

Pluto's Identity Crisis

A Great Story Parable

(long version; kids can act this)

By Connie Barlow & Bella Downey

www.TheGreatStory.org/Pluto.html

Script for 4 - 12 children to act out

Revised March 2007

NOTE TO FACILITATOR:

This **12-part script** is meant to be acted out by elementary or middle-school children who can **read well**. It requires no advance preparation (although you might want to distribute colorful scarves to at least the 2 main characters, and a yellow scarf to the Sun). Give the narrator role to the best reader (or do it yourself), and give Pluto and Comet roles to 2 other excellent readers. The Sun should also read very well. Children who are less adept readers can be given the roles of the 8 planets. If there are fewer children than parts, have some of the kids play 2 or more planets.

NOTE: This parable is intended to be an excellent way to **teach about the science of why Pluto, in 2006, was switched from being a planet to a dwarf planet**. It is also a great way to teach about **adoption in a very positive way**. So you might want to use this parable as a way to open up that discussion.

“Pluto Parable”: NARRATOR

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: [the play begins with you reading below:]

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 cross 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: "No, I won't tell. And, hey, I'm sorry I said anything. You know, I might be wrong."

NARRATOR: "Icy Comet was now sad for having made Pluto feel bad. But suddenly there came an idea."

COMET: "Wow! 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 ..."

NEPTUNE: "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: Icy Comet was silent, then offered brightly:

COMET: "Pluto, let's continue our journey into the solar system. I bet you are brave enough so that YOU will be the one to call out when next we encounter a planet!"

NARRATOR: Pluto was indeed brave enough. As they approached the next planet, it was Pluto who called out.

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

URANUS: "I know I am a planet because I am wrapped in thick clouds of gases, just like my Mother-Father Sun."

PLUTO: "I do not have thick clouds of gases! I wonder if that means that I am not a planet?"

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

NARRATOR: "The journey continued, and with each encounter, Pluto felt less and less like a planet."

PLUTO: "Ho there, Saturn! Please tell us how you know that you are a planet."

SATURN: "Oh, that is easy! Look how beautifully the light of Mother-Father Sun shines on my lovely rings. They glisten silver and gold! That is how I know I am a planet."

PLUTO: "I do not have rings. I do not have anything that glistens silver and gold."

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

NARRATOR: The journey continued. An enormous planet with orange and brown bands loomed ahead.

PLUTO: "Ho there, Jupiter! Please tell us how you know that you are a planet."

JUPITER: "I will be glad to tell you how I know that I am a planet. You see, I am nearly as big as my Mother-Father Sun. That is what makes me a planet!"

PLUTO: "Oh no! I am not big. Does that mean I am not a planet?"

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

NARRATOR: The journey continued. Something red was now coming into view.

PLUTO: "Ho there, Mars! Please tell us how you know that you are a planet."

MARS: "I know I am a planet, because, because . . . well, because I know I am a planet! That is how!"

PLUTO: "Oh dear! I do not have such confidence! Maybe I am too confused to be a real planet."

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

NARRATOR: The journey continued. A blue-and-white pearl of a planet was coming into view. It had splotches of color that no other planet had: brilliant green.

PLUTO: "Ho there, Earth! Please tell us how you know that you are a planet."

EARTH: "Certainly! Just look at my lovely green plants. Look at the tall trees on land and look at the beautiful green algae in the oceans. Plants are green so that they can absorb the sunlight coming from Mother-Father Sun. And then they turn that sunlight into energy to make plant food. That is exactly how I know that I am a planet!"

PLUTO: "Oh no! I don't have any green plants! That must mean I am not a planet."

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

NARRATOR: "Pluto and Icy Comet continued their journey."

PLUTO: "Ho there, Venus! Please tell us how you know that you are a planet."

VENUS: "With pleasure. Just look at me! I am veiled with beautiful thick clouds. Do you see how bright and lovely my clouds shine in the light of Mother-Father Sun? This is how I know that I am a planet."

PLUTO: "I don't have bright shining clouds!"

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

NARRATOR: "The journey continued. 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! Then we can return to the cool relief of the outer solar system!"

PLUTO: "Ho there, Mercury! Please tell us how you know that you are a planet. And please be quick about it, so that my Icy Comet friend doesn't melt!"

MERCURY: "Hot! I am hot! 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. Now Pluto cried out in despair:"

PLUTO: "Oh, Icy Comet! Our journey has ended, and I am quite sure 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 — not 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 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!"

NARRATOR: "The end!"

ALL CHARACTERS: bow to audience.

"Pluto Parable": PLUTO

NOTE TO PLUTO: You are a main character. You enter stage at the beginning and stay on the stage the entire time. 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 each statement (in **bold**), 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: "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 cross through that surface at an angle — sometimes above the other planets and sometimes below."

COMET: "And unlike the others, sometimes 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: "No, I won't tell. And, hey, I'm sorry I said anything. You know, I might be wrong.

NARRATOR: "Icy Comet was now sad for having made Pluto feel bad. But suddenly there came an idea."

COMET: "Wow! 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."

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 ..."

NEPTUNE: "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: Icy Comet was silent, then offered brightly:

COMET: "Pluto, let's continue our journey into the solar system. I bet you are brave enough so that YOU will be the one to call out when next we encounter a planet!"

NARRATOR: Pluto was indeed brave enough. As they approached the next planet, it was Pluto who called out.

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

URANUS: "I know I am a planet because I am wrapped in thick clouds of gases, just like my Mother-Father Sun."

PLUTO: "I do not have thick clouds of gases! I wonder if that means that I am not a planet?"

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

NARRATOR: "The journey continued, and with each encounter, Pluto felt less and less like a planet."

PLUTO: "Ho there, Saturn! Please tell us how you know that you are a planet."

SATURN: "Oh, that is easy! Look how beautifully the light of Mother-Father Sun shines on my lovely rings. They glisten silver and gold! That is how I know I am a planet."

PLUTO: "I do not have rings. I do not have anything that glistens silver and gold."

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

NARRATOR: The journey continued. An enormous planet with orange and brown bands loomed ahead.

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JUPITER: "I will be glad to tell you how I know that I am a planet. You see, I am nearly as big as my Mother-Father Sun. That is what makes me a planet!"

PLUTO: "Oh no! I am not big. Does that mean I am not a planet?"

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MARS: "I know I am a planet, because, because . . . well, because I know I am a planet! That is how!"

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

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EARTH: "Certainly! Just look at my lovely green plants. Look at the tall trees on land and look at the beautiful green algae in the oceans. Plants are green so that they can absorb the sunlight coming from Mother-Father Sun. And then they turn that sunlight into energy to make plant food. That is exactly how I know that I am a planet!"

PLUTO: "Oh no! I don't have any green plants! That must mean I am not a planet."

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

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PLUTO: "Ho there, Venus! Please tell us how you know that you are a planet."

VENUS: "With pleasure. Just look at me! I am veiled with beautiful thick clouds. Do you see how bright and lovely my clouds shine in the light of Mother-Father Sun? This is how I know that I am a planet."

PLUTO: "I don't have bright shining clouds!"

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

NARRATOR: "The journey continued. 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! Then we can return to the cool relief of the outer solar system!"

PLUTO: "Ho there, Mercury! Please tell us how you know that you are a planet. And please be quick about it, so that my Icy Comet friend doesn't melt!"

MERCURY: "Hot! I am hot! 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. Now Pluto cried out in despair:"

PLUTO: "Oh, Icy Comet! Our journey has ended, and I am quite sure 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: (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 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”: ICY COMET

NOTE TO COMET: You are a main character. You enter the stage at the very beginning and are on stage the entire time. You start off as a proud, somewhat rude comet, but then you become kind and friendly when you realize that you made Pluto very sad.

*Listen to the narrator carefully, as you may be described as taking some action. After you finish a statement, and if you see no **bold** words for awhile, look up from your script and enjoy simply watching the other characters. 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.

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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 cross through that surface at an angle, sometimes above the other planets and sometimes below."

COMET: "And unlike the others, sometimes 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: "No, I won't tell. And, hey, I'm sorry I said anything. You know, I might be wrong."

NARRATOR: "Icy Comet was now sad for having made Pluto feel bad. But suddenly there came an idea."

COMET: "Wow! 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."

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COMET: (Curve scarf or arm around Pluto. Move together toward a new planet who comes on stage.)

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

NEPTUNE: "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: Icy Comet was silent, then offered brightly:

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NARRATOR: Pluto was indeed brave enough. As they approached the next planet, it was Pluto who called out.

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URANUS: "I know I am a planet because I am wrapped in thick clouds of gases, just like my Mother-Father Sun."

PLUTO: "I do not have thick clouds of gases! I wonder if that means that I am not a planet?"

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

NARRATOR: "The journey continued, and with each encounter, Pluto felt less and less like a planet."

PLUTO: "Ho there, Saturn! Please tell us how you know that you are a planet."

SATURN: "Oh, that is easy! Look how beautifully the light of Mother-Father Sun shines on my lovely rings. They glisten silver and gold! That is how I know I am a planet."

PLUTO: "I do not have rings. I do not have anything that glistens silver and gold."

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

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JUPITER: "I will be glad to tell you how I know that I am a planet. You see, I am nearly as big as my Mother-Father Sun. That is what makes me a planet!"

PLUTO: "Oh no! I am not big. Does that mean I am not a planet?"

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

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PLUTO: "Ho there, Mars! Please tell us how you know that you are a planet."

MARS: "I know I am a planet, because, because . . . well, because I know I am a planet! That is how!"

PLUTO: "Oh dear! I do not have such confidence! Maybe I am too confused to be real planet."

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

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PLUTO: "Ho there, Earth! Please tell us how you know that you are a planet."

EARTH: "Certainly! Just look at my lovely green plants. Look at the tall trees on land and look at the beautiful green algae in the oceans. Plants are green so that they can absorb the sunlight coming from Mother-Father Sun. And then they turn that sunlight into energy to make plant food. That is exactly how I know that I am a planet!"

PLUTO: "Oh no! I don't have any green plants! That must mean I am not a planet."

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

NARRATOR: "Pluto and Icy Comet continued their journey."

PLUTO: "Ho there, Venus! Please tell us how you know that you are a planet."

VENUS: "With pleasure. Just look at me! I am veiled with beautiful thick clouds. Do you see how bright and lovely my clouds shine in the light of Mother-Father Sun? This is how I

know that I am a planet."

PLUTO: "I don't have bright shining clouds!"

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

NARRATOR: "The journey continued. 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! Then we can return to the cool relief of the outer solar system!"

PLUTO: "Ho there, Mercury! Please tell us how you know that you are a planet. And please be quick about it, so that my Icy Comet friend doesn't melt!"

MERCURY: "Hot! I am hot! 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. Now Pluto cried out in despair:"

PLUTO: "Oh, Icy Comet! Our journey has ended, and I am quite sure 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 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: NEPTUNE

NOTE TO NEPTUNE: You are not a main character. You come on for just a brief time. So wait until you hear Narrator reading the part below. At that time you come on stage and get ready to speak.

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 ..."

NEPTUNE: "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."

NEPTUNE: (Leave the stage, sit down, and watch the rest of the play.)

Pluto Parable: URANUS

NOTE TO URANUS: You are not a main character. You come on for just a brief time. So wait until NEPTUNE leaves the stage. At that time you come on stage and get ready to speak.

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: Icy Comet was silent, then offered brightly:

COMET: "Pluto, let's continue our journey into the solar system. I bet you are brave enough so that YOU will be the one to call out when next we encounter a planet!"

NARRATOR: Pluto was indeed brave enough. As they approached the next planet, it was Pluto who called out.

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

URANUS: "I know I am a planet because I am wrapped in thick clouds of gases, just like my Mother-Father Sun."

PLUTO: "I do not have thick clouds of gases! I wonder if that means that I am not a planet?"

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

URANUS: (Leave the stage, sit down, and watch the play)

Pluto Parable: SATURN

NOTE TO SATURN: You are not a main character. You come on for just a brief time. So wait until URANUS leaves the stage. At that time you come on stage and get ready to speak.

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

NARRATOR: "The journey continued, and with each encounter, Pluto felt less and less like a planet."

PLUTO: "Ho there, Saturn! Please tell us how you know that you are a planet."

SATURN: "Oh, that is easy! Look how beautifully the light of Mother-Father Sun shines on my lovely rings. They glisten silver and gold! That is how I know I am a planet."

PLUTO: "I do not have rings. I do not have anything that glistens silver and gold."

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

SATURN: (Leave the stage, sit down, and watch the rest of the play.)

Pluto Parable: JUPITER

NOTE TO JUPITER: You are not a main character. You come on for just a brief time. So wait until SATURN leaves the stage. At that time you come on stage and get ready to speak.

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

NARRATOR: The journey continued. An enormous planet with orange and brown bands loomed ahead.

PLUTO: "Ho there, Jupiter! Please tell us how you know that you are a planet."

JUPITER: "I will be glad to tell you how I know that I am a planet. You see, I am nearly as big as my Mother-Father Sun. That is what makes me a planet!"

PLUTO: "Oh no! I am not big. Does that mean I am not a planet?"

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

JUPITER: (Leave the stage, sit down, and watch the rest of the play.)

Pluto Parable: MARS

NOTE TO MARS: You are not a main character. You come on for just a brief time. So wait until JUPITER leaves the stage. At that time you come on stage and get ready to speak.

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

NARRATOR: The journey continued. Something red was now coming into view.

PLUTO: "Ho there, Mars! Please tell us how you know that you are a planet."

MARS: "I know I am a planet, because, because . . . well, because I know I am a planet! That is how!"

PLUTO: "Oh dear! I do not have such confidence! Maybe I am too confused to be real planet."

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

MARS: (Leave the stage, sit down, and watch the rest of the play.)

Pluto Parable: EARTH

NOTE TO EARTH: You are not a main character. You come on for just a brief time. So wait until MARS leaves the stage. At that time you come on stage and get ready to speak.

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

NARRATOR: The journey continued. A blue-and-white pearl of a planet was coming into view. It had splotches of color that no other planet had: brilliant green.

PLUTO: "Ho there, Earth! Please tell us how you know that you are a planet."

EARTH: "Certainly! Just look at my lovely green plants. Look at the tall trees on land and look at the beautiful green algae in the oceans. Plants are green so that they can absorb the sunlight coming from Mother-Father Sun. And then they turn that sunlight into energy to make plant food. That is exactly how I know that I am a planet!"

PLUTO: "Oh no! I don't have any green plants! That must mean I am not a planet."

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

EARTH: (Leave the stage, sit down, and watch the rest of the play.)

Pluto Parable: VENUS

NOTE TO VENUS: You are not a main character. You come on for just a brief time. So wait until EARTH leaves the stage. At that time you come on stage and get ready to speak.

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

NARRATOR: "Pluto and Icy Comet continued their journey."

PLUTO: "Ho there, Venus! Please tell us how you know that you are a planet."

VENUS: "With pleasure. Just look at me! I am veiled with beautiful thick clouds. Do you see how bright and lovely my clouds shine in the light of Mother-Father Sun? This is how I know that I am a planet."

PLUTO: "I don't have bright shining clouds!"

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

VENUS: (Leave the stage, sit down, and watch the rest of the play.)

Pluto Parable: MERCURY

NOTE TO MERCURY: You are not a main character. You come on for just a brief time. So wait until VENUS leaves the stage. At that time you come on stage and get ready to speak.

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

NARRATOR: "The journey continued. 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! Then we can return to the cool relief of the outer solar system!"

PLUTO: "Ho there, Mercury! Please tell us how you know that you are a planet. And please be quick about it, so that my Icy Comet friend doesn't melt!"

MERCURY: "Hot! I am hot! 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."

VENUS: (Leave the stage, sit down, and watch the rest of the play.)

PLUTO PARABLE

Role of Sun (in bold)

NOTE TO SUN: You are not a main character. You come on stage only after Pluto and Icy Comet have visited all the planets. But you are very important, because it is you who helps Pluto feel like a real planet. Act like a loving parent when you speak your lines. But, until then, just sit back and enjoy watching the parts that come before yours.

*WHEN TO ENTER STAGE: After Icy Comet and Pluto have finished speaking to Mercury and have begun their return to the outer solar system, you will start acting. Make sure you are on stage and can put **one arm straight out** as if to mean "Stop!", when the narrator reads, "All of a sudden their journey came to a standstill."*

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)

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 [SUN: stretch out your arm]** their journey came to a standstill. Neither Pluto

nor Icy Comet could move, even an inch. Something was holding them back.

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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!"

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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?"

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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 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.