I think that was right after the surgery. I was like one of the last conversations we actually had before like, yeah, you went into a darker place. Was that in person? Yeah, that was a person. Okay, so

Erin 24:29

I have two memories of you. Yeah. Yeah. And then I don't know. When we reconnected after I got out of the hospital.

I guess I had this idea in my head that like, Oh, you know, we'll just go back to the once I started training circus again. And

Jane 25:11

I actually wanted it to, I had this feeling like, you're mad at me for a lot of that time.

Jane 25:22

So I was teaching at the Kingston School of Dance, and I started teaching, right like around the time you like fully came out of the hospital. And yeah, I had this feeling that you were like really mad at me because I had like started.... Even though I like the furthest thing like I, you know, even then, like, trying to start my own circus program, which like, was not what I wanted. And I told the Kingston School of Dance I would teach it but they had to run it. Like I was not making any decisions. Like it was the furthest thing from what I wanted. But I had this feeling like I was somehow stepping on your toes. And I Yes, I know. Yeah.

Erin

I don't remember. Any feelings of being mad at you. I think I was mad at the world, but not really mad at the world that mad at like, you know, mad? I don't think it's even the right word. I was just so confused. Like, what the heck is going on?

Jane

Yeah, well, I mean, I think a lot of it was like, I had such conflicted feelings about continuing circus like I did,

because my, like circus world became so wrapped up in working with you. But I had this like, on the one hand, I felt like I needed to keep going, because it's kind of all I had, you know, it was, yeah, hard to process, everything that was happening. And I felt like I needed it. But I think I also felt very, like confused about what I was doing. So maybe some of it was just like, my own guilt and confusion. But I had this feeling like you were mad at me. And like, how do I? How do I know?

Erin

Sorry, that was so hard,

Jane

because I like didn't know how to process like, evaluate things. But now she's mad at me. I don't really know how to be there for her. You know, I've been trying to move on all this time. And now she's back. But yeah, it's so confusing. And honestly, like, that's why David and I left Kingston, largely because I like couldn't figure out how to, yeah, how to figure out how to be relative to you. So it was just like, we've got to do something different. And we don't really know what we're doing. Let's just, like, leave town for a while and do something else. And so that's why we went to Montreal for a bit. And then we came back to Kingston for the summer. And then we were in Halifax for a bit before we went on tour. So yeah, it was like so much of my world in Kingston, those few years have just been working with you. And then everything that happened. And so it was like, confusing to find a new place, and a new relationship to you. I think.

Erin 28:23

I remember we met at a coffee shop downtown, and tried to have a conversation. And, and I remember you saying, Our friendship is different now. And I I don't know why that's stuck out to me. But I was just like, why can't we go back. But you know, I didn't. Like I was very wrapped up in my head at that point. And just, you know, trying to sort out what is what and

Erin 28:57

yeah, I'm really

Erin 29:00

glad that you did go away. And you know, like seeing all of you're like, wow, you got to train in Montreal and like, get all of this amazing experience and you're going on a ship and you get to do circus. Amazing, amazing. Yeah, I always... I didn't really know that that was the reason or maybe I didn't know my memory is

Jane 29:31

Like, it was very explicitly... The reason I had this feeling like, you know, at the Kingston School of Dance, they were really like encouraging me to build a bigger circus program, but then you were back and I was like, I don't want to do that. That's Erin's thing, like I'm teaching because it's my job and, you know, people are asking me to but it's not really like what I want to be doing at all and I certainly don't want to be doing it when Erin's doing it. Like I don't want to be in that relationship at all. Yeah, so we definitely left. And I think, you know, one thing that

I've always been sad about is that you weren't at my wedding.

Erin 30:13

I was just thinking about that the other day. And I remember seeing photos like, Why Why was in the air?

Jane 30:24

We didn't invite you originally because we were in the hospital. And then so I gave you an invitation like, sometime, I don't know, I remember being in your apartment, and like, after you got out, but it was still very, like, we didn't have it figured out how to relate to each other. And you kind of said, like, you didn't know how you would get there. And so I was just like, Okay, I'm just gonna, like, leave it, it's probably easier if we just like... yeah, in hindsight, I'm really sad, but you weren't there.

Erin 31:01

I had a feeling I was going to be crying in this. I, I guess when you came back, and I had moved classes. And I was just going through videos the other day. For this project, and seeing some of the videos, I think it was the first time that we really trained together like, as a duo, on the same apparatus was when we set up the hammock or sling, and got in there together, watching those videos made me so nostalgic. And it just, I so appreciate that.

Erinn 32:04

through all of this,

Erin 32:06

like after all of this, you know, you went away all of these different things have happened. And get back in there. And you know, it is a process or was a process of figuring out like, what even goes where now there's a lot of those moments and watching the video. But that we can, like, just come back to it. You know, and like the amount of time that we spent together. I am so so so

Erin 32:40
thankful that

Erin 32:43
we're in each other's lives.

Jane 32:45
Yeah, me too. You know, I was so I just remember. I don't know if we talked on the phone, maybe while I was in BC or something. But I remember at some point, I think before I came back, but definitely once I came back, like just saying to David, like, Oh my god, it feels normal. Like, it feels like, I don't know enough time or we both sort of like like, had gotten through what happened and like, now we're back to normal and it just feels Yeah, so. So good. I was so happy like I you know, I didn't I think we... As i said I think we talked about it, maybe before I got him back. And I could tell it felt normal then. And I still wasn't totally sure how it was gonna go when I was actually here. And it, just yeah, didn't feel so heavy. And I was so grateful for that.

Erin 33:54

And those days, it's like training side by side on ropes. I got some good video of that those were I have just such good memories of that.

Jane and Erib 34:04

Now I'd like to do that again. I know. And then we talked about doing something together and about our friendship. I think shortly after I got back. And then I told you like yes, that's great. And but also I'm planning on getting pregnant. I was in the car when you told me. I was so excited. Yeah. And then yeah, my whole relationship to circus has changed, which is Yeah, and then COVID, like I hardly ever see you now.

Erin 34:56

Thankful for these projects that we get to do you know, it's weird, it is weird talking through a computer to each other. I'm glad that it's an option.

Jane 35:09

You know, so whenever we go out in the backyard to just like hang out, Eska's always like, Erin? Erin?.

Erin and Jane 35:24

So sweet. The act that we made while you were pregnant and I knew you would stand on my shoulders and as time went on that whole position changed every time we did it, like we had to refigure outt the balance. I was so like, dizzy and sick. Oh, yeah.

Jane 36:03

Honestly, I was like scared. Yeah, because I had a miscarriage in the first pregnancy. And then I was so like, wow, like, what's gonna happen? What if I fall?

Erin 36:16

so much? And that oh my gosh. Damn videos of that to standing on shoulders. And I mean, I think when did we perform that, were you six months?

Jane 36:34

No, I wasn't that far along. I was still in my first trimester. Like, I don't think very many people, you would have been one of the few people who even knew I was pregnant at that point, I think.

Erin 36:50

I just remember, like that day. Like, we'd been at the studio in the morning for some reason, and I got like a nosebleed and I was so dizzy, I don't want to perform and that we were performing and like

Erin 37:06

no sound.

Jane 37:13

That was the last time I performed live. Because you know that I was more pregnant and then COVID?

Jane 37:23

Yeah, it's so weird. I was thinking like, you know, how we've had different conversations about what we're going to do for performance. If we're going to do a performance as part of this piece. a live performance and part of me I'm

like, suddenly realizing, oh, I have so much anxiety about that. Because I have been in so long, like, that's why I can like, yeah, there's COVID and all the restrictions and everything. But I suddenly realized, like, Oh, yeah, like I haven't been live in like, since 2018, I guess.

Erin 38:03

Wow.

Jane 38:04

Yeah. Which is funny, because like, before that I was performing a lot those few years before, but normal or maybe not. I'm glad that if we do it, it'll be together.

Erin 38:19

Feels interesting. We both had a break from performing and then coming back to it. I really liked the idea of being outside and doing something with this with you

Jane 38:41

To figure out what that is.

Erin
nurturing,

Jane
strong,

Erin
deep connection.

Jane
generous.

Erin
Solid.

Jane
That's funny.

Erin
I mean, in terms of like, yeah, on many levels, actually.
There,

Jane
trust

Erin
ebbs and flows. I love your laugh. It's my favorite.

Jane
It's funny. Yeah. Now that we're on Zoom all the time, and especially if I have to listen to a recording of anything that I'm assuming I like, Oh my God, my laughs

Erin 40:40
Oh, its so good.

Jane
Your smile. I think like, have like the biggest heart. Too big like, I think you like have too much. You're too attuned to the

Erin 41:18
pain in the world. But also so generous and like welcoming. And it's really, yeah, I can only aspire to have that much generosity of self and spirit.

Erin 41:37

Oh, my gosh, I feel that way about you. And I feel like you have such deep understandings of things. And I also feel like so much of what I've learned, you know, post accident, you had a lot of information before, and I was just oblivious, and I just so appreciate how much work

Erin 42:04

you've done on yourself, and

Erin 42:07

what you put out into the world. It's

Erin 42:11

incredible and beautiful. And oh my gosh. I was like, Wow. I mean, you're, you're amazing.

Jane 42:23

That's really nice. That means a lot. I feel like I mean, I did. Yeah, I always feel now like I'm so in some ways, like, detached from some of the like ethical and political commitments that I had earlier in my life. I feel more like I was less active. And you.

Erin 42:45

Oh, my gosh, I like that is totally how I feel about you. I'm like, Jane is like, it's like, Wow. I just regret that. I didn't appreciate that earlier. However, time, has its own. You know, we only know what we know. And it comes on.

Erin 43:19

I so appreciate though, that like the learning that I've done. I'm just like, wow, you know, like, I know, you get

Erin 43:25

it. You get it so deeply. And it's

Jane 43:29

I tried to but I've learned a lot from you. Like sometimes I go back to my book and I like oh, this

Erin and Jane 43:37

I didn't see any part but that I felt like you should be embarrassed. I just think it's an incredible thing that you wrote a book and what it's about and just who you are and what you support. Yeah, like likewise, I think one thing I really admire with you, I mean, especially in how you have run your business, because I know that hasn't been easy and as common a lot of like personal sacrifice, actually, to run your business in accordance with your values and to make that like, you know, number one sometimes above paying the bills. Yeah, is really... I don't think very many people do that.

Jane 44:35

And I think you take on a lot as a result. And I hope other people like see that. I think other people I think people do see that but yeah, I wish it were like valued more in more like tangible ways so that you run your business in a way that like is affirming to a lot of different kinds of people didn't mean you had to struggle. You know, like,

Erin 45:14

I think you also take on a lot. I like you are a mother, and, full full full time and COVID. And yeah, a partner.

Erin 45:27

You're going to school. You have so many different jobs. You're an artist, it's like, unbelievable.

Jane 45:40

Yeah, we talk about like rest and the importance of rest and, you know, not giving into capitalist logics of productivity and efficiency. But on the other hand, I'm like, Yeah, the model.

Erin 46:08

I do really appreciate you sent out an email to students the other day about the importance of observing holidays.

Erin 46:17

Like, yes.

Erin 46:20

Also, I have just loved I mean, I haven't, you know, been able to be around as much as I would like, because of COVID. And, you know, all of the things but what I see of you being a mother is just,

Erin and Jane 46:38

it's hard to put into words, but Eska is like, so lucky. And just, I mean, let me think about what I want to say here. I just so appreciate the interactions between the two that I've seen in the backyard. It's Yeah, I am so excited.

Definitely motherhood is its own. Very wild. It's amazing to witness. Thank you. Thank you for letting me in. Likewise, yeah. I also think I missed your baby shower.

Jane 47:54

Well, you know, you also like you and Karen threw me one at a studio. So I don't look at it that way.

Jane 48:07

Yeah, I mean, we talked about this the other day, about, about, like, rituals and life events and stuff. You know, the heteronormative nature of them. And, like, those things have been really important to me. And I have been, like, really grateful for people who I have been able to, like, share their events, but I also, like, kind of appreciate that our friendship follows a bit of a different logic on how.... I don't totally know what I mean by that. But like, Yeah, I definitely never felt, you know, I do wish they were at my wedding. But that's just because it was like, such a great day. And we have all these photos of it and like you're not in the photos. Yet you're such an important part of my life. And, like, I never like even thought about the fact that you weren't in that baby shower. Like I never even you know, like, it wasn't, it wasn't important. Our friendship is like built on something like a lot deeper and a lot different than the typical places that we mark appreciation for each other. Yeah, I don't think we ever like had a conflict before. Like, I don't remember anything. I just remember everything. Like it's so easy. I mean, before everything went down with the woods.

Jane

Yeah. No, I agree. I've always felt kind of very easy to work with you. Yeah.

Erin

Just like so immediate boom. And here we are.

Jane

Not a lot of Yeah. I think like working with you, I think you're really open. And that makes it really easy. Really open and really collaborative.

Erin 50:20

I want to redo that silks piece. So one day, 20 years from now!

Jane

If it does happen 20 years from now that would be pretty amazing. We're like in our 60s and doing a duo silks redo, you know, I mean, I hope it doesn't take that long but that would be pretty cool.

Erin 50:45

It would be

Jane 50:47

if that's where this friendship goes.