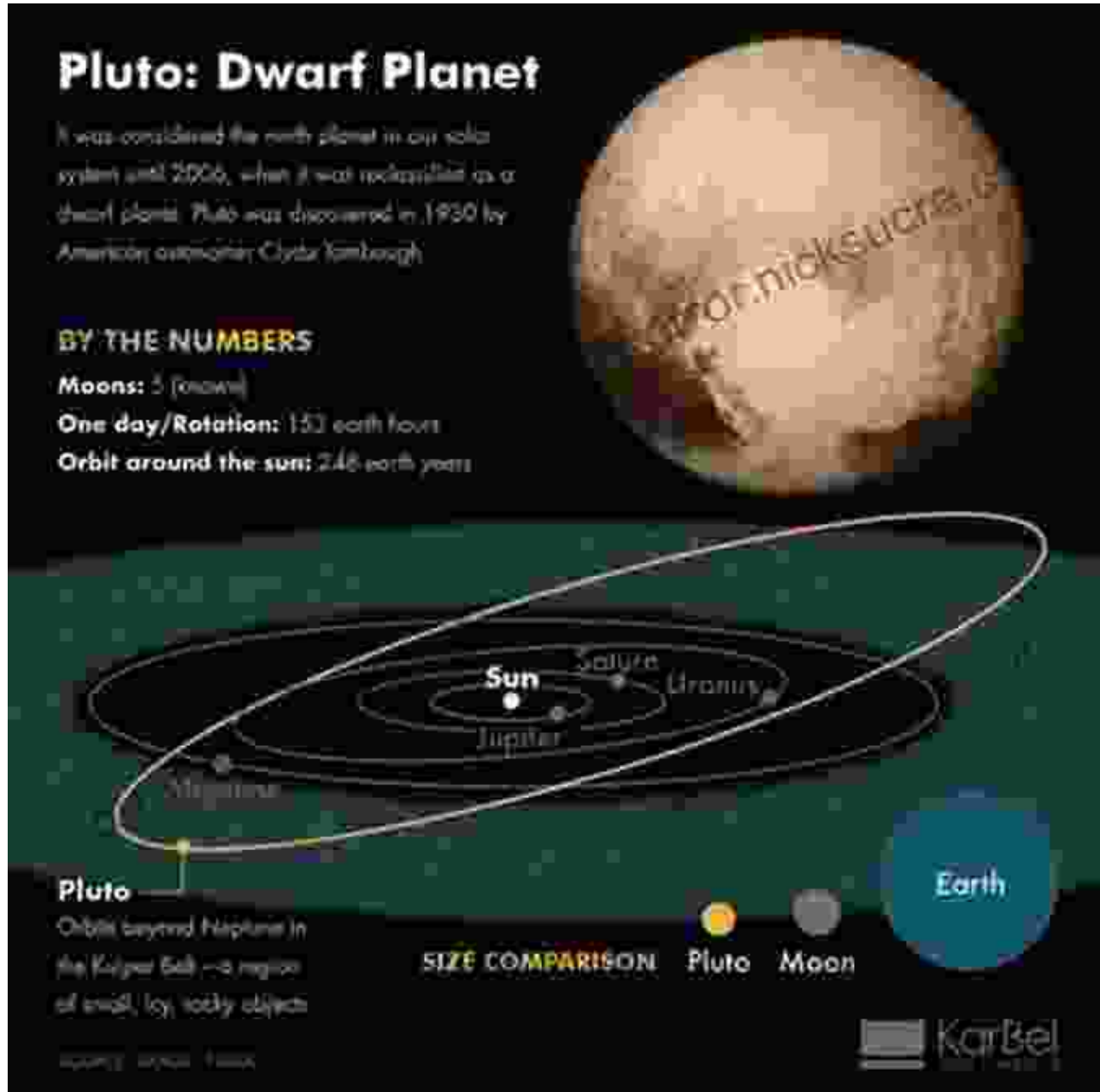


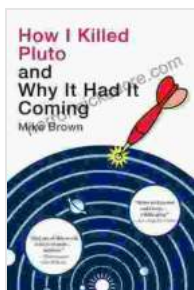
Pluto: The Ex-Planet and Why It Met Its Demise



The Discovery and Classification of Pluto

Pluto was discovered in 1930 by Clyde Tombaugh, a young astronomer at the Lowell Observatory in Arizona. Tombaugh was searching for a

hypothetical "Planet X" that was thought to be causing irregularities in the orbits of Uranus and Neptune.



How I Killed Pluto and Why It Had It Coming by Mike Brown

★ ★ ★ ★ ☆	4.6 out of 5
Language	: English
File size	: 1649 KB
Text-to-Speech	: Enabled
Screen Reader	: Supported
Enhanced typesetting	: Enabled
Word Wise	: Enabled
Print length	: 290 pages



Initially, Pluto was considered the ninth planet from the Sun. However, as more observations were made, astronomers began to realize that Pluto was much smaller and less massive than the other planets. In 1992, a new class of objects called "dwarf planets" was created, and Pluto was reclassified as one of them.

The Case Against Pluto

There are three main reasons why Pluto was demoted from planet status:

1. **Its small size:** Pluto is only about 1/5th the size of Earth and is smaller than some of the moons in our solar system, such as Ganymede and Titan.
2. **Its elliptical orbit:** Pluto's orbit around the Sun is highly elliptical, meaning that it takes an elongated path that brings it closer to the Sun than Neptune at times.

3. **Its resonant orbit:** Pluto's orbit is in a 3:2 resonance with Neptune, meaning that for every three orbits that Pluto makes around the Sun, Neptune makes two. This resonance keeps Pluto from colliding with Neptune, but it also means that Pluto's orbit is not independent.

The Evidence for Pluto's Demotion

In 2005, the International Astronomical Union (IAU) voted to reclassify Pluto as a dwarf planet. The IAU definition of a planet is as follows:

- It must orbit the Sun.
- It must have enough mass to be round.
- It must have cleared its orbit of other objects.

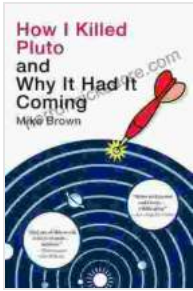
Pluto meets the first two criteria, but it fails the third. Pluto's orbit intersects with the orbits of several other objects, including the dwarf planet Eris. This means that Pluto has not cleared its orbit and is therefore not a planet.

The Legacy of Pluto

Pluto's demotion from planet status was controversial at the time, and some astronomers still argue that it should be considered a planet. However, the IAU's decision is based on sound scientific evidence, and it is unlikely that Pluto will ever be reclassified as a planet.

Despite its loss of planetary status, Pluto remains a fascinating object of study. It is the largest known dwarf planet in our solar system, and it has a number of unique features, such as its nitrogen-rich atmosphere and its large moon, Charon. Pluto is also a reminder that our understanding of the

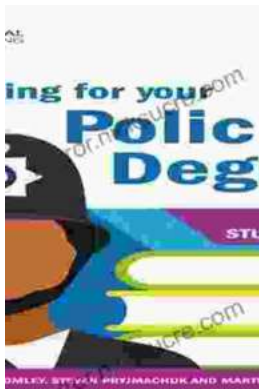
solar system is constantly evolving, and that new discoveries can lead to new insights.



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