

POETRY

A Short Poem about Nearly Everything

R. A. Christmas

for Bill Bryson and the Hayes family

On his morning walk on Deer Flat Road in Kuna, Idaho, a man came upon a chalk drawing of our solar system—more or less to scale.

Pluto first, then Neptune, etc., as he walked half a block toward Earth—assuming Earth to be about the size of the period at the end of this line.

It was a colorful attempt to illustrate the vastness of our tiny place in the universe—the impossibility of imagining it from textbook diagrams.

The family he was visiting had a dwarf daughter, born after her mom decided not to get her tubes tied. The dad was an army helicopter pilot.

They'd adopted an Iraqi family with three dwarf kids needing medical care, brought them to Idaho, and rented them the house next door.

The pilot paid the bills; kids played back and forth. When the Iraqis' dwarf daughter died after critical neck surgery, the pilot's wife

took the mother each week to the cemetery to recite the Qur'an over the grave. She sent meals; so did they; she mowed their lawn;

which shows, on this pint-sized planet—like that map of our solar system scrawled on a sidewalk—the importance of a giant perspective.