

PAT JASPER

Things I Didn't Say ...

I nearly choked on all
the reckless words of love
you didn't want to hear.

Swallowed quantities of sweet
nothings before they blossomed
into bitter somethings flung
back into my face, uninvited
guests with bad table manners,
overexhuberant and embarrassing.

Oh, you were masterful at
changing the subject just
when things got interesting,
deflected off course like
berserk jumbo jets
avoiding bolts of lightning.

Did I mention your knack
for pretending not to hear?
Pardon? you'd bark,
certain I couldn't bring myself
to repeat the soft swells
of feeling rising
from somewhere dark
and dangerous. Oh nothing—
and on to safer things.

The solace of small talk,
lightweight words sparring
with themselves, dancing
with their fancy footwork
around the things that matter,
illusion of intimacy.

Where did they go? These words
unable to navigate the channel
from heart to mouth.
Stillborn, unwelcome gifts
returned unopened.