

A Perfect Fit

By Shawn Inmon

Interlude 1: (Shawn)
December 1st, 2006 8:03 PM

“The moment you fell inside my dreams/I realized all I had not seen”

Heaven/Where True Love Goes
Yusuf Islam

It had already been a very long day when I pulled off of I-5 heading Northbound and stopped at the gas pumps in front of Safeway.

Once I had the car filled up with gas, I realized that I was feeling pretty empty myself. I remembered that I hadn't eaten anything since breakfast, and that had been more than twelve hours ago, so I walked into the little deli at the front of the store to get a sandwich.

Now, if I told you that this “deli” was out of everything but white bread, would you believe me? I didn't want to believe it either, but after I'd waited in line, that's what they told me. Since it was less than a week since Thanksgiving, I'd eaten a lot of “turkey on white” the past few days, and I wasn't in the mood for more, so I walked out of the store still hungry.

I figured I'd just do the last 90 miles of my drive without eating, but as I was getting ready to turn right out of the Safeway parking lot and get back on the freeway, I looked to my left and immediately felt a wave of nostalgia wash over me. I saw a small sign that said “Bill and Bea's Drive In” and that stopped me in my tracks. I hadn't eaten there in decades. Until I saw that sign, I had no idea they were still in business.

Without a thought, I turned left instead of right, and slipped into the drive-thru lane at Bill and Bea's. A little nostalgia combined with food for the starving seemed like a good combination.

“B & B's” wasn't exactly like the fast food drive-thru's I was used to, though... it was a little more “old school” and it seemed to take forever for the car in front of me to get their order. I sat semi-patiently in line, listening to the new CD (“An Other Cup” by Yusuf Islam, formerly Cat Stevens) I had bought in Longview earlier that day. After 10 minutes or so of not moving, I was

beginning to think I was just destined not to eat that night.

Finally, though, the car in front of me got their food and went on their way.

I turned my music down and pulled up to the window and placed my order with the young girl behind the counter. She was smiling and polite to me in that way that pretty young girls often are with safe-looking older men, and that definitely included me. She took my order then turned and disappeared back toward the grill. I saw why it had taken the car in front of me so long to get their order... they didn't start cooking it until you ordered it. What an idea!

A long minute after the young girl had taken my order, another woman came to the window and asked me a question.

Unfortunately, I couldn't answer her question, because as I looked at her, I felt a strong electrical charge that started at the very top of my head and ran down to the base of my spine. My stomach started doing flip-flops, and I noticed that my hands were slick against the steering wheel. What the hell was going on? Was I having a heart attack?

As I was trying to get a handle on this sudden influx of sensations, I managed to cleverly respond "Huh?" to whatever her question was. I always was able to think on my feet!

She patiently asked me again (as if she was speaking to a slightly slow child) if I wanted onions on my chicken sandwich. This time, I was able to keep my wits about me long enough to mutter "Yeah, sure," so she turned and walked away. I thought for a second that she might have felt something slightly odd, too, but after the briefest of pauses, she went on her way.

I wondered again... what was going on? Why did it feel like I had an entire orchestra going off in my head? Was it that woman? I didn't think so... I mean, yes, she was pretty, but I manage to see pretty women every day without drooling or acting like a complete fool.

As I pondered this, I looked back at the grill area again, where the woman was talking with the young girl who had taken my order. I'm not sure what the young girl said to her, but she obviously didn't like it, and her eyes flashed in annoyance.

"Like a cloud passing in front of the sun on a summer day," a more poetic sort might say.

And that was it. That was when I knew. I had never been able to forget those flashing brown eyes.

I hadn't seen her in 28 years, but I had no doubt who she was, and now I knew why I was feeling fireworks inside me. Obviously, some instinctive part of myself got to the correct conclusion before the rest of me did.

Since they cooked each order completely from scratch, it took quite awhile for my food to

get ready, and now that I knew who she was, that was completely alright with me. I watched her move gracefully around the small space and let my mind wander to thoughts I had long kept buried deep in my subconscious.

She had lived only as a memory, held deep in my heart for so long, that it was amazing and a little exhilarating just being this close to her again.

Initially, I admit, it was a little disconcerting, mentally aging her from the teenager she had been the last time I had seen her to the woman in her 40's that stood before me now. But... she was so obviously, so perfectly *herself* that I caught up fast.

I had come to believe, as the decades passed, that I would never see her again, and to find her so suddenly and unexpectedly *present* sent my head spinning.

When she finally brought my small brown bag over to me (a small grease stain from the onion rings already starting to spread) she took my money and handed me my change with a small smile, but absolutely no hint of recognition on her part.

She thanked me politely and turned to leave, but I knew I couldn't just let her disappear out of my life again.

"Did you go to Mossyrock High School" I asked her?

That set her back a little. "Yes..." she said hesitantly.

"Class of '82?"

"No... '81."

Damn it. I never was very good at math on the fly.

Now she looked at me more questioningly, but the look had a slight edge to it, as if saying, "Who wants to know?" It was becoming apparent that maybe I was someone she should know, but she just couldn't place me.

I couldn't take the suspense any more, so in the calmest voice I could manage, I said "We went to school together." When that still didn't ring any bells, I went in for the kill: "Dawn, it's Shawn."

I'm not 100% sure what reaction I thought I'd get with that announcement, but I'm sure it probably included some form of recognition. Instead, what I got was: "Shawn who?"

OK. Ouch. I mean seriously... OUCH.

I tried to justify her reaction ("*Shawn who?*" *Really?*) by thinking that maybe my radar was working a lot better than hers was, or maybe she just loomed a lot larger in my personal mythology than I did in hers, but in any case, my ego underwent an instant and dramatic

downsizing.

I looked at her levelly, wondering if I really looked that different with the passing of the years. Apparently so, because now she was *really* looking at me, and I could see she still wasn't making the connection.

"Shawn... Inmon? We lived next door to each other..." I said, trailing off meaningfully. I was preparing to say more (thinking of adding, in a moment of frustration "You know... your first?" but I didn't.)

If it was a reaction I was hoping for, I finally got it.

She took one small, half-step back, and in a characteristic gesture that the years had never managed to wash away from my memory, her perfect eyes grew wide with recognition, and I could see the memories flood back into her face. Both her hands flew to her mouth in the universal gesture of shock, and she said "Oh my God."

Hmm... that could be good. Like, "Oh my God! It is so good to see you!" Or, I suppose it could be not, like "Oh my God! I hoped I would never see you again!"

Then, slowly, a moment later, she said it again. "Oh. My. God." Each word its own sentence. Then again. And again. And again.

While Dawn was chanting her "Oh my God" mantra over and over, the young girl who had first taken my order came bouncing over, smiling broadly, obviously amused at seeing this reaction, and wanting to get in on it.

"Hi!" she said. "I'm Dawn's daughter."

Honestly, it was hard for me to take my eyes off Dawn for even a moment, but I gave a lame attempt at a charming smile and tried to talk. Instead of words, nothing but nervous laughter came out. Eventually, I managed to spit out "I'm Shawn. Your Mom and I were friends a long time ago."

By the knowing, twinkly look in her eyes, I thought she had probably figured out already what kind of "friends" we had been. I turned my attention back to Dawn. Even though almost a minute had passed since I had told her who I was, she was still repeating "Oh, my, God" over and over. It was a little eerie, really, like a record needle stuck in a groove.

I tried to say something to break through the chant, but I was so blown away by just being this close to her that my hands were trembling and I couldn't think of one intelligent thing to say. I mumbled something about how it was good to see her, and that I was just on my way home to Enumclaw, but nothing seemed to get through to her. I couldn't find anything

worthwhile to say, and she couldn't stop chanting.

Finally, frustrated at my own ability to get my brain and tongue working together, I turned to Dawn's daughter and said, "Tell your Mom it was good to see her, K?" I gave her a quick attempt at a wink, failed, and with one last, longing look at Dawn, who was still chanting, I drove off, dizzy with the thought of her.

More than anything on earth, I wanted to turn that car around, run into that little restaurant and say, "Dawn... Dawn, it's me" while I held her tight against me, waiting for all the intervening years to evaporate. Discretion led me to just keep my wheels rolling, moving me further away every second.

My mind reeled.

For nearly three decades, I had fought against myself, constantly suppressing any thought of her. Now, with her standing in front of me only moments ago, I knew there was no suppressing anything any more. Memories, sensations, emotions swept over me in wave after wave, almost choking me as I turned back onto I-5 to head for home.

The previous few minutes had led me to some very definite conclusions: I knew I was in trouble. All the years had changed nothing. I loved her still, and infinitely. I loved her just as I had when I kissed her tear-stained face good-bye on Valentine's Day weekend 1979.

Finally, I knew I had to talk to someone. I dialed my oldest sister Terri as I drove. She answered on the first ring. "Hey, Redhead" I said, unable to keep the tremor out of my voice.

"Honey, what's wrong?"

Isn't that why we call our big sisters in times of trouble; because they can tell something's up after only two words?

"Nothing's wrong, really... Listen, you won't believe this, but guess who I just ran into?"

"Umm... I give up. Who?"

"Dawn."

"Dawn. *Your* Dawn?"

"Well, I don't know about that, but yes, *that* Dawn."

"Oh." There was a longish silence as she considered this. "How'd she look?"

"Seriously, Redhead... that's the first thing you want to know? She looked great. She looked... like herself."

"Oh, PSI... did you have a chance to talk to her?"

"Yeah, kind of... well, no, not really." I gave Terri the condensed version of what had just

happened, minus the whole “It feels like my heart just might explode” part. Finally, I said, “Listen, Red... seeing Dawn has totally rocked my world. I need to ask you a favor.”

“OK, what do you need?” She was all business now.

“I need to figure a few things out, and I’m going to need a sounding board. How would you feel if I wrote out all the things that happened when Dawn and I separated and sent them to you in some emails? That would fill in some blanks in the story for you, and then maybe we could talk about a few things I have questions about. Are you game?”

“You know I love a mystery!”

“OK, then. Keep your eyes on your inbox, and I’ll be in touch. I love you Redhead.”

I hung up, turned my new CD back up and let the miles roll under my wheels... my body was in 2006, but my mind, my spirit and my heart, were firmly lodged in the 70’s.

From: **PSI** (ShawnInmon@Hotmail.com)
Sent: Tue 12/05/06 6:52 PM
To: **TL** (TL1042@MSN.com)

Hello, Red...

OK, here's the deal... You know me well enough to know that seeing Dawn has completely freaked me out. It had been so many years since I had seen her that I think that I had finally come to grips with the idea that I would never see her again. The wounds had run so deep when I had lost her that I thought they would never heal. They did at least scab over, though, to a certain extent... until I saw her standing in front of me again a few days ago. Now, everything feels as fresh and painful as it did in 1979.

So, here's how I thought this might work... I thought I'd write out a little biography of what happened with Dawn and I when we were together and send it off to you a chapter at a time. That will bring you up to speed on things you know but might have forgotten, along with some things you weren't around for, and some things that there were just no way for you to know.

After that, if you're game, I'd like to ask your opinion about a few things. If you're up for this, reply to this email and let me know. It'll be kind of a long, strange trip, and it'll take me a few weeks to get everything written and off to you.

You know I tend to play things pretty close to the vest, but I feel a need for outside perspective on this, so let me know if you want to come along for the ride!

I love you, Redhead, and I appreciate you.

PSI

From: **TL** (TL1042@msn.com)
Sent: Tue 12/05/06 10:44 PM
To: **PSI** (ShawnInmon@hotmail.com)

Dearest PSI...

I guess I've always known that a day would come when we would finally talk about this. I know you've been carrying it around, bottled up inside yourself for too long, so I'm glad you're finally ready to talk about it. You can put your trust in me.

Whenever you're ready, PSI, fire away!

You know I love you too, little brother.

TL

From: **PSI** (ShawnInmon@hotmail.com)
Sent: Wed 12/06/06 11:33 AM
To: **TL** (TL1042@msn.com)

Hello again, Red...

I hope I haven't given this too much of a build-up, promising super-secret revelations and deep-dark secrets and such. I suppose there will be some of those things, but really, I'm just looking to get at the heart of the matter. I want to come as close as I can to re-creating my own perspective for you, so we can discuss a few things when the story is brought up to the present day.

Although I'll try and keep this as entertaining as possible, I give you my word that I will tell you the absolute truth as it is known to me. I won't change the facts to protect the less-than-innocent... namely, me.

At some point, I will ask you some questions.... A lot of them will be rhetorical, but if you want to take a swing at them along with me, feel free! I am writing this both to organize my thoughts and to seek outside input.

So, Red, do you remember what the Rosetta Stone was? Well, basically, there were all these symbols and hieroglyphs, but no one could understand how to translate them, because they didn't have a place to start. Then they found the Rosetta Stone, which showed the same symbols, but also had languages that we knew. Voila! As soon as they saw that, they were able to extrapolate and figure out what all the symbols meant.

Anyway, here's why I'm giving you a history lesson: when I saw Dawn last week, it felt like I got one new piece of information, and "click!" everything fell into place. A lot of things that hadn't made sense in my life suddenly came into focus. When I realized that it was Dawn standing in front of me, I had my own "Rosetta Stone" moment, and my own truth.

I knew that I loved her just as truly, madly, and deeply as I had when I had last seen her twenty-six years before. I knew that even if I never saw her again in this lifetime, I would go to my grave knowing that she is the one true love in my life. I don't say that lightly, or as a comparison to anyone else... it simply, absolutely, was true.

A friend of mine once told me that our subconscious mind could only speak the truth. Unfiltered, with no concerns for anyone's feelings or what the world thinks, simply the truth. That night, my subconscious mind jumped right to the top of my consciousness, and told me that

although I had managed to keep it buried so deep that I thought it would never resurface, the truth still remained: that I love her like I never have, and never will, love another.

When you consider that I've been married twice, and been in more relationships than I care to count, that fact is a little awkward, but it might explain the "success" (ok, "lack of success" is a lot more accurate!) that I've had in all those relationships.

For most of the twenty-six years that we had been separated, I had told myself a story along the lines of "of course I will always love Dawn. She was my first love, and everyone always has a soft spot for their first love, their first heartbreak. That's over, though, and it's time to put Dawn away with other childish things and get on with the business of growing up." And, so I did, for twenty-six years, until I finally caught up with what my subconscious mind knew all along... that there would never be another for me.

Anyway... I don't want this to be a complete bummer, so let's change it up a little, shall we? I know it's kind of inevitable that there will be some low spots as I'm writing this, because I know how it all turns out. But, this is also about the happiest time of my life.

One little side note about the story I'm about to attach... I'm going to write this story as if I'm telling it to someone who's not already familiar with a lot of the facts, and who the players are, and here's why: at some point (maybe after I'm dead?!?) I'd like my girls to read this. After all, Red, how cool would it be if we stumbled on a diary that our father had written about several years in his life. How much would we cherish that? I don't think it would be any different for Desi, Samy, and Sabrina.

Also, if I'm completely honest (which is what I intend to be through all this) I have a secret hope that someday what I write here will find its way into Dawn's hands. Although she was certainly there for the events I'm going to describe, I would love for her to see it through my eyes, and for her to see how clear it all is to me, even after all these years.

So, here's how these emails should break down: I'll write a little introduction to each chapter in the body of the email, and then I'll "attach" the story itself. That'll make it easier to separate our present day thoughts from the flow of the story.

OK, then... enough chatter... click on the little paper clip and you'll find Chapter One of "The Saga of Shawn and Dawn!"

(attachment)

Chapter One

"I am young, but I am so alone"

A Long Time Ago
Jim Croce

I was 15 years old in the summer of 1975... living on that terribly difficult cusp between childhood and adulthood.

The OPEC oil embargo and accompanying energy shortage were still fresh in everyone's mind, and there was a lot of talk about "saving energy" for the first time I can remember. We made Daylight Savings Time last all year to save electricity, and lowered the National Speed Limit to 55 MPH to save gasoline.

I lived in a doublewide trailer in a small town in the middle of nowhere in Washington State called Mossyrock. Mossyrock had less than 500 hearty souls living in it, and other small towns like Morton, Onalaska, Randall, Adna, Tenino, Toledo and Napavine surrounded us. Not a metropolis in the bunch. The "Twin Cities" of Centralia and Chehalis, 40 miles away, had less than 40,000 people between them, but when people said they were going "out town" that's where they were headed.

At 15, I was gangly, awkward and gawky. I had just gone through an incredible growth spurt the year before, and I definitely had not grown into my new body. I still wore my hair however my Mom told me to wear it (I think she went in with me and said "Marge, just give him "The Dork") and let's say that fashion wasn't a real priority in my life. Plus, at least as far as most adults were concerned, I was a little too smart for my own good, and I was definitely socially inept. Socially retarded is probably more accurate.

Most kids go through an awkward stage, and I was no exception. Mine just lasted a little longer than most... like ten years. I left behind the adorable cuteness of childhood at about age 9, and I didn't make much of a comeback until I was 18 or 19. It was a long, unrelenting stretch of homeliness in my life.

Then, to make things worse, my best friend, Mark, who lived next door, moved to Seattle. Seattle was only 90 miles away, but in Mossyrock in the mid-70's, it might as well have been in another universe. For much of the summer, Mark's house had stood dark and empty, silently mocking my long hours of having nothing to do now that he was gone.

For the previous five summers, Mark and I had found unique ways to keep us occupied. For instance, the year before, my Step-Dad had brought home a huge old barrel. Because it had sat for a long time with water inside it, rust had formed, and when we tipped it over, it made an incredibly cool “shoosh-shoosh” sound, kind of like an oversized Indian rain stick.

We had spent hundreds of hours over the summer of 1974 riding on top of that barrel, moving it along like competitive log rollers, and making up games that usually involved pitching each other headfirst onto the lawn. Our Moms were sure that we were gonna kill ourselves eventually (a variation on the classic “You’ll put your eye out”) but since it kept us out of their hair, they never stopped us.

If we could gather up a group of the other kids in the neighborhood, we’d turn the barrel up on it’s end and use it as a base for a game of “Werewolf”, which was kind of like Hide ‘n Seek, only cooler... at least to us. I know teenagers wouldn’t be caught dead playing a game like that today, but things were different in the 70’s... We didn’t have iPods, cell phones, computers, or 300 channels on the TV, but we had an old, rusted-out barrel. Honestly, I think we got the good end of things.

At night, when it was too dark to do anything else, but too early for Johnny Carson (one of the best things about summer was getting to stay up late to watch Johnny’s monologue, even though I didn’t “get” a lot of the jokes yet) Mark and I would sit out under my old cherry tree and tell each other stories and lies. We both knew they were lies, but since we were both telling them, it seemed all right. We talked about girls we liked, and watched bats eating the moths that gathered around the streetlight.

We’d heard from another kid in school that if you tossed a pebble up in path of the bat’s sonar, then they would follow it to the ground and knock themselves silly. We tried to do it for weeks with no success, but it was fun trying.

And then, Mark’s Dad lost his job, and he was gone.

I soon found that it wasn’t much fun watching bats eating moths by yourself, and even if I managed to sucker one into crashing into the ground, who would ever believe me?

So, I wasn’t real hopeful when I heard that new neighbors were moving in. The fact that they were there just made it more concrete that my best friend wasn’t coming back. Plus, the new neighbors were from California. There were few things in rural western Washington in the mid-1970’s than a transplanted Californian. There was a feeling at the time that they had already “used up” all the good in California, and now they were coming up to our perfect little

area to do the same.

On the day the moving van arrived, my Mom and step-Dad seemed pretty interested in watching, as everything was unloaded. I was interested at first, too, until I saw that they didn't have any kids my age. Then, I couldn't have cared less

Late that afternoon, the new neighbors emerged from their house and walked around their new front yard, squinting in the July sunlight as if they were trying to get their bearings. Dad being Dad, he went over to say hello. Me being me, I hung back and listened while pretending not to pay attention.

They talked about adult stuff that I couldn't even fake an interest in, but I wanted to size up the new neighbors and get a feeling for them. The woman of the house, Colleen, was a big woman and she wore a long, flowing muumuu. The man, Walt, was smaller, and he seemed to keep his thoughts to himself.

The one snippet of conversation that I recall with perfect clarity that day was when Colleen said how glad she was to be away from the urban sprawl of California and living in the sticks of Washington. She recounted walking out of the house earlier, and, seeing a plane flying overhead, shook her fist at it, as if to say "how dare you, vestige of civilization, follow us to this cultural backwater" or some such.

And, that was it... the moment that would change my life. That was the first moment I saw Dawn. She had come out of the house without me noticing, and when she heard her Mom relating this story to us, she rolled her eyes, looked at me, shook her head contemptuously, and turned on her heel and went back inside the house.

Dawn was just a kid then, really... way too young for me to ever have been interested in hanging out with, but I remember my first thought of her that day was "Hey, that kid's got attitude!" And she did. Even at that formative age, she had the ability to let you know what she was thinking with very few words.

And that was that, between Dawn and I for some time. Let's be honest... I just wasn't going to have that much in common with a girl so young. I lived and died with the fortunes of the Los Angeles Lakers, the Oakland Raiders, and *The Vision* from The Mighty Avengers comic books. She cared about... well, I'm not really sure, because I didn't hang out with her, but I'm sure it was young girl stuff!

Once I sucked it up and realized that my best friend was gone, I got on with the difficult task of being a high school sophomore. The previous September, at the start of my freshman

year, I was all of 5'2" tall. Even including the girls, I think I was the shortest person in my class. One year later, I would stand 6'1", so to say that the year before was one of transitions and changes is an understatement.

I'll never forget the first day of school that year, when the basketball coach passed me in the hall and did an absolute double take. The year before, I had been a 5'2" guard. Now I was a shade over 6' tall, and I think he was doing the mental math in case I had another growth spurt like that in me. Unfortunately for the Mossyrock High School basketball team, I never grew another inch.

During this time, I had many romances, with many different girls.

Unfortunately, they all existed only between my ears.

I had a great imagination, and absolutely zero experience with the opposite sex. I was the world's biggest romantic, with one minor flaw... I couldn't talk to a girl to save my soul. At home in my bedroom, standing in front of my mirror, I was slick and smooth. In front of an actual, living breathing girl, I was pathetic.

And that was, for the first time, when Dawn came into my life in any meaningful way. Because of the almost four-year (and three grade level – she was just entering 7th grade) age difference between us, there was no pressure on us at all. It was obvious that there could be no romantic stuff between us. That meant that, over time, we could be friends – and we were.

At school, of course, we never saw each other... I was in high school, and Dawn was in junior high, and there was never any reason for our paths to cross. After school, we both rode the #9 bus home together every day, got off at the same stop, and went into our own houses; all without ever saying a word or even acknowledging each other most days.

Sometime later in the afternoon, though, first one, then the other of us would wander outside. There was no fence between our houses at that time, so conversation was easy. It would often start with an insult. Now that I was feeling pretty tall, I teased her about being so short, or being such a kid... I admit she didn't give me a lot to work with! In return, she would give me a hard time for being such a brainiac, or a weirdo (yeah, I gave her a lot more material) and then we would just hang out and talk.

Because we lived on the outskirts of such a small, rural town, there weren't a lot of other kids for us to talk to. At the time, I was so lacking for conversation with *any* female of the species, that I was happy to get some practice in, even if it was with the kid next door.

During these early years of friendship, I learned a lot about Dawn. I found that, even at

that young age, she had an innate sense of calm. What I would call “grace” today, I suppose. She wasn’t real outgoing, but she was smart, and she could always make me laugh with just a look. She had a way of looking at me when I was being somewhat less-than-truthful – a sideways glance out of the corner of her eyes – that always took the wind out of my sails. The result was that I figured out that it was better to just be honest, rather than boastful with her.

Best of all was that I felt like she accepted me for what I was... an older, nice guy who was completely safe to hang out with. Looking back on it now, I’m sure she knew that I was out of step with the “cool” crowd (that wasn’t too hard to spot!) but she didn’t seem to care. As a sensitive young teenager myself, this “accepting me for what I am” attitude meant a lot to me, even though I didn’t have the capacity to express it yet.

Also, even though I had the advantage of being older than Dawn, I already knew that she was going to eventually substantially outrank me on the school food chain. In high school, the pretty popular girl vs. the nerdy, secluded boy was kind of a mismatch, and even at this young age, you could see what a beauty she was going to grow up to be.

Over the next few years, we grew into a pattern where we were each other’s “fall-back” friends. If neither of us had another friend over, or didn’t have a sports practice or whatever, then we would hang out. I don’t remember talking about other girls with her, because, I suppose, there *weren’t* any other girls for me to talk about. If I had, though, I have a hunch she would have given me good advice, because she was always smart about those things... way smarter than me.

As time went on, I found that I looked forward to the times we hung out in our yards more and more. One day, after Dawn went into her house for the night, I lingered outside, and realized that I was sorry to see her go in. It was like there had been a slow building inside me over weeks and months, and when I finally became aware of it, I was surprised by it. If I could use only one word to describe that early phase of our relationship, it would be “organic.” The friendship between us grew slowly and naturally.

Since we never hung around with each other when our other friends were around, I never had to explain why I was friends with a much younger girl, and she never had to explain, I suppose, why she hung out with such a geek. Of course, there were times when my two worlds (school friends and Dawn) would collide.

One Friday night during my sophomore year, my friend Harold came over after school to spend the night so we could stay up and watch the “creature feature” that Channel 7 showed at

midnight. As a general rule, the movies themselves turned out to be a big disappointment, but the idea of staying up until midnight to watch them was irresistible.

Harold and I had been friends since Kindergarten, and he was the kind of guy your parents want you to hang out with – he was earnest, intelligent, and he went to church because it “turned him on,” not because he had to. Like me, his experience with the fairer sex was approximately zero. We were a perfect pair.

That day, we had a few hours to kill between getting off the bus and dinner, so we wandered out into our side yard that ran between my house and Dawn’s. We started tossing a Frisbee back and forth. Being the geeks we were, though, we couldn’t just throw the Frisbee. No, that’s way too simple for us. We had to create a complicated set of rules for tossing the Frisbee back and forth, with points awarded and subtracted for difficult throws, angles, catches, etc. Soon, we were trying to set new world’s records for “Inmon Yard Frisbee.” (We were at my house, so I got the naming rights.)

Dawn’s bedroom looked straight out onto that shared side yard, and, midway through the game, Harold noticed that Dawn was in her room, standing behind her curtains, watching us. I can’t imagine a stronger indictment of the entertainment options available to a young girl on a Friday evening in the mid-70’s, because I don’t think Harold and I were offering much in the way of... well, anything. I suppose that if you spanned the globe, you could find two equally socially inept, homely young boys hanging out together, but I kind of doubt it. I have no idea what she could be finding interesting enough to watch.

After pointing out that Dawn was watching us, Harold tagged her with a nickname that he called forever after. In fact, if I called him up right now and mentioned Dawn’s name, I think there’s a decent chance it would be the first thing out of his mouth. “I believe we have a “Peeping Dawn” Harold said in an attempt at wittiness. And, to Harold, at least, “Peeping Dawn” she became.

I also had a metabolism that was stuck at warp speed. Not only could I eat anything I wanted and never gain an ounce, it was nearly impossible for me to maintain even a healthy weight. My Mom finally took me to the doctor for tests, and to her everlasting chagrin, was told that I was suffering from malnutrition. That was completely unacceptable to her, so she arranged with the school so that I could take extra food with me and eat it between classes. Nothing worked, though, and no matter how many calories I consumed, I stayed at 145 lbs. until I graduated from high school.

As far as Dawn and I were concerned, the rhythm of our friendship also remained unchanged. We still hung out after school, teased each other endlessly, supported each other without thought or effort, and set about building a foundation of friendship.

Things ramped up, at least a little bit, at my 16th birthday party...

© 2010 Shawn Inmon