



## Cosmic Story of Pluto and Charon

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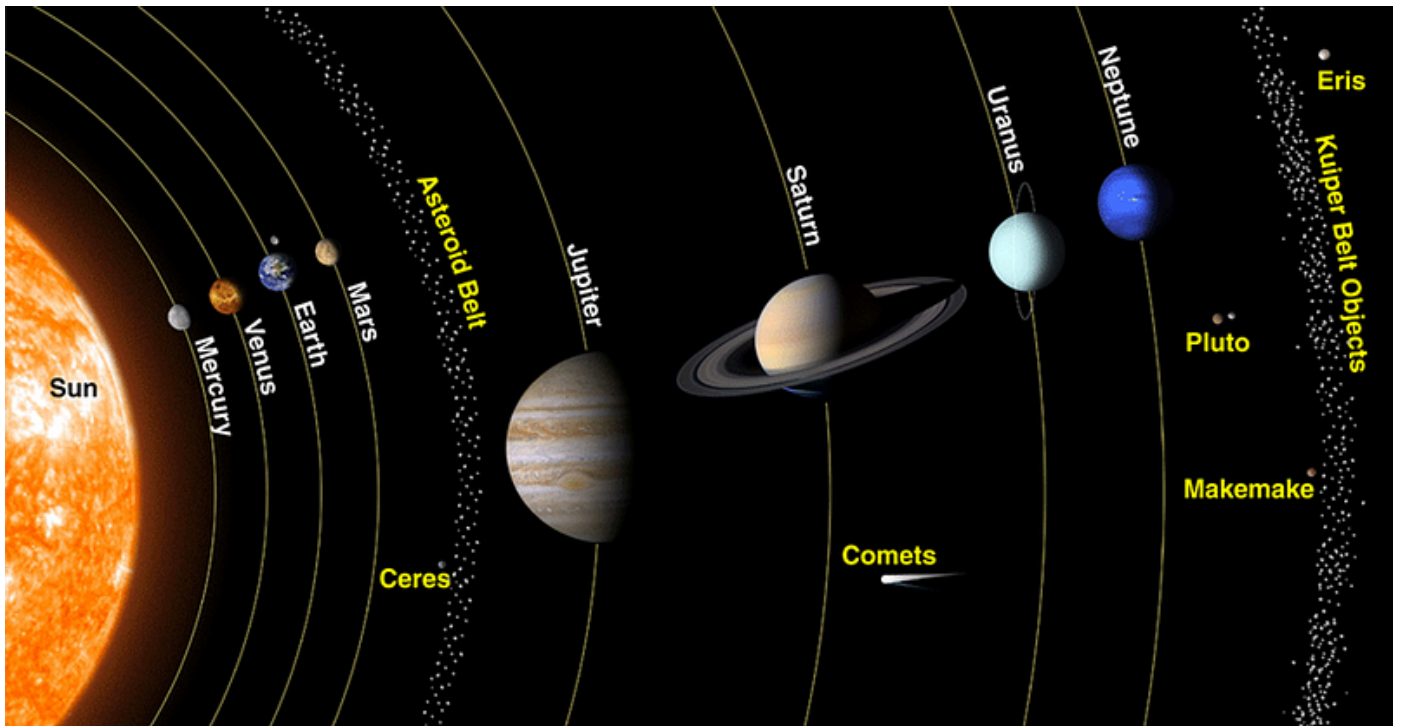
A recent study suggests that **Pluto's largest moon, Charon**, was formed after a violent collision between Pluto and another celestial body. This was followed by a **"kiss-and-capture"** event, where the two began orbiting each other.

- **Unusual Orbit:** Unlike Earth, whose moon orbits the planet, **Pluto and Charon** are considered a **"binary system"** where **they orbit around a common center of mass**, essentially **orbiting each other**, within the [Kuiper Belt](#) making their relationship unique in the solar system.
  - The **Kuiper Belt**, beyond Neptune's orbit, is a **cold region housing icy objects**, similar to the **asteroid belt** but farther from the Sun.
- **Pluto's Planetary Status:** Pluto, once the ninth planet, was reclassified as a **"dwarf planet"** in 2006 by the [International Astronomical Union](#).
  - [NASA's New Horizons mission](#) revealed surprising features on Pluto, such as **ice mountains, nitrogen glaciers**, and a heart-shaped region called [Tombaugh Regio](#), changing its image from a barren rock to a **dynamic, complex world**.
- **Moons of Pluto: Charon (largest in size), Nix, Hydra, Kerberos, and Styx.**

### Pluto:

- Discovered by Clyde Tombaugh in 1930.
- **Diameter:** 1,400 miles, smaller than Earth's Moon.
- A year on Pluto lasts **248 Earth years**; a day lasts **153 hours** (about 6 Earth days).
- The atmosphere consists of **nitrogen, methane, and carbon monoxide**, with a **blue tint and haze layers**.
- Surface temperature ranges from **-228°C to -238°C**, too cold to support life.

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