

## Pluto's Tale

Pluto summoned the Knights of his round table. As king of the Kuiper Belt, Pluto called the shots. His minions included Makemake, Quaoar, Orcus, Haumea, Ceres, and Eris. Pluto began his oration, "My fellow citizens of the Kuiper Belt, we and our brethren ice planets have a respite now that that drunken Hale-Bopp comet has left the confines of our beloved solar system. We will have a 2533-year break before we have to worry once again about that old sot making off with some of our smaller members. He did collect a few on his way out. Just enough to keep his drinks cold for the next several thousand years."

Eris interrupted, "Are you sure he's a drunk? He seemed pretty fixated on making off with as many ice planets as he could. That suggests to me a level of planning I don't associate with inebriation."

Pluto responded icily, "All the comets are drunks. That's why their orbits are so elliptical. They can't approximate a circle to save their souls. Why just a couple of years back that darn fool Schumacher-Levy 9 was so drunk, he ran off the road and crashed into Jupiter. At least he won't be stealing any more of our ice planet friends for his cocktails. I've had to dodge a few comets in my time and let me tell you, it's no walk in the park. Only the largest of us can stand up to those ice balls run amok. Our smaller Kuiper cousins are no match for those speed demons. That Halley guy is the worst of them with his frequent trips around the sun. You just know he does that to show the sun he's not afraid of being melted out of existence. Every 75-76 years he flips the sun a cosmic bird and makes off with a few of our ice planets as he waltzes in and out of our realm. He's due to bust through our belt next in 2061. So, we have plenty of time to try and clear a path that will spare most of our ice cousins."

Eris had another question, "Any chance we could get Neptune to run interference? You know, sort of step in front of old Halley and take him out of the game. Put him out of his misery? Give him the Schumacher-Levy treatment and take one more drunken comet off the map."

Pluto said, "It's a nice idea, but when I've asked before, Neptune had issues. The last time Halley came around, I was still a planet. In fact, I was the outermost planet. Since then, I've been downgraded to King of the Kuiper Belt. Dwarf planet status like you guys. Neptune was miffed that he wasn't the outer limit of the planets and now that he's got that status, it's gone to his head. Now he won't talk to me since I'm a dwarf. You can't win with that guy. I think he has ego problems. If you even try to just get his attention so you can start a conversation, he shakes his trident at you. I don't think we stand much of a chance of getting him to take one for the team and step in front of Halley. It would be a fine idea. I get tired of the comets treating us like their own

personal ice dispenser. On a brighter note, our annual ice carnival is coming up and our cavalcade of stars will be judging who is best in show again this year. Orcus won the sash last year. Leo was serving as head judge, and some felt that there was some sort of backstage deal between the two.”

Orcus chimed in, “You guys are just sore losers. There was no fix, I just had been working out a lot and was in great shape. Leo thought I sparkled like diamonds. It’s petty of you to suggest the competition wasn’t on the up and up.

Pluto responded, “We’ve appealed to the Zodiac council and requested Libra be this year’s head judge and they’ve agreed so things should be about as balanced as possible. If everyone will just put on a happy face, I’m sure we’ll make the judge’s job difficult. I think it’s hilarious when the Gemini twins can’t agree on whom they want to vote for. I will be sitting this year’s contest out as I’ve been rewarded enough just by being appointed King. I will serve as King of Carnival, however. Now everyone, back to your stations. Let’s start shining those ice surfaces and no Zamboni use. That is strictly against the rules. Hand-chipped and buffed ice surfaces are all that will be allowed as per our rules. Now, places everyone.

Submitted by Bob Rietschel, March 28, 2023

Click here to send your comments to [rrietschel@aol.com](mailto:rrietschel@aol.com).