Comfort in the Questions
Commission for ratiotangerang on twitter

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Summary: To unravel life is to question, a principal Dr. Ratio stays true to. Yet there are times where questions are intended to be unanswered and let his actions speak for its answer, as shown how 476 questions him things that are much deeper, different from how she used to be around him.

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"Veritas Ratio. Dr. Ratio. Ratio."

476 repeated his name like it was a magic spell, or rather a mathematical equation. She boredly spun herself in a spinny chair as she kept repeating it. Dizzy never felt, only a sliver of amusement as she did so. After a few spins, 476 stops and decides to sit upright and looks around the room she's currently in. The look in her eyes was one of curiosity and nonchalant, as she takes a good look at the renowned scholar of the Intelligentsia Guild, who's focused on reading a book, winding down after a shared errand together. His gaze, golden like molten metal or maybe a star she once saw in her travels, was sharp as he looked at the words amongst the pages. There's something about his name that's making 476 think more than she usually does. Veritas Ratio… Veritas Ratio… His name floats in her mind like a seafoam, it's easy to remember when she shrugs off the concept of names itself. Besides, she considers herself to not carry any of it aside from the numbers deeply embedded into her…

Dr. Ratio clears his throat as he sees that she's spacing out. He says, "Just how long will you repeat my name like that if you don't have something to ask?" With a thud, he closes his book and leaves it by the table as he stands up from his seat and walks towards the other end of the room where 476 is.

She blinks a few times as reality tugs her focus to come back to the scholar who's walking closer towards her, growing annoyed from how she said his name and variations of it repetitively. He lets out a huff of breath, thinking that she is really airheaded when she wasn't at her work mode. When he gets there, her back is facing him and he spins the chair back to make her face him. As always, she looks unfazed to daily musings like this, and so, like the usual she would rely on those internet slangs she chronically used in daily conversations like this.

“Annoyed because you were *ratio*-ed?” 476 starts

There it is again, as expected. Dr. Ratio sighs exasperatedly as he reminds her, “For the last time, 476, my name is not to be joked about.”

“*Aww*, I thought that you like that you’re more popular in the internet for your name,” 476 answers

“Do as you please, but don’t you do that to others, they may have less patience than me,” Dr. Ratio lightly scolds her, and she nods in agreement

After a moment of silence between them, 476 asks something that he didn’t expect her to ask of all things, “What nickname do you like the most?”

Name is one of the things that she cares about the least. To her, names are just mere words people used to identify themselves. Yet the irony of her asking such a question to him, where he gives her the freedom to call him whatever he pleases. Dr. Ratio gives her a questioning look as that question hangs in the air. But it’s a question nevertheless and he’s kind enough to answer them no matter how stupid it is. Questions are asked to gain knowledge, and he would treat it as such.

“I don’t mind which one, but Ratio is fine. What about *you*?’ Dr. Ratio answers simply like he is. Perhaps that he too doesn’t want to be called with complicated things, opted for the so-simple Ratio.

Once again, his name floats in the space of her mind. She hums in agreement, thinking that Ratio rolls over her tongue easily whenever she calls him. The blue-haired scholar thinks that she’s just acting normal, asking the most absurd of questions, but he feels deep inside that something’s bothering her. The silence between them ensues, and he decides to put one hand to her shoulder, making her look up to him.

“Overthinking is useless, it’ll get you nowhere,” Dr. Ratio advises

476 lets out a bright smile as if the daze leaves her almost immediately, “You advising me nicely this time?”

“Only this once,” his voice is a bit soft, perhaps he’s just a bit tired.

Their days of banter and working and spending time together leads them to have much deeper conversations at times. Started from him making her sit down as he's explaining to her many things that she didn't know existed, even though it's complicated he thoroughly explains it to her while keeping her to not getting bored when they have free time in between their jobs. 476 looks at him as he is doing the thing he's good at while having his gypsum head on. Seeing the head whenever he whips it out to cope with 476's blatant *stupidity* might cringe her, but there's something that intrigues her.

"Do you know that the eyes are the loneliest organs?" 476 asks idly

Not the molten gold color that looks back at her, but the empty off-white color of the gypsum head is the one who looks back at her as he turns around to look at her who's sitting, a hand to her chin onto and face scrunched up in disgust, or *cringe* in her slang dictionary.

"Your expression doesn't match your question, 476," Dr. Ratio answers, and he moves to put his chalk down before taking off his gypsum head, so that he can look at her properly. He doesn't know why, but he feels like he starts to feel less of the urge to wear one when he can't take it anymore.

Once off, 476 looks more relaxed as she idly continues, "So much that it sees, yet nothing was obtained. They didn't even know that they were a pair, a couple." There's something haunting in the words she just says to him, vague and full of questions on what she could refer to. "They're empty and hungry…"

Dr. Ratio looks at her.

476 looks at him.

Molten gold meets nebula.

The ones they see are crystal clear, yet no one dares to question first.

Until 476 opens her mouth once more to ask him.

"What did you see, Ratio?" the smile she had on her face was equally haunting, yet there's a spark of warmth in her gaze, as if she had already knew his answer

That question left him pondering for hours after that. Of course, he could just rationally answer that he's looking at *her* because she's talking with him. Yet he feels that carries a deeper meaning. One could set their eyes onto something as a form of motivation that sparks them to

move their body, like how he sees stupidity as a motivation to get them becoming a better person. But what about *her*? She who's there everytime he looks around? She who balances their banters with the uniqueness of her personality? That questioning makes his heart feel this distinctive warmth, along with the rising beats. He doesn't scold her much anymore, and becomes less annoyed… Familiarity? The signs of their relationship might be deepening over time? He denies that he feels such a thing with someone like her, but a part of him is actually relieved that he still feels these fragile emotions, when he was as stone-like as he claimed.

Many times Dr. Ratio had tried to tell 476 that it was her who he was looking at, but conveying it was a struggle as he knows that she'll joke about it to him at the end of the day, saying that he's smitten for her.

But that's the thing.

He's *indeed* smitten for her.

Shaking his head, Dr. Ratio decides to not think about it for a moment, as he walks through a series of hallways, wanting to find 476 who he didn't see for a whole day. The clicks of his shoes resound in the walls and the floor as he moves to a lounge room where everyone can see the holographic view of the ocean, with fishes swimming around. He could look at anything in this lounge, from the ambience of the lighting, the layout of the room where plush couches are situated strategically, or even at the holographic fishes, but his gaze remains at 476 who's engrossed at the virtual scene in front of her. What is she thinking as she looks at those fishes? Does it evoke something of a memory from her past? Was the sea and its creatures something she was interested in? Or she was just bored?

That's too many questions in his mind about her right now. But never he complained about it, he embraced them like it was dear to him.

"Did you have fun spacing out?" Dr. Ratio greets her

476 nods and says, "The fishies are interesting, come look with me."

He didn't say anything else as he looked away from her to the fishes swimming around. It's actually therapeutic, to disconnect from the hustle and bustle of life and let the scene relax their minds.

"I wonder how it feels to swim like those fishies. The sea is wide and they can swim whenever they go and not dissolve into seafoams…" her words is tinged with longing

There it is again.

That kind of words.

Dr. Ratio lets out a sigh, and moves closer to her. The thought of her actually away from him, dissolves into seafoam, makes his stomach churn in a way he didn't ever feel before. He then says to her, hand unconsciously reaching out to hold hers, a sign that he doesn't want that. "Then it's a sign that you shouldn't swim. I'd rather have you safe here."

476 turns away from the holographic scene to look at him, not once she flinches from his hand who held hers. Was that his way of saying that he prefers her to be here beside him? Those questions remained unanswered, but both of them knew that they had already answered it, true to their hearts.

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