

1154-R1-1490 **Andy R. Magid***, Department of Mathematics, University of Oklahoma, 601 Elm Room 423,
Norman, OK 73019. *The Simplest Equation – Mathematical Science Fiction of Nicky Drayden.*

We discuss two remarkable metaphors for mathematics from Nicky Drayden's science fiction short story *The Simplest Equation*. The story concerns two young women in an advanced math class at a future Stanford: the narrator, an Earthling Mariah (like the author, a woman of color), and an interstellar extraterrestrial, Kwalla, who become study partners, and then friends. Kwalla teaches Mariah how to understand equations as stories and vice versa (the first metaphor) and then shows her how to use a device from her home planet that turns spoken equations/stories into evanescent crystalline displays (the second metaphor). As a consequence, Mariah, who has burned out as a math major, rediscovers her love of mathematics. The climax of the story involves Mariah creating the equation that tells the story of her relationship with Kwalla and then producing its crystalline realization.

No mathematical background is required to appreciate this charming tale of doing mathematics. It is suitable for readers from young adult on up. The published version of *The Simplest Equation* may be hard to locate. But an audio version read by Levar Burton is available at <https://player.fm/series/levar-burton-reads/ep-49-the-simplest-equation-by-nicky-drayden>. (Received September 15, 2019)