

RE: Old Plans for a New Dragon

by Marisa P. Clark

You took all my tail feathers, I joked,
and you said, *You told me I could*
have them. They were red and green,
molts from my three parrots. You planned
wings for another dragon, a puppet
you might sculpt. Now we were on the phone,
with 787 miles of crow-fly, orthodromic, great-circle, call it what you will,
literal distance between us. Door to door,
the drive measures 978 miles, a trip
I've never made.

You took all my tail feathers, I moped
in jest, long after you'd last inspired
my bright-quilled strut and flared display.
Oh, woman, how you'd stood my plumage up!
But with this the stuff of our unencrypted talk—
feather collections, dragon puppets, dreams
of life together in light of all
that kept us apart—
it's no wonder you missed
my meaning. I should have stripped it bare:
I miss you. Please come back.

What happened to the dreamed-of
dragon? Did you give it wings? Can it fly?
Will it ever cross the sky to close
the space you made
between us? Or did you let those feathers go
to waste, the refuse of a half-cast spell,
of magic unmanifest? Did you abandon
that fantasy as well? And have you learned
to decode the difference yet between metaphor
and real? In plain speech, please,
I'm asking.