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A HISTORY OF EX-LOVE, PART XIV

Dissolving romantic bonds then required investment, commitment. Those wishing to sever a delicate relationship were compelled to dress

in seventeen layers of starched clothing, in frocks, tailcoats, powdered wigs, and whatnot, to make themselves presentable for formal visits

to the inkwright to procure his finest ware. The inkwright would thus summon the child labourers copiously at his disposal and send them forth

into the earth, into the ink mines to excavate only the most passionate, profound ores, in the colours best suited to that season's epistolary fashions.

Those whom Eros had abandoned would subsequently have to traverse to the zoöpapyrium to fulfill their parchment needs, carefully selecting

for their hides only those cattle whose demeanors and lowing exactly replicated the variety of pathos suffered by the well-bred customers.

And then to the columbiary. According to the annals of Langton Strepforth, by the 1820s, some people had begun using parrots for their flashy plumage

and capacity for oral mimicry. But those from the best families stayed true to the specially-trained pigeons, each of which having spent months

memorizing local topographical maps, and thus well worth the price. Imagine the mingled awe and despair of the jilted lover of a past era,

observing the avian harbinger of romantic doom as it coursed toward his or her window, a paragon of grace in flight, pausing only to poo

on the heads of the lower classes. Best of all, after the message was read and laudanum imbibed, one could eat the messenger, perhaps in a pie.