

# Pluto's Identity Crisis

## A Great Story Parable

By Connie Barlow • [www.TheGreatStory.org/Pluto.html](http://www.TheGreatStory.org/Pluto.html)

With substantial help from Bella Downey in March 2007, when the original 2003 parable needed to be revised to accommodate Pluto's new status as a "dwarf planet"

### *Script for Readers (revised version of March 2007)*

NOTE TO FACILITATOR: This 4-part script is meant to be acted out by readers, with no advance preparation. It is a Great Story parable about Pluto that is up to date with the latest science in astronomy.

Explain to the audience what Great Story parables are (refer to [www.thegreatstory.org/parables.html](http://www.thegreatstory.org/parables.html)) and that this parable and others can be downloaded for free from that site. Very important to mention that Great Story parables are playful ways telling key components of the 13 billion year story of the universe, in ways that also promote the teaching of core human values.

Ask for **volunteers**: 2 people to volunteer for the main characters (Pluto and Icy Comet), and 2 people to volunteer for supporting roles (Generic Planet and Sun). If you distribute the parts before lunch or before a break, the actors have a chance to peruse the script a bit; but that's not necessary. You can begin right away, so that the actors too are surprised by what comes next.

You may wish to play the NARRATOR role yourself, or ask for a volunteer with an excellent voice that projects. If there is a microphone, have the narrator use it.

ADVANCE PREPARATION: If you can get remnants of cloth that actors can drape around shoulders like scarves. I like deep purple for Pluto, something shiny and silvery for Icy Comet, turquoise blue for Neptune role of "Generic Planet" and orange for Mercury role. Also, bright yellow for the Sun.

## PLUTO PARABLE

### **Narrator Role (in bold)**

*NOTE TO NARRATOR: Your part appears in bold for you to read. Since you never need to act, you can be the one responsible for making sure the play keeps going. Actors may get lost from time to time trying to read their script, while fully acting out. So you may occasionally need to prompt a character if they get lost, or reread a phrase with emphasis if the actor isn't doing the behavior.*

**NARRATOR: "Once upon a time, not long ago, the nine planets were all playing in their orbits around the Sun, as planets are prone to do. Jupiter was stirring its Great Red Spot. Venus and Uranus were playing peek-a-boo through thick clouds. Mars was kicking up a storm of red dust, and Saturn was smoothing its rings. Our own lovely Earth, of course, was playing with dinosaurs.**

**Just then, a comet made of ice approached Pluto. Icy Comet was doing exactly what comets like to do: testing how close it might fly by a stranger without risking capture."**

PLUTO: "Ho there, Comet!"

COMET: "Ho there, Space Rock!"

PLUTO: "Hey! I am not a Space Rock. I'm a Planet. My name is Pluto, and I am the ninth planet of our Solar System."

COMET: "That may be what *you* think, but I can tell from the slant of your orbit that you are not like the others. You are different. And I have heard that the Sun is not your parent star."

PLUTO: "The Sun not my parent star!?! You are wrong. The Sun is my Mother-Father!"

**NARRATOR: "Icy Comet said nothing."**

PLUTO: "Well, I do sometimes wonder why my orbit is different from the rest. All the other planets glide around the Sun, as if skating on the surface of a vast pond. Yet I plunge through that surface at an angle, sometimes above the other planets and sometimes below."

COMET: "And unlike the others, occasionally you even cross over inside of Neptune's orbit. When that happens, Neptune becomes the outermost planet, instead of you."

PLUTO: "I thought I was the only one who knew about that! You won't tell on me, will you?" [sniffles and looks sad]

COMET: "No, I won't tell. And, hey, I'm sorry I said anything. You know, I might be wrong. [Pause] I have an idea. If you will turn down your gravitational force for awhile, I will invite you to join me on my journey into the solar system. Along the way, you may be able to learn more about who you are."

**NARRATOR: "Pluto was happy to comply. As soon as the gravity was turned down, Icy Comet curved a long icy tail around the little planet. Thus began Pluto's journey toward the very center of the solar system, in the company of a comet. One by one, Pluto and Icy Comet would meet and greet the other planets."**

COMET: "Ho there, Neptune. Please tell us how you know that you are a planet."

**NARRATOR: "Neptune flashed its loveliest hue of sea-blue color and said ..."**

GENERIC PLANET: "Certainly! Whenever I look inward, toward my Mother-Father Sun, I can see all my sibling planets, like boats sailing across the surface of a sea. That is how I know that I am a true planet of this solar system."

COMET: "Thank you, Neptune. You have answered our question. Goodbye."

PLUTO: "That is not how I see the other planets. I see them through my slanted orbit. They look like snowflakes swirling in a blizzard, every which way!"

**NARRATOR: "The journey continued. Icy Comet called out to each planet the same way, and each time the response left Pluto feeling less and less like a planet. Uranus claimed to be a planet because of thick clouds — thick clouds that Pluto did not share. For Saturn it was rings that glistened silver and gold in the light of the Sun. For Jupiter it was size. Earth pointed out that its dinosaurs all depended on green leaves that ultimately depended on the energy of the Sun. Venus was pleased to show how bright the Sun's light reflected off its clouds. By now the two travelers were becoming uncomfortably hot. Icy Comet worried about melting if they lingered long this close to the Sun."**

COMET: "Only one more planet to go! And then we can retreat to cooler realms! . . . Ho there, Mercury. Please tell us how you know that you are a planet."

GENERIC PLANET: "I am happy to oblige. I know I am a planet because my surface temperature is hot like my Mother-Father Sun. It is hot enough to melt lead."

PLUTO: "I am not at all hot — at least not when I am in my own orbit."

COMET: "Thank you , Mercury. You have answered our question. Goodbye."

**NARRATOR: "Icy Comet turned sharply, with Pluto still snug in the curve of its tail. The two headed back toward the cool relief of the outer solar system."**

PLUTO: "Oh, Icy Comet! Our journey has ended, and I am quite sure now that I am not a planet."

**NARRATOR: "There was nothing Icy Comet could do to comfort Pluto, except stroke the would-be planet tenderly with a somewhat melted icy tail. . . All of a sudden their journey came to a standstill. Neither Pluto nor Icy Comet could move, even an inch. Something was holding them back."**

PLUTO: "Whew! I have never felt this much gravity coming from Mother-Father Sun before. Something must be wrong!"

SUN: "It is only to remind you, Pluto, that wherever you go, you are forever held within my gravitational embrace."

PLUTO: "Mother-Father Sun! It is you!"

SUN: "Yes, my *dwarf planet*."

PLUTO: "You just called me a dwarf planet! Am I really a dwarf planet? Am I *your* dwarf planet?"

SUN: "Indeed you are! Mercury, Venus, Earth, Mars, Jupiter, Saturn, Uranus, and Neptune are NOT dwarf planets, but you are."

PLUTO: "What, then, makes me a dwarf planet?"

SUN: "A dwarf planet is very much like a regular planet. It is big enough to be round, but it is too small to clear its own path, so your orbit is a bit messier than the rest.

PLUTO: (sadly) "So, I guess I'm not a *real* planet."

SUN: "Oh, dear one, you are my dwarf planet, and I love you just the way you are. . . Besides, there is something far more important than size when you are a member of this family."

PLUTO: "What is that?"

SUN: "It is something that your Comet Friend shares, too."

ICY COMET: "What? You mean me?????"

SUN: "Yes, you, dear Comet. What you and Pluto all share with the big planets is *my loving gravitational embrace*. That is what holds all of you in your orbits!"

PLUTO and ICY COMET (look at one another and jump for joy!).

SUN: "It is true that you, Pluto, are different from the rest. Your orbit is slanted because you came to me from outside my original family of planets. You see, *I adopted you*. Yes, dear Pluto, I adopted you. And now, I hold you in my gravitational embrace just like I hold all the rest. . . So, go now, dear one, and return to your orbit in the company of your Friend. I believe you are overdue for a nap."

**NARRATOR: "Pluto and Icy Comet happily returned to the outer reaches of the Solar System, where Pluto promptly fell asleep, dreaming happy dreams, as planets and dwarf planets are prone to do. . . . But wait! Our story is not yet over! . . .**

**Many years have passed since that grand adventure. Icy Comet is still seeing how close it can fly by planets and dwarf planets without risking capture. And Pluto is**

**still orbiting on a slant. . . But now, whenever Icy Comet visits Pluto, this is how they greet one another:"**

PLUTO: "Ho there, Icy Comet!"

COMET: "Ho there, Dwarf Planet Pluto!"

**ALL CHARACTERS:** bow to audience.

## PLUTO PARABLE

### Pluto Role (in bold)

*NOTE TO PLUTO: You are a main character, present from beginning to end. You are young and innocent, prone to mood swings from anger to sadness to joy.*

*Listen to the narrator carefully, as you may be described as taking some action. After you finish a quote, glance ahead; if you see no bold words for a while, look up from your script and enjoy simply acting your part. If you get lost, the narrator will prompt you to say something. Don't worry about getting it right. Just have fun! And remember to speak loudly. Even if you are saying something to Icy Comet, be sure to turn your face toward the audience partway through your speech, so that they can hear you better. Or simply face the audience.*

### Script

NARRATOR: Once upon a time, not long ago, the nine planets were all playing in their orbits around the Sun, as planets are prone to do. Jupiter was stirring its Great Red Spot. Venus and Uranus were playing peek-a-boo through thick clouds. Mars was kicking up a storm of red dust, and Saturn was smoothing its rings. Our own lovely Earth, of course, was playing with dinosaurs. Just then, a comet made of ice approached Pluto. Icy Comet was doing exactly what comets like to do: testing how close it might fly by a stranger without risking capture.

**PLUTO: "Ho there, Comet!"**

COMET: "Ho there, Space Rock!"

**PLUTO:** (angrily) "**Hey! I am not a Space Rock. I'm a Planet! My name is Pluto, and I am the ninth planet of our Solar System.**"

COMET: "That may be what *you* think, but I can tell from the slant of your orbit that you are not like the others. You are different. And I have heard that the Sun is not your parent star."

**PLUTO:** "**The Sun not my parent star!?! You are wrong. The Sun is my Mother-Father!**"

NARRATOR: Icy Comet said nothing.

**PLUTO:** (tentatively) "**Well, I do sometimes wonder why my orbit is different from the rest. All the other planets glide around the Sun, as if skating on the surface of a vast pond. Yet I plunge through that surface at an angle, sometimes above the other planets and sometimes below.**"

COMET: "And unlike the others, occasionally you even cross over inside of Neptune's orbit. When that happens, Neptune becomes the outermost planet, instead of you."

**PLUTO:** (weepily) "**I thought I was the only one who knew about that! You won't tell on me, will you?**" [sniffle and look sad.]

COMET: "No, I won't tell. And, hey, I'm sorry I said anything. You know, I might be wrong. [pause] I have an idea. If you will turn down your gravitational force for awhile, I will invite you to join me on my journey into the solar system. You may be able to learn more about who you are along the way."

**PLUTO:** (begin journey with Comet)

NARRATOR: Pluto was happy to comply. As soon as the gravity was turned down, Icy Comet curved a long icy tail around the little planet. Thus began Pluto's journey toward the very center of the solar system, in the company of a comet. One by one, Pluto and Icy Comet would meet and greet the other planets.

COMET: "Ho there, Neptune. Please tell us how you know that you are a planet."

NARRATOR: "Neptune flashed its loveliest hue of sea-blue color and said ..."

GENERIC PLANET: "Certainly! Whenever I look inward, toward my Mother-Father Sun, I can see all my sibling planets, like boats sailing across the surface of a sea. That is how I know that I am a true planet of this solar system."

COMET: "Thank you, Neptune. You have answered our question. Goodbye."

**PLUTO:** (whispering to the comet) **"That is not how I see the other planets. I see them through my slanted orbit.** (gesture with arm). **They look like snowflakes swirling in a blizzard, every which way!"** (gesture swirls)

***NOTE TO PLUTO:*** (What follows is the only section in which you say nothing, simply acting out as the narrator describes. So look up from your script and completely engage in the action. Comet will be guiding you around on your journey. You will next speak after Mercury talks about melting lead. So turn to that page now, and just enjoy acting till the next bold.)

NARRATOR: The journey continued. Icy Comet called out to each planet the same way, and each time the response left Pluto feeling less and less like a planet. Uranus claimed to be a planet because of thick clouds — thick clouds that Pluto did not share. For Saturn it was rings that glistened silver and gold in the light of the Sun. For Jupiter it was size. Earth pointed out that its

dinosaurs all depended on green leaves that ultimately depended on the energy of the Sun. Venus was pleased to show how bright the Sun's light reflected off its clouds. . . By now the two travelers were becoming uncomfortably hot. Icy Comet worried about melting if they lingered long this close to the Sun.

COMET: "Only one more planet to go! And then we can retreat to cooler realms! . . . Ho there, Mercury. Please tell us how you know that you are a planet."

GENERIC PLANET: "How do I know I am a planet? Well! I know I am a planet because my surface temperature is hot like my Mother-Father Sun. It is hot enough to melt lead. That's how I know!"

**PLUTO:** (sadly, speaking to audience) **"I am not at all hot — at least not when I am in my own orbit."**

COMET: "Thank you , Mercury. You have answered our question. Goodbye."

NARRATOR: Icy Comet turned sharply, with Pluto still snug in the curve of its tail. The two headed back toward the cool relief of the outer solar system.

**PLUTO:** (in despair, while) **"Oh, Icy Comet! Our journey has ended, and I am quite sure now that I am NOT a planet."**  
(hang head down and look depressed, or weep, while Comet continues to walk you away from Generic Planet.)

NARRATOR: There was nothing Icy Comet could do to comfort Pluto, except stroke the would-be planet tenderly with a somewhat melted icy tail. . . All of a sudden their journey came to a standstill. Neither Pluto nor Icy Comet could move, even an inch. Something was holding them back.

**PLUTO:** (stop moving) "**Whew! I have never felt this much gravity coming from Mother-Father Sun before. Something must be wrong!**"

SUN: "It is only to remind you, Pluto, that wherever you go, you are forever held within my gravitational embrace."

**PLUTO:** (speak to Sun) "**Mother-Father Sun! It is you!**"

SUN: "Yes, my *dwarf planet*."

**PLUTO:** "**You just called me a dwarf planet! Am I really a dwarf planet? Am I *your* dwarf planet?**"

SUN: "Indeed you are! Mercury, Venus, Earth, Mars, Jupiter, Saturn, Uranus, and Neptune are NOT dwarf planets, but you are."

**PLUTO:** "**What, then, makes me a dwarf planet?**"

SUN: "A dwarf planet is very much like a regular planet. It is big enough to be round, but it is too small to clear its own path, so your orbit is a bit messier than the rest."

**PLUTO:** (sadly) "**So, I guess I'm not a *real* planet.**"

SUN: "Oh, dear one, you are my dwarf planet, and I love you just the way you are. . . Besides, there is something far more important than size when you are a member of this family."

**PLUTO:** "**What is that?**"

SUN: "It is something that your Comet Friend shares, too."

ICY COMET: "What? You mean me?????"

SUN: "Yes, you, dear Comet. What you and Pluto all share with the big planets is *my loving gravitational embrace*. That is what holds all of you in your orbits!"

**PLUTO and ICY COMET** (look at each other and jump for joy!).

SUN: "It is true that you, Pluto, are different from the rest. Your orbit is slanted because you came to me from outside my original family of planets. You see, *I adopted you*. Yes, dear Pluto, I adopted you. And now, I hold you in my gravitational embrace just like I hold all the rest. . . So, go now, dear one, and return to your orbit in the company of your Friend. I believe you are overdue for a nap."

NARRATOR: "Pluto and Icy Comet happily returned to the outer reaches of the Solar System, where Pluto promptly fell asleep, dreaming happy dreams, as planets and dwarf planets are prone to do. . . . But wait! Our story is not yet over! . . .

Many years have passed since that grand adventure. Icy Comet is still seeing how close it can fly by planets and dwarf planets without risking capture. And Pluto is still orbiting on a slant. . . But now, whenever Icy Comet visits Pluto, this is how they greet one another:"

PLUTO: "Ho there, Icy Comet!"

COMET: "Ho there, Dwarf Planet Pluto!"

**All CHARACTERS:** bow to audience.

## PLUTO PARABLE

### Comet Role (in bold)

*NOTE TO COMET: You are a main character, present from beginning to end. You start off as a happy-go-lucky, somewhat rude comet, and then grow into compassion and friendship*

*Listen to the narrator carefully, as you may be described as taking some action. After you finish a quote, glance ahead. If you see no bold words for a while, look up from your script and enjoy simply acting your part. If you get lost, the narrator will prompt you to say something. Don't worry about getting it right. Just have fun! And remember to speak loudly. Even if you are saying something to Pluto, remember to turn your face toward the audience sometimes, or even face the audience the whole time.*

### Script

NARRATOR: Once upon a time, not long ago, the nine planets were all playing in their orbits around the Sun, as planets are prone to do. Jupiter was stirring its Great Red Spot. Venus and Uranus were playing peek-a-boo through thick clouds. Mars was kicking up a storm of red dust, and Saturn was smoothing its rings. Our own lovely Earth, of course, was playing with dinosaurs. Just then, a comet made of ice approached Pluto. Icy Comet was doing exactly what comets like to do: testing how close it might fly by a stranger without risking capture.

PLUTO: "Ho there, Comet!"

**COMET: "Ho there, Space Rock!"**

PLUTO: "Hey! I am not a Space Rock. I'm a Planet. My name is Pluto, and I am the ninth planet of our Solar System."

**COMET:** (tauntingly) **"That may be what *you* think, but I can tell from the slant of your orbit that you are not like the others. You are different. And I have heard that the Sun is not your parent star."**

PLUTO: "The Sun not my parent star!?! You are wrong. The Sun is my Mother-Father!"

NARRATOR: Icy Comet said nothing.

PLUTO: "Well, I do sometimes wonder why my orbit is different from the rest. All the other planets glide around the Sun, as if skating on the surface of a vast pond. Yet I plunge through that surface at an angle, sometimes above the other planets and sometimes below."

**COMET:** **"And unlike the others, occasionally you even cross over inside of Neptune's orbit. When that happens, Neptune becomes the outermost planet, instead of you."**

PLUTO: "I thought I was the only one who knew about that! You won't tell on me, will you?"

**COMET:** (becoming compassionate) **"No, I won't tell."** [move closer] **"And, hey, I'm sorry I said anything. You know, I might be wrong."** (pause, then brightly) **"Hey! I have an idea. If you will turn down your gravitational force for awhile, I will invite you to join me on my journey into the solar system. Along the way, you may be able to learn more about who you are."**

NARRATOR: Pluto was happy to comply. As soon as the gravity was turned down, Icy Comet curved a long icy tail around the little planet. Thus began Pluto's journey toward the very center

of the solar system, in the company of a comet. One by one, Pluto and Icy Comet would meet and greet the other planets.

**COMET:** (curve arm-“tail” around Pluto, and begin moving together toward Generic Planet)

**COMET: "Ho there, Neptune. Please tell us how you know that you are a planet."**

NARRATOR: "Neptune flashed its loveliest hue of sea-blue color and said ..."

GENERIC PLANET: "Certainly! Whenever I look inward, toward my Mother-Father Sun, I can see all my sibling planets, like boats sailing across the surface of a sea. That is how I know that I am a true planet of this solar system."

**COMET: "Thank you, Neptune. You have answered our question. Goodbye."**

PLUTO: "That is not how I see the other planets. I see them through my slanted orbit. They look like snowflakes swirling in a blizzard, every which way!"

**COMET:** (keep walking slowly with Pluto around the stage as narrator reads a long section).

NARRATOR: The journey continued. Icy Comet called out to each planet the same way, and each time the response left Pluto feeling less and less like a planet. Uranus claimed to be a planet because of thick clouds — thick clouds that Pluto did not share. For Saturn it was rings that glistened silver and gold in the light of the Sun. For Jupiter it was size. Earth pointed out that its dinosaurs all depended on green leaves that ultimately depended on the energy of the Sun. Venus was pleased to show how bright the Sun's light reflected off its clouds.

NARRATOR: By now the two travelers were becoming uncomfortably hot. Icy Comet worried about melting if they lingered long this close to the Sun.

**COMET: "Only one more planet to go! And then we can retreat to cooler realms!"**

**COMET** (go up to generic planet): **"Ho there, Mercury. Please tell us how you know that you are a planet."**

GENERIC PLANET: "How do I know I am a planet? Well! I know I am a planet because my surface temperature is hot like my Mother-Father Sun. It is hot enough to melt lead. That's how I know!"

PLUTO: "I am not at all hot — at least not when I am in my own orbit."

**COMET: "Thank you , Mercury. You have answered our question. Goodbye."** (turn away, and guide Pluto back home, slowly).

NARRATOR: Icy Comet turned sharply, with Pluto still snug in the curve of its tail. The two headed back toward the cool relief of the outer solar system.

PLUTO (in despair): "Oh, Icy Comet! Our journey has ended, and I am quite sure now that I am not a planet."

NARRATOR: There was nothing Icy Comet could do to comfort Pluto, except stroke the would-be planet tenderly with a somewhat melted icy tail. . . All of a sudden their journey came to a standstill. Neither Pluto nor Icy Comet could move, even an inch. Something was holding them back.

PLUTO: "Whew! I have never felt this much gravity coming from Mother-Father Sun before. Something must be wrong!"

SUN: It is only to remind you, Pluto, that wherever you go, you are forever held within my gravitational embrace."

PLUTO: "Mother-Father Sun! It is you!"

SUN: "Yes, my *dwarf planet*."

PLUTO: "You just called me a dwarf planet! Am I really a dwarf planet? Am I *your* dwarf planet?"

SUN: "Indeed you are! Mercury, Venus, Earth, Mars, Jupiter, Saturn, Uranus, and Neptune are NOT dwarf planets, but you are."

PLUTO: "What, then, makes me a dwarf planet?"

SUN: "A dwarf planet is very much like a regular planet. It is big enough to be round, but it is too small to clear its own path, so your orbit is a bit messier than the rest.

PLUTO: (sadly) "So, I guess I'm not a *real* planet."

SUN: "Oh, dear one, you are my dwarf planet, and I love you just the way you are. . . Besides, there is something far more important than size when you are a member of this family."

PLUTO: "What is that?"

SUN: "It is something that your Comet Friend shares, too."

**ICY COMET: "What? You mean me?????"**

SUN: "Yes, you, dear Comet. What you and Pluto all share with the big planets is *my loving gravitational embrace*. That is what holds all of you in your orbits!"

**PLUTO and ICY COMET** (look at each other and jump for joy!).

SUN: "It is true that you, Pluto, are different from the rest. Your orbit is slanted because you came to me from outside my original family of planets. You see, *I adopted you*. Yes, dear Pluto, I adopted you. And now, I hold you in my gravitational embrace just like I hold all the rest. . . So, go now, dear one, and return to your orbit in the company of your Friend. I believe you are overdue for a nap."

NARRATOR: "Pluto and Icy Comet happily returned to the outer reaches of the Solar System, where Pluto promptly fell asleep, dreaming happy dreams, as planets and dwarf planets are prone to do. . . . But wait! Our story is not yet over! . . .

Many years have passed since that grand adventure. Icy Comet is still seeing how close it can fly by planets and dwarf planets without risking capture. And Pluto is still orbiting on a slant. . . But now, whenever Icy Comet visits Pluto, this is how they greet one another:"

PLUTO: "Ho there, Icy Comet!"

COMET: "Ho there, Dwarf Planet Pluto!"

**All CHARACTERS:** bow to audience.

## PLUTO PARABLE

### Role of Generic Planet (in bold)

*NOTE TO GENERIC PLANET: You are not a main character, but enter the action in the middle of the script. You speak on just two occasions. So carry a chair to the side of the stage now and stay seated except for your brief part. What is printed here is only that portion of the script that pertains to you, with your two lines set off in bold. So sit back and enjoy the parts that come before and after yours.*

### Script

**GENERIC PLANET: (Stand up and move onto the stage as the narrator begins to talk about the journey to the planets.)**

NARRATOR: Pluto was happy to comply. As soon as the gravity was turned down, Icy Comet curved a long icy tail around the little planet. Thus began Pluto's journey toward the very center of the solar system, in the company of a comet. One by one, Pluto and Icy Comet would meet and greet the other planets.

COMET (move with Pluto over to the generic planet character): "Ho there, Neptune. Please tell us how you know that you are a planet."

NARRATOR: "Neptune flashed its loveliest hue of sea-blue color and said."

**GENERIC PLANET: "How do I know I am a planet? Well! Whenever I look inward, toward my Mother-Father Sun, I can see all my sibling planets, like boats sailing across**

**the surface of a sea. That is how I know that I am a true planet of this solar system."**

COMET: "Thank you, Neptune. You have answered our question. Goodbye."

PLUTO: "That is not how I see the other planets. I see them through my slanted orbit. They look like snowflakes swirling in a blizzard, every which way!"

NARRATOR: The journey continued. Icy Comet called out to each planet the same way, and each time the response left Pluto feeling less and less like a planet. Uranus claimed to be a planet because of thick clouds --; thick clouds that Pluto did not share. For Saturn it was rings that glistened silver and gold in the light of the Sun. For Jupiter it was size. Earth pointed out that its dinosaurs all depended on green leaves that ultimately depended on the energy of the Sun. Venus was pleased to show how bright the Sun's light reflected off its clouds.

NARRATOR: By now the two travelers were becoming uncomfortably hot. Icy Comet worried about melting if they lingered long this close to the Sun.

COMET: "Only one more planet to go! And then we can retreat to cooler realms!"

COMET (go up to generic planet): "Ho there, Mercury. Please tell us how you know that you are a planet."

**GENERIC PLANET: "Well! I know I am a planet because my surface temperature is hot like my Mother-Father Sun. It is hot enough to melt lead. That's how I know!"**

PLUTO: "I am not at all hot — at least not when I am in my own orbit."

COMET: "Thank you , Mercury. You have answered our question. Goodbye."

**GENERIC PLANET:** (You may nod to Comet, then return to your seat.)

**GENERIC PLANET:** (At end of play, join the other characters for a bow.)

## PLUTO PARABLE

### Role of Sun (in bold)

*NOTE TO SUN: You are not a main character, but enter the action late in the middle of the script, having a dialogue with Pluto. But in your last quotation, you **SPEAK THE PUNCHLINE** (about Pluto being an **adopted** planet). So you are very important. Make sure your voice is clear and you face the audience to speak it. In fact, you might begin each response to Pluto by speaking toward Pluto, then turn your face toward the audience to finish it. To prepare, **carry a chair** to the side of the stage now and stay seated until your time comes up. What is printed here is only that portion of the script that pertains to you, with your part set off in **bold**. So sit back and enjoy the parts that come before and after yours. When **MERCURY** is talking with Icy Comet, that is your signal that your part begins very soon.*

*HELPFUL HINT: You are a noble, somewhat reserved being, but also have a deep parental love for your planets. Basically, after Comet and Pluto have finished speaking to Mercury and begun their return to the outer solar system, you will start acting, when the narrator reads , “All of a sudden their journey came to a standstill.” You might want to stretch out an arm toward Pluto with a “halt” gesture at that moment.*

## **Script (late, pertaining to Sun; Sun speaks the BOLD)**

COMET: "Thank you , Mercury. You have answered our question. Goodbye."

NARRATOR: Icy Comet turned sharply, with Pluto still snug in the curve of its tail. The two headed back toward the cool relief of the outer solar system.

PLUTO: "Oh, Icy Comet! Our journey has ended, and I am quite sure now that I am not a planet."

**SUN: (enter stage now, and where script says "all of a sudden" stretch out your arm as if to signal "halt")**

NARRATOR: There was nothing Icy Comet could do to comfort Pluto, except stroke the would-be planet tenderly with a somewhat melted icy tail. . . *ALL OF A SUDDEN* their journey came to a standstill. Neither Pluto nor Icy Comet could move, even an inch. Something was holding them back.

PLUTO: "Whew! I have never felt this much gravity coming from Mother-Father Sun before. Something must be wrong!"

**SUN: "It is only to remind you, Pluto, that wherever you go, you are forever held within my gravitational embrace."**

PLUTO: "Mother-Father Sun! It is you!"

**SUN: "Yes, my *dwarf planet*."**

PLUTO: "You just called me a dwarf planet! Am I really a dwarf planet? Am I *your* dwarf planet?"

**SUN: "Indeed you are! Mercury, Venus, Earth, Mars, Jupiter, Saturn, Uranus, and Neptune are NOT dwarf planets, but you are."**

PLUTO: "What, then, makes me a dwarf planet?"

**SUN: "A dwarf planet is very much like a regular planet. It is big enough to be round, but it is too small to clear its own path, so your orbit is a bit messier than the rest."**

PLUTO: (sadly) "So, I guess I'm not a *real* planet."

**SUN: "Oh, dear one, you are my dwarf planet, and I love you just the way you are. . . Besides, there is something far more important than size when you are a member of this family."**

PLUTO: "What is that?"

**SUN: "It is something that your Comet Friend shares, too."**

ICY COMET: "What? You mean me?????"

**SUN: "Yes, you, dear Comet. What you and Pluto all share with the big planets is *my loving gravitational embrace*. That is what holds all of you in your orbits!"**

PLUTO and ICY COMET (look at each other and jump for joy!).

**SUN: "It is true that you, Pluto, are different from the rest. Your orbit is slanted because you came to me from outside my original family of planets. You see, *I adopted you*. Yes, dear Pluto, I adopted you. And now, I hold you in my gravitational embrace just like I hold all the rest. . . So, go now, dear one, and return to your orbit in the company of your Friend. I believe you are overdue for a nap."**

NARRATOR: "Pluto and Icy Comet happily returned to the outer reaches of the Solar System, where Pluto promptly fell asleep, dreaming happy dreams, as planets and dwarf planets are prone to do. . . . But wait! Our story is not yet over! . . .

Many years have passed since that grand adventure. Icy Comet is still seeing how close it can fly by planets and dwarf planets without risking capture. And Pluto is still orbiting on a slant. . . But now, whenever Icy Comet visits Pluto, this is how they greet one another:"

PLUTO: "Ho there, Icy Comet!"

COMET: "Ho there, Dwarf Planet Pluto!"

**All CHARACTERS:** bow to audience.