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The Plague of Simple Loss

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The Plague of Simple Loss

by Robert Parham

A plague of many colors,
a kind of iridescent soot,
descended on the land.
Its damage seemed little
to those who could not miss
what it had killed: just
simple manners, what seemed
rules of prickly consort
to uninitiates were in fact
what eased the passing place
to place, person to person.

Good manners are but kindness,
all with sense would know.
It is not a prison of forks,
which one first, or where,
but forks instead of fingers
greasy with half raw duck,
clean folded napkins
in the place of snot-filled rags,
a pause to let the jest of one
precede the gentle spar of next.

