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# Lunch and Afterwards

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## Lunch and Afterwards · *Dannie Abse*

### *Lunch with a Pathologist*

My colleague knows by heart the morbid verse  
of facts—the dead weight of a man’s liver,  
a woman’s lungs, a baby’s kidneys.

At lunch he recited unforgettably,  
“After death, of all soft tissues the brain’s  
the first to vanish, the uterus the last.”

“Yes,” I said, “at dawn I’ve seen silhouettes  
hunched in a field against the skyline, each one  
feasting, preoccupied, silent as gas.

Partial to women they’ve stripped women bare  
and left behind only the taboo food,  
the uterus, inside the skeleton.”

My colleague wiped his mouth with a napkin,  
hummed, picked shredded meat from his canines,  
said, “You’re a peculiar fellow, Abse.”

### *No Reply*

*Why?*

because  
when I went home no-one was home  
because I knew I was awake  
(a man asleep is a man enslaved)

I stood up, walked into the hall  
where I dialled the number  
because of some strange ancestor  
because I'm Welsh because I'm a Jew  
because the audible clock's rounder  
than any circle I can draw  
because I've shared the particular  
lunatic boredom of caged animals  
because I've been touched on a scar  
and felt nothing or almost nothing  
because when sick I'm still a doctor  
because pathologists aver  
"The first organ to disappear  
is the brain—the uterus the last"  
because I shan't forget that ever  
because I walked into the hall where  
I stood next to the telephone  
I thought of a number doubled it.