

Hollywood Ending

Young alum finds an identical twin she never knew she had

By Cynthia K. Buccini

In 2013, Samantha Futerman was a 25-year-old actress in LA, with two waitressing jobs, a YouTube channel, and a major release on her IMDb bio. On February 21, she made her way to a friend's apartment to have her nails done for the premiere of her new film, the comedy *21 & Over*. But the red carpet walk, the screening, and the celebrities would not be the most memorable part of her day. That morning, Futerman (CFA'09) discovered she had an identical twin sister more than 5,000 miles away.

Futerman learned the extraordinary news in the most ordinary way: by social media. As her friend painted her nails, Futerman fiddled with her phone and saw a request on Facebook from a young woman named Anaïs

Bordier. She studied the woman's photo. "I thought it was an old head shot of mine," she says. She tapped the image—funny, they shared a birthdate—and clicked around a bit more. "We looked exactly alike," Futerman says. "We had similar tastes, similar activities, everything. And I accepted her friend request because, why not?"

Bordier's message was "too sincere to be a joke," Futerman says. "Hey," she wrote. "My name is Anaïs, I am French and live in London." A friend had stumbled upon one of Futerman's YouTube videos and thought the two "looked really similar...like...VERY REALLY SIMILAR." Bordier invited Futerman to check out her photos and videos, where the resemblance was more obvious, and offered other key details: she was born in Busan, South Korea, on November 19, 1987. And she was adopted. "Don't freak out...Lots of love, Anaïs."

Futerman was also born in Busan, and she was adopted. She did not freak out. For adoptees, she explains, the past has so many missing pieces, "you have to be open to new expectations and new opportunities." Besides, "It was all too crazy not to be true. I was pretty excited, like, omigod, this could be my twin."

Days after that virtual introduction, after the two exchanged birth records, emails, and texts, Futerman began filming every conversation, encounter, and development. She has since turned those clips—all 23,000—into the documentary *Twinsters*, which follows the sisters from their first Skype chat to their meeting in London (where they learned that DNA tests had confirmed they are identical twins) to their emotional trip to South Korea, where they reconnected with the foster mothers who had cared for them for their first few months.

Anaïs Bordier holds up a photo of herself and Samantha Futerman (CFA'09), the identical twin sister she didn't know she had. Bordier contacted Futerman in 2013, after a friend stumbled upon a YouTube video of the young actress.



Futerman's documentary premiered in March 2015 at the South by Southwest Film Festival.



TWINSTERS

TWO LIVES. CHANGED FOREVER. WITH JUST ONE CLICK.



The movie premiered March 15, 2015, at the South by Southwest Film Festival, where it won special jury recognition for editing; a month later it won the grand jury prize for best documentary at the Los Angeles Asian Pacific Film Festival. By then, Futerman and Bordier had also published a book, *Separated @ Birth: A True Love Story of Twin Sisters Reunited* (Putnam, 2014).

Face to Face After 25 Years

Their story begins in Busan, South Korea's second largest city. While much of the information on the sisters' birth records doesn't match—Futerman's indicate her parents were married, for example, but Bordier's say her mother was unwed—in one aspect they align: each baby is listed as a single birth. The two never learned why they were separated and sent to different adoption agencies. Their birth mother has denied giving birth to them, and, according to Futerman, does not wish to be contacted.

"We don't know if she needs time, or it could be that she doesn't want to talk to us," she says. "We respect whatever her choice, her feelings, and her decisions are."

Bordier, adopted by a childless couple

In their adoption papers, each baby is listed as a single birth.

from Paris, arrived in France on March 15, 1988. Futerman, who landed in the United States two weeks later, had been adopted by a Verona, N.J., couple with two biological sons. She had a happy childhood, filled with dance competitions, baseball, basketball, and lessons in tae kwon do, trumpet, and French horn. Theater was part of her life, too; she performed at the Paper Mill Playhouse in Millburn, N.J., and at 16 was cast as Satsu in the 2005 film *Memoirs of a Geisha*, based on the novel by Arthur Golden (GRS'88). After graduating from the Professional Perform-

ing Arts High School in New York City, she earned a BFA in theater arts at BU and, in 2011, moved to Los Angeles. She began auditioning and posting light-hearted YouTube videos—about black and Asian stereotypes and about how it feels to be adopted. It was her role in *High School Virgin*, a four-minute video by the comedian and actor known as KevJumba that Bordier's friend happened upon in December 2012.

Not long after they connected on Facebook, Futerman and Bordier set a date to Skype, a conversation that would last three hours. "It was like going on a blind date, and you don't know what to ask," Futerman says. "We talked about how everything came about and what our friends were saying. We compared our noses, our teeth, our ears—which is really freaky—our hands...We talked about when we got our period. We talked about our current boyfriend status. We talked until we were just staring at each other, and then she was like, 'I have to pee.' It was really late her time, so we had to finally say good-bye."

They discovered similarities, beyond their long hair and the spray of freckles across their noses. Both hate bell peppers and cooked carrots, prefer Coke to Pepsi, relish Korean barbecue and Halloween, and require a nap when stressed. "We'll go to get our hair cut the same day," Futerman says. "We'll show up with the same nail polish color, always, without talking about it."

Their differences are notable, too: Futerman is more extroverted, a result, she believes, of growing up with two older brothers. Bordier, an only child and the moodier of the two, struggled with her adoption and with feelings of abandonment. Not so for Futerman, who was never even teased as a kid.

In May 2013, Futerman and her family flew to London to meet Bordier, then

a graduate fashion design student, and her parents. When the twins came face to face in the living room of the AirBnB apartment, all they could do was stare.

"Virtually, we knew each other so well," Futerman says, "but it was very strange being in the same physical space." The awkwardness didn't last long, and soon enough they were holding hands. "And that felt right," she says. "It didn't feel weird. It didn't feel creepy. It just felt safe."

Futerman has since become an advocate for adoption. She cofounded Kindred: The Foundation for Adoption with fellow actress Jenna Ushkowitz (*Glee*), a Korean adoptee and a producer on *Twinsters*. The goal is to create an online community for adoptees and to provide services, such as travel, translation, and support, to those adoptees and their families who would like to reunite.

"It feels good to know we're working for a greater purpose," she says. "It's not just to make a movie or be, like, listen to me, I have a crazy story." She says finding her twin also has given her a greater purpose. "This is what I'm here for," she says, "to be your family and for you to be my family. It really taught me that family has no boundary, and that love is greater than DNA. It's way deeper than that. It can be anyone you choose to accept into your life. And it taught me to be open to anything, because if something this crazy can happen, almost anything can happen."