

# The Heart of the Planet Pluto

Words: Gary McGath, Copyright July 14-15, 2015

Music: Fred Small, "Heart of the Appaloosa"

In the outer Solar System, past the giant balls of gas,  
There lies the distant Kuiper Belt, of thinly spread-out mass.  
And Percival L. Lowell said that Neptune's off its course.  
There's something massive pulling it; we've got to find its source!

Then Clyde Tombaugh found an object, called it Lowell's Planet X,  
Out at the very edge of what a telescope detects.  
This little dot on film received the symbol of P. L.  
And it got its name from Pluto, the ancient god of Hell.

New Horizons comes to greet it,  
Sending pictures across the great divide.  
"The planet is through," so they said at IAU,  
But the heart of the planet Pluto never died.

In the night came the astronomers to cast a careful eye  
With their logbooks and their telescopes directed at the sky.  
They ran their calculations, with disposition stern,  
And studied the distant planet, its mysteries to learn.

In the shadow of the mission the planet seemed to shrink,  
For Lowell's numbers were all wrong, or so they had to think.  
Its orbit was eccentric, in and outward it was hurled,  
And the word would come from IAU: This is no proper world!

## *Chorus*

They sent a resolution bringing anger, grief, and pain:  
It is no more a planet: Dwarf planet is its name.  
They condemned it to the Kuiper belt, as just an outsized stone.  
It hadn't cleared its neighborhood, and so it must be gone!

But a probe named New Horizons had been launched that very year.  
It would take almost a decade at Pluto to appear,  
And the old school saw its strategy, the thought came to their mind  
To wait until the flyby when they'd see what it would find.

## *Chorus*

Three billion miles of flying, through the Solar System hurled,  
The probe arrived at Pluto, past all the other worlds,  
At last it sent back pictures of every side and part  
And showed what none had guessed: it was a planet with a heart!

New Horizons sent the image of the heart so bright and clear.  
The planet might be frozen, but it was full of cheer.  
Yet a Balrog stood beside it, and Cthulhu lay below,  
Which proves there isn't anything man wasn't meant to know.

*Chorus*

Data sent back here is coming at a crawling data rate.  
At 4K bits a second, we will have a year to wait.  
The astronomers named Lowell and Tombaugh both would say,  
“They have given up our planet, but it won't go away.”

And now the final proof remains of New Horizons' worth  
As the data comes together in a map that's sent to Earth,  
Of the panoramic detail of every ridge and hill.  
Wait for all those pictures, the planet Pluto's living still!

*Chorus*