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The Nature of Solar Flare Reconnection

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Solar flares are among the most energetic events in the solar system, capable of releasing over 10^{32} ergs in the forms of heating, energetic particles, and bulk motion. This energy release is known to be driven by magnetic reconnection, a plasma process that explosively heats (10^7 – 10^8 K) plasma that illuminates the reconnected magnetic structures. We present a new high-resolution, three-dimensional magnetohydrodynamics model of a solar flare performed with the ARM S code. In our model, the flare ribbon exhibits characteristic whorls that represent generated structures known as plasmoids that are thought to be important for particle acceleration. We furthermore show that the orientation of the flare loops reveals the orientation of the guide magnetic field that is thought to play a critical role in plasmoid structure and associated particle acceleration efficiency. We discuss implications for understanding