

SPACE WARP;

Some Far-Out Cosmic Speculations

Liao leaned forward until his reflection merged with the starfield beyond the viewport, his eyes blazing with the fever-light of a man who had glimpsed infinity and lived to talk about it.

"Isn't it true," he murmured, "that mathematics reduces the entire universe to a single point? At the risk of seeming heretical, mathematics doesn't just describe the universe — it actually devours it. Every galaxy, every quantum flutter, every heartbeat... gets collapsed into a dimensionless point of pure abstraction."

Bill's laugh cracked like orbital glass under pressure. He jabbed a finger toward the starry expanse visible framed in the viewport. "All this?" His voice stretched tautly as if it were a gravitational field at breaking point. "Is this merely a cosmic string that has been reduced to a mathematical pinprick? Liao, don't be so ridiculous!"

Liao merely shrugged, a faint smile ghosting his lips. "My intuitions outpace my explanations. I admit as much."

"At least you're honest," Bill grumbled, settling back in his grav-chair. "Nothing nauseates me more than charlatans baptizing their fevered dreams in pseudo-science."

Gus, who had been quiet until now, finally stirred, tightening his eyebrows. "Why torture ourselves with this cosmic masturbation? he flatly asked. Aren't all intellectualizations ultimately a waste of time? Every grand theory collapses sooner or later. We're mere insects trying to comprehend the ocean by analyzing droplets of rain."

The cabin's life support systems whispered their mechanical mantra as Bill exhaled, the sound of sterile air escaping from his lungs slowly, "Perhaps intellectualizations are our most beautiful disease," he mused with a ironic voice. "We're archaeological bacteria trying to decode the hieroglyphs of God. Reality towers over us because our consciousness is too small to climb it."

Liao nodded, a distant fire in his eyes growing dimmer. "No doubt, our quest for wisdom is laughable. But to gain any wisdom, we must go beyond the senses. Real mathematics isn't about what we see or feel, but about following threads of thought to places where conclusions might seem entirely senseless. That paradox keeps me awake as our starship journeys forward..."

His smile deepened, becoming almost predatory. "In that realm, we don't find answers. We find the questions that reality has been asking itself since we first existed."

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