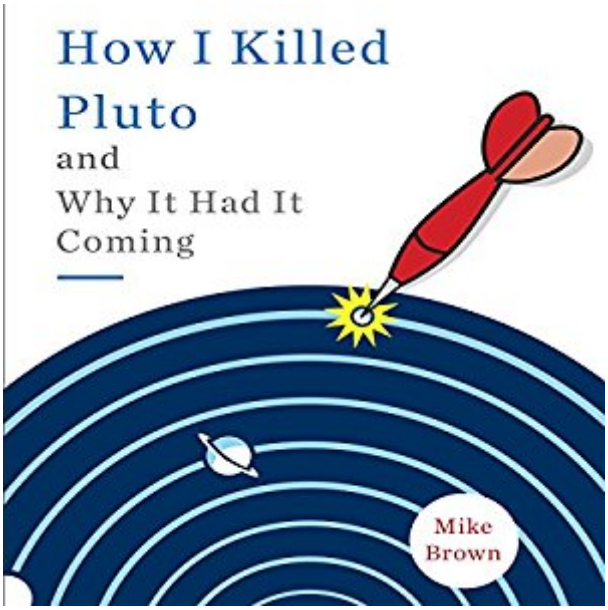
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How I Killed Pluto And Why It Had It Coming



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Synopsis

The solar system most of us grew up with included nine planets, with Mercury closest to the sun and Pluto at the outer edge. Then, in 2005, astronomer Mike Brown made the discovery of a lifetime: a 10th planet, Eris, slightly bigger than Pluto. But instead of its resulting in one more planet being added to our solar system, Brown’s find ignited a firestorm of controversy that riled the usually sedate world of astronomy and launched him into the public eye. The debate culminated in the demotion of Pluto from real planet to the newly coined category of "dwarf" planet. Suddenly Brown was receiving hate mail from schoolchildren and being bombarded by TV reporters - all because of the discovery he had spent years searching for and a lifetime dreaming about.Filled with both humor and drama, How I Killed Pluto and Why It Had It Coming is Mike Brown’s engaging first-person account of the most tumultuous year in modern astronomy - which he inadvertently caused. As it guides readers through important scientific concepts and inspires us to think more deeply about our place in the cosmos, it is also an entertaining and enlightening personal story: While Brown sought to expand our understanding of the vast nature of space, his own life was changed in the most immediate, human ways by love, birth, and death. A heartfelt and personal perspective on the demotion of everyone’s favorite farflung planet, How I Killed Pluto and Why It Had It Coming is the book for anyone, young or old, who has ever dreamed of exploring the universe - and who among us hasn’t?

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

This is an entertaining and easily-understood account of how Pluto came to be demoted from

"Planet" to "dwarf planet" status. The author was one of the people directly responsible for Pluto's new status. He gives a clear account of how it came about, and why.A major parallel story in the book is how the author discovered what was briefly thought to be the Tenth Planet. His discovery precipitated the change in both its, and Pluto's, status. The story is nicely told, in such a way that the technical details are described in an understandable way; and the personal drama that goes along with it is well told, too.If you like astronomy or are simply interested in how the universe works, I think you will find this a fun and informative book.

Is Pluto a planet? Whatever you think the answer may be is really beside the point; the question itself is fascinating and worth exploring.Deciding what is and is not a planet may seem simple enough to those who have never given the matter any thought, but Brown opens by reviewing just how challenging the issue has been throughout history. As a species, we've been looking at up the skies for a long, long time. Over that time, our understanding of what it was we were seeing has changed as we've learned more and more about our universe and how it works. It's only natural that such change will continue to occur as we continue to learn more and more about what we see when we look up. And that's what Brown presents us with in this book; while he takes a stand on Pluto's planethood, for me the real core of the book was the process of discovery, the broadening of the solar system and human understanding of it, and how what we are continuing to learn forces us to rethink what we thought we already knew. Easy to follow even for a lay reader, at times the book feels more like a novel than a recounting a scientific work due to the thrill of discovering new stellar bodies it contains as well as the human tension from his personal life during the same period that Brown intersperses with his work searching for new planets. I can therefore recommend the book even for people who don't care whether Pluto is a planet or not, because it isn't just about taking a position in that debate, but about discovery in space and what it means for us here on this planet.

Even better than I thought, this is the story of how little Pluto ceased being a planet. Not truly the killer of Pluto, but the finder of multiple Solar System bodies, Mike Brown takes on his quest of discovery. I was fortunate to attend one of his lectures on Eris, the day after the name was confirmed and his charming personality translates into this book beautifully. If you are curious about planets in general, Pluto in particular, or just enjoy a good story, then I recommend this book. You might even learn something real science along the way.

The human side of one of the key events in modern astronomy. A scientific thriller tossed with bits of

international intrigue and human interest.

If you like astronomy, this is fun book, a quick read, nicely mixing Brown’s professional work with stories of his love life and a new baby. A book that gives the inside view about how a search was mounted for new kuiper belt objects, preparing papers and announcements and a very interesting story about whether a Spanish astronomer jumped Brown’s claim to one of the new objects.With all the newly found objects each with two or three names, by the end of the book I was pretty confused, so I went to Wikipedia and pulled together the little table below. I’m including it since others may find it useful. Since the book was written, the size of pluto is now known very accurately since it was photographed by the New Horizon spacecraft . The press’ #1 question is, ’Is any newly found kuiper belt object bigger than pluto’? The current answer is Eris is almost exactly the same size as pluto (2% smaller dia), but 28% heavier. Only the first four below (along with Ceres) are recognized by the IAU as dwarf planets. The mass of Makemake will be known soon because just days ago it was announced that Makemake has been found to have a moon.Pluto dwarf planet 1,186 km (radius) .. 29 - 49 AU 248 yr .177 moon (mass)Eris dwarf planet 1,163 km (radius) .. 39 - 97 AU 558 yr .23 moon (mass)Makemake dwarf planet 715 km (radius) .. 38 - 52 AU 309 yr ---Haumea dwarf planet 575 - 718 km (radius) .. 35 - 51 AU 294 yr .054 moon (mass)Quaoar dwarf planet? 555 km (radius) .. 42 - 45 AU 286 yr .019 moon (mass)Sedna minor planet --- .. 76 - 936 AU 11,400 yr ---

The first half or so, as an engineer, I found the competition for new Solar System worlds exciting. The last part spent deciding how many planets and what their definition should be must be of interest only to astronomers.

If you like astronomy and like to read, this is a must-have for you!Mike Brown tells the tale about how the famous planet Pluto was "demoted" to the class of dwarf planet, through the actions of the International Astronomical Union (IAU) and how his research was a major part of that decision.It illustrates how science operates in the real world, while many people only see things through their emotional sunglasses.This book is especially well written, humorous and informative. It presumes a little science understanding in advance, but it unlikely anyone who is completely ignorant of science will buy this book anyway.Since NASAs New Horizons spacecraft is approaching rendevous with Pluto and her moons in less than three years, and carries on board a small capsule of the remains of Pluto’s discoverer, Clyde Tombaugh, this book would be timely reading over the next year or so.Treat yourself or someone you know who loves science to a fun time. Highly recommended!

I don’t know what made me pick this up, as it’s far outside my wheelhouse but I’m glad I did! The author takes information that could be dense and dull and gives it humanity. I had a a sentimental attachment to Pluto, as many people do. But now I understand why it’s not a planet & it makes total sense.

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