



"The best part of this," says Brandy (left, with her younger sister Heidi, at home in Missouri), "is finally knowing exactly where I came from."

Brandy Hersh felt a connection to Heidi Wickware from the moment they met through their boyfriends in 2002. "We were drawn to each other like magnets," she says. In no time the women were inseparable, gabbing every day and even finishing each other's sentences. They also looked alike. And had near-identical voices. "More than one person would say, 'You guys could be sisters,'" says Heidi, a homemaker in Springfield, Mo. "We'd say, 'Yeah, we wish!'"

Little did they know. In 2005 Heidi brought Brandy home to meet her mother, Lisa, 46. Intrigued to learn her daughter's friend was adopted, Lisa asked about her birthday and where she was born. After Brandy left that day, Lisa dropped a bombshell on Heidi: As an unwed teen she had given up a baby girl for adoption—and that girl, she now suspected, was Brandy. "I was shocked," says Heidi, 25. Says Brandy, 27, an administrative assistant: "I didn't know what to think."

The women petitioned the state to open Brandy's adoption records. But after a year of waiting impatiently, they submitted samples for DNA tests. The results came back Nov. 26 and surprised them both. Not only are they sisters, they also share the same father—Jeff Wickware, whom Lisa married in 1981. (They divorced in 1986.) "I've always wanted a big sister, and to find out it's Brandy is wonderful," says Heidi. "We might not ever have met. We're extremely lucky."

By Joanne Fowler. Anne Lang in Springfield

BEST FRIENDS DISCOVER THEY ARE SISTERS

DNA proves it: Brandy Hersh, adopted at birth, and her pal Heidi Wickware don't just look alike—they're family



Sisters Brandy Hersh (left, in '85) and Heidi Wickware (in '88) grew up two miles apart but didn't meet until '02.

HAIR & MAKEUP: SHEILA BROWN/STYLING; PHOTOS: COURTESY BRANDY HERSH AND HEIDI WICKWARE (2)