

## “One Day I Wrote Her Name”

### Points to Remember:

**Sonnet No.** – 75

**Sonnet Cycle** – “Amoretti” (the collection contains 89 Sonnets in total)

**Major Theme** – Describes the courtship and eventual marriage of Edmund Spenser to Elizabeth Boyle. The speaker addresses indirectly his beloved, attempting to convince her that their love will live eternally.

**Published in** – 1595 (16<sup>th</sup> Century)

**Sonnet Structure** – Three Quatrains and One Couplet

**Rhyme Scheme** – ABAB BCBC CDCD EE

### Analysis

#### Lines 1-4 (Writing the name in sand)

The first quatrain depicts the lyrical voice’s attempt to immortalize his loved one. The stanza starts by setting the scene: “One day”. The lyrical voice writes the name of his loved one on the sand of a beach but the waves wash the writing away (“*I wrote her name upon the strand,/But came the waves and washed it away*”). The lyrical voice writes the name in the sand again, but, as before, the waves wash the name away (“*Again I write it with a second hand,/ But came the tide, and made my pains his prey*”). The action of the wave symbolizes how time will destroy all man-made things. To emphasize this action the waves are personified as they “washed it away” and “made my pains his prey”. Notice also, the way in which the lyrical voice refers to his own writing (“my pains”) and how this works as a metaphor (“his prey”) for the relationship that the words have with nature and time.

#### Lines 5-8 (Failure to accomplish the impossible)

The second quatrain describes a dialogue that the lyrical voice has with his loved one. The woman reacts to the writing and tells the lyrical voice that his attempts are in vain (“*Vain man, said she, that doest in vain assay/A mortal thing so to immortalize*”), as mortal things such as herself cannot live forever. The woman introduces a new perspective to *Sonnet 75*, as she criticizes the lyrical voice’s actions and words. She emphasizes her mortal nature because she will also disappear like the words in the sand (“*For I myself shall like to this decay/And eek my*

*name be wiped out likewise*”). Thus, it is useless to write her name because she, as the words in the sand, will eventually disappear. Time and nature are cruel and destroy man-made things.

### **Lines 9-12 (Having none of it)**

The third quatrain presents the lyrical voice’s response to what his loved one said. In this stanza, there is a volta (narrative turn) and the tone of *Sonnet 75* changes. Up to this moment, both the lyrical voice and his loved one emphasized on the mortal nature of them and their creations. Nevertheless, the lyrical voice says the opposite in this stanza. The lyrical voice tells the woman that the “baser things” will disappear, but she will live on (*“Not so, (quod I) let baser things devise/To die in dust, but you shall live by fame”*). Notice the alliteration in these lines: “devise”, “die”, and “dust”. The lyrical voice, a poet, will immortalize his loved one in his poems and, because of that, she will live forever (*“My verse, your virtues rare shall eternize, And in the heavens write your glorious name”*). By immortalizing his loved one, the lyrical voice puts her on a heavenly space, as she will be “in the heavens” with her “glorious name”. Now, the alliteration is made with “v” sounds (“verse” and “virtues”), and they are much softer than the “d” sounds in the previous lines.

### **Lines 13 and 14 (Immortalized in poems)**

The final couplet summarizes the message of the poem. According to the lyrical voice, even if everything comes to an end (*“Where whenas death shall all the world subdue”*), their love will survive (*“Out love shall live, and later life renew”*). There is alliteration in the first line with a “w” sound (“Where”, “whenas”, and “world”) and with an “l” sound in the second line (“Love”, “live”, “later”, and “life”). The immortal quality in love and death is contrasted to the briefness in life. Notice how, throughout the poem, there is a very melodic and stable rhythm that is formed with the regular rhyme scheme and the iambic pentameter. These devices make the sonnet calm and pleasant to the ear, while creating a very detailed picture.