

Pluto Tells All by John Scalzi

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By Pluto, ex-planet, 4,500,000,000 years old

As told to John Scalzi

- I don't want to sound like I was surprised, but yeah, I was surprised. Because just before, they were talking about adding planets, right? Me and Eris and possibly Ceres, and it looked like that proposal was getting good play. So it looked good, and Charon and I thought it'd be okay to take a break and get a little alone time. So there we are relaxing and then suddenly my agent Danny's on the phone, telling me about the demotion. And I say to him, I thought you had this taken care of. That's what you told me. And he said, well, they took another vote. And then he started trying to spin the demotion like it was a positive. Look at Phil Collins, he said. He was an ex-member of Genesis but then he had this huge solo career. And I said, first, Phil Collins *sucks*, and second, I'm not exactly the lead singer of the solar system, am I? This isn't the Phil Collins scenario, it's the Pete Best scenario. I'm the Pete Best of the goddamn solar system. So I fired Danny. Now I'm with CAA.
- No, really. Phil Collins does suck. I'm sorry, but there it is. Good drummer, but a lot of his sound is from his producer, Hugh Padgham. You want to sound like Phil Collins? Have your producer drop in a noise gate. Done. And his *singing*. Oy. Funny thing is, in the 80s, Phil was in talks to play me in a science fiction comedy. He dropped out of it and made *Buster* instead. The movie deal fell apart after that. I lost some money on that. I have some issues with Phil Collins.
- The funny thing about the demotion is that I never actually wanted to be a planet, you know? I was out here minding my own business and then suddenly Clyde Tombaugh is staring at me. And the next thing I know, people start calling me and telling me I'm the newest planet. And I remember saying, I don't know if I want that responsibility. And they said, well, you can't not be a planet *now*, Walt Disney's already named a character after you. That's really what made me a planet. Not the astronomers, but that cartoon dog. People loved that dog.
- Ironically, I'm a cat person.
- I'm not going to sue. Who am I going to sue? You think the International Astronomical Union has any money to speak of? There's a reason the most popular event at an astronomer's conference is the free buffet.
- I try to look at it philosophically. Seventy-six years a fine run. And now I'm sort of the spokesperson for an entirely new class of objects: The dwarf planets. I understand it's meant to be something of a consolation prize, but you know what, there are more of us dwarf planets out here than anything else. If we're talking "one dwarf planet, one vote," you're going to find we're setting the agenda on a lot of things.
- I might make a comeback. There are some groups rebelling against the new definition right now. And there are a lot of people telling me they want to work with me. It's not *just* NASA anymore. Let's just say CAA is earning its fee.
- Yes, I'm excited about the New Horizons mission. But I wish you guys could have found a way to get one of the Voyagers my way. I wanted to listen that record.
- I think most people know I had no direct involvement in *The Adventures of Pluto Nash*. That

movie took place on *your* moon, folks.

- “Dwarf planet” is a misnomer. If I sit in your lap, you’re gonna feel me.
- “Plutoed”? Has anyone ever actually used that word? Even I don’t use it, and it *happened* to me. I think it’s some sort of urban myth.
- The worst thing about it all is that Eris feels like it’s her fault, like if she’d never been discovered then they wouldn’t have had an excuse to kick me out. She’s a sweet kid. She shouldn’t have to feel like it has anything to do with her.
- Yes, it’s cold this far out from the sun. But look, I’m mostly made of ice. I get any closer, I’d get melty, and then suddenly I’m the size of Vesta. Then I really *will* be a dwarf planet.
- No, no. Some of my best friends are asteroids.
- I’ll tell you when I think the problem started. A few years ago the director of the Rose Center for Earth and Space asked for a favor. A big fat unethical favor. I said to him that I was too big to fit in a jail cell but he was just the right size, and I didn’t want that for him. He got snippy, I got snippy back, but I thought that was that—it’s business. A little while later they do that panorama of the solar system of theirs, and I’ve been dropped from it, and the Rose Center spokesman is saying I’m the “King of the Trans-Neptunian Objects” in that patronizing way of his. I should have done the director his favor and let him rot when he got caught.
- It’s not what you think. Just because I’m named for the god of the underworld, it doesn’t mean I have *connections*.
- I have problems with the new definition, yeah. What is this “sweep your lane” shit? Let me toss Eris at your planet and see what sort of job Earth does sweeping the lane. I don’t think you’d like the result. Look, when people want you gone, they’ll use any excuse. Simple as that.
- Also, highly elliptical orbits are *fun*. You don’t know what you’re missing, people.
- One thing about something like this is you find out who your friends are. Jupiter couldn’t have been nicer during the whole thing. Saturn’s been a real sweetheart, too. And Neptune—well, we go way back. We’re simpatico, always have been. But some others, eh. Not so nice.
- No, I don’t want to name names. They know who they are.
- Oh, fine. Mercury. I got into the club, and Mercury was suddenly my best buddy. And I thought, well, okay—we’re close to the same size, both of us have eccentric orbits, we’ve both got a 3:2 resonance thing going on. Similarities, you know? So we hang out, get to know each other, fine, whatever. Then the IAU vote comes down and I haven’t heard from him since. Like the demotion might be catching or something. He may be right; he’s not exactly a brilliant lane-sweeper himself.
- Evidence? Well, you know. It’s not that he has an unusually thick iron core; it’s that he’s got an unusually thin silicate skin. Where did the rest of it go? So much for lane-sweeping. See, now you know why he’s so damn twitchy. A perfect example of small planet syndrome.
- No, I don’t have small planet syndrome. I have dwarf planet syndrome. Didn’t you get the memo?
- You know who else have been nice? Moons. If anyone had reason to be bitter about me being

made a planet, it was them. Hell, you can't tell me Titan doesn't deserve to be a planet: He's got an atmosphere, for God's sake. Not one of them ever said anything against me. The day I got demoted, Titan calls up, says "you wuz robbed" and then tells me dirty jokes until I nearly throw up laughing. We should swap him for Mercury.

- I have nothing bad to say about Earth. Good planet. Friendly. Too bad you people are making her all itchy recently. If I were her I would be considering a topical application of a meteor right about now. You're lucky she's tolerant.
- One of the good things about the whole fracas was once it was settled, Eris finally got a permanent name. Being called "Xena" really ticked her off. She said that when Uranus was discovered, his temporary name was "Georgium Sidus," after King George III of England. He got a national leader, she got a butch tv character. I told her I didn't really think she wanted to be named "Dubya," and she said I had a point. Then I said her moon would have been named "Cheney," and then she hit me.
- It hurts when you're hit by a dwarf planet. She's bigger than me, you know.
- I would have preferred the term "ice planet" myself. Some of the "dwarf" planets out here are going to mess with that definition once you discover them.
- No, I won't tell you where they are. Find them yourself. You guys are good at that.
- Life on other planets? You know, I'm paid really well not to comment about that.
- I will say that if there is life on other planets, that they'd wish you'd stop beaming "lite hits" music stations into space. I'm not the only one out here who has Phil Collins issues. Theoretically.