

JOE GALLAGHER

Delta of Lost Hippos

When a hippo mother gives birth to twins,
she always abandons one to the river;
the favored calf has a better chance to survive.
But what happens to all the abandoned brothers,
the sisters swept down the muddy Lethe?

They gather in a delta deep in the old grass.
They are waiting to release you,
you who have quit,
you who thought the world was too much,
who couldn't finish a project, a job, a love.

You maybecrushed shitty-apartmented mudsoled quitters!
It's ok.
The hippo moms quit on their runts.
God will quit someday. He told us so in Revelation.
The sun will quit quite dramatically. The earth will
follow it out the door. And you, and the hippos,
in your delta of crumpled light,
you will be ready.

Unsmoothly

So Tim baked Jill a blueberry pie.
But when he sliced it into eight pieces,
the crusts became wings.

Eight warm blueberry birds sit outside
Tim's window, their ice cream heads
melting naturally.

Now Tim is on the phone with Jill.
Instead of asking her over for pie,
he has to explain:

“Jill, I baked you a pie, but it turned into eight jays.
I assure you from the smell of them
the pie would have been delicious.”

Tim knows Jill thinks he's a weirdo.
His mind jumbles the recipes.
Crushes become crazy.

The pie flies off. Tim wants a quesadilla
made of anger and mushrooms.
He's tired of not getting himself.

Tim wants to take his anger
to bed with him, to cuddle with it
like a soft saw.

“Dear sir,” the saw will buzz,
“You have to forgive yourself,
the way you’d forgive
anyone else.”