

Diameter

By Michelle Y. Burke

You love your friend, so you fly across the country to see her.

Your friend is grieving. When you look at her, you see that something's missing.

You look again. She seems all there: reading glasses, sarcasm, leather pumps.

What did you expect? Ruins? Demeter without arms in the British Museum?

Your friend says she believes there's more pain than beauty in the world.

When Persephone was taken, Demeter damned the world for half the year.

The other half remained warm and bountiful; the Greeks loved symmetry.

On the plane, the man next to you read a geometry book, the lesson on finding the circumference of a circle.

On circumference: you can calculate the way around if you know the way across.

You try *across* with your friend. You try *around*.

I don't believe in an afterlife, she says. But after K. died, I thought I might go after her.

In case I'm wrong. In case she's somewhere. Waiting.

Source: *Poetry* (March 2015)