My eternal eons spent living were never wasted, to be frank. I loved humanity. I loved humankind unconditionally, no matter how terrible they acted or however many mistakes they as a collective made across millennia. I never stopped loving humanity since my first lover near the dawn of history itself, and for endless eons, I planned to never stop loving each mortal who I felt needed me, who desired for the perfect loving partner, who needed that soulmate to be their best version possible. Seeing such a fire burn brightly gave me power, after all.

See, my immortality worked differently than how people often portrayed it in fiction. The moment I formed a bond with someone, it effectively caused me to progressively age alongside then, keeping me healthy all the while until their inevitable deaths, which then effectively led to me being ‘given’ their years spent by my side.

I wasn’t an unfeeling monster. I mourned each loved one equally. I couldn’t spend my endless days grieving though, when better time would be spent giving mortals the love they deserved. So, upon leaving my solitude and taking a new identity, I began the search again for someone new. This varied between familial love, for between best friends, or the love one felt for an equal romantic partner. Having just spent fifty-nine years being the best friend to a wonderfully talented and kind individual, then spent three years lamenting their death as I de-aged back into my early twenties, I eventually decided to find a spouse.

Forging a new identity didn’t require much effort. What did require determination was finding someone I could not only enjoy romantic company with, but possibly spend the rest of their life alongside. My perfect companions needed to be considerate, full of potential, possessed a sense of independence, and love for their fellow humans like I did. Not all needed to fulfill these requirements, but it did help me over the decades. Then, I went on the prowl.

Her name was Margaret. We encountered each other by chance while getting morning coffee, not that I needed it, but simply enjoyed the taste. She worked as a nurse practitioner but spent most of her free time either writing thought-provoking poetry about social issues or reading and learning from college textbooks during her off-hours. Her thirst for knowledge would equal any prodigy, though it did seem to outmatch mine. Margaret and I bonded closely over the works of Whitman, Frost, Milton, and Edgar Allan Poe. Her favorite poet rivaled none other than Edmund Vance Cooke. She felt chills run down her spine each time she reread ‘How Did You Die?’, which in turn often inspired her to keep pushing the limits of her own poetry talents.

To me, she was perfect.

We continued meeting at the same café over a period of weeks. By the end of the second month, I asked Margaret if she would be interested in attending a slam poetry club meeting with me. I had never appeared at one myself, but her clear interest intrigued me. Once she joined the stage, her personality and talent flourished like a blooming flower, and later that same night, our relationship became official. Margaret became my next romantic partner.

Years blinked by for me. Her love for me grew and grew as did my devotion to her happiness. I smiled at her joys, laughed with her jokes, enjoyed watching her creative endeavors and marveled at how Margaret still kept her kindness in the face of such contempt and bitterness at her day job. Before long, I asked her to marry me, and our wedding commenced months later.

Unfortunately, our marriage reached a rocky start.

As her husband, I couldn’t supply her any children. In truth, I had made myself infertile near the beginning of my immortality, but it was a necessary sacrifice. The thought of populating the human race with my own descendants, some of whom I might accidentally bond with, didn’t sound appealing. However, it crushed Margaret to learn how she wouldn’t be able to have children. She became depressed and withdrawn as a result.

Previous lovers and marriages taught me to respect her boundaries, but only for a short while, which I did. When the time was right, I didn’t let her shut me out. I proclaimed to Margaret how even though I couldn’t give her any children, it didn’t prevent us from being happy. Some of my words, while scripted, didn’t lose their heartfelt meaning. Just because my immortality allowed me to repeat milestones or scenarios, it didn’t mean I couldn’t still feel emotions. I felt the same bittersweet contentment, the same sorrow of loss, or thankful happiness when I hugged my wife to tell her everything would be okay.

Margaret published her first poetry collection sometime later. The revenue from it meant she could retire if she wanted to. Yet she didn’t, instead keeping the royalties for our daughter and sons’ futures. Subsequently, we adopted three children over the course of her life, each one bright enough to rival the Sun with how much they smiled. Little Susan moved to another continent to start her own family with a wonderful young man, Little Johnny became an activist fighting for the rights of others, and Young Carlie followed in her adopted mother’s footsteps to become a nurse.

Meanwhile, Margaret and I loved each other well beyond her twilight years. Our friends and neighbors cited our love as one prime example of a lasting marriage. Sure, we sometimes did argue and bicker like any long-term couple, but our love did prove strong. I worked hard to make sure it succeeded where others failed, staying with Margaret all the way until her eventual last day, when I held her frail hand in mine as she breathed her last.

Afterward, I too passed away. Or rather, my mortal form did.

I returned from the Earth in a forest several miles away, back to the young adult form I once possessed from decades past. Between being young again and the thought of losing Margaret still fresh in my mind, I retreated as a hermit once more. Our adopted children would mourn the loss of their parents, but they would be fine. I just knew it.

The cycle continued again. For three years, I grieved. On the fourth year though, I knew it wouldn’t be forever. I loved humanity. I loved humankind unconditionally. Therefore, when the time felt right again, I would become the perfect loving partner, who needed that soulmate to be their best version possible. I planned to do this until the end of time.

Once more, I left the woods. I forged a new identity. I went out to find a new loved one.