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The Defective Conversationalist

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The Defective Conversationalist

Abstract

It's not rare for an internal organ to lope from my mouth in the middle of a conversation...

Cover Page Footnote

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The Defective Conversationalist

Fiction by Joe Lucido

It's not rare for an internal organ to lope from my mouth in the middle of a conversation. I will feel it coming up like a burp, and then my hands are cupped before me, gathering my spleen against my body. I'm so sorry, I say to the interviewer through cords of tissue still joining the spleen to my insides. Let me tell you why I'm the man for the job, I continue, though I worry she can't understand me anymore. She appears pretty ill herself. Somebody call somebody! she shouts. Meanwhile, my mouth contains a fair amount of blood, which I try not to spit on her tidy desk and official-looking cardstock documents. Wait! I say, as I bring my spleen back to my mouth. Let me just swallow this! I stuff my spleen into my mouth and do my best not to nick it with my teeth. All the while I shoot her an encouraging look. I manage to gag it back down. Sorry! I say, swiping a tissue from her desk. You were asking me about my qualities? I say, wiping blood from a picture of her and her daughter. I say something about adversity and my ability to overcome it. I say something about guts and cleaning, but it's clear I won't be getting the gig. Hey, I say, at least it wasn't my *heart* this time, ha ha ha ha ha!

Joe Lucido lives in Tuscaloosa, Alabama, where he teaches in the Alabama Prison Arts + Education Project and is the fiction editor of the *Black Warrior Review*. His work appears or is forthcoming in *Whiskey Island*, *Word Riot*, *Hobart*, *SmokeLong Quarterly*, *apt Online*, and others. He grew up in the suburbs of St. Louis.