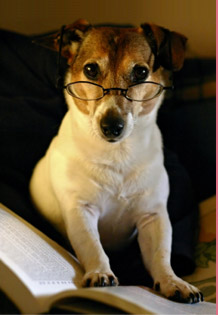
**Literature 4 VWO**

**Part 1**



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| |  | | --- | | **Calculating Love**  by Alicia d' Marvel  **In Brief** | | *Dara Bennett, the novel's young heroine, has just arrived in New York from the Midwest to take a position in a prestigious consulting firm. Her first assignment is with a high-tech company founded and operated by charismatic Blake Darcy. The two are deeply attracted to one another, but as in all romance novels not all goes smoothly. We pick up the story in Chapter 12 as Blake confronts Dara: Why, he wants to know, has she been avoiding him?* |   **Calculating Love**  ***Chapter 12*** Dara struggled against his grasp, but she could feel his arms tighten around her, his hard breath on her. She felt faint as the room began to tilt around her.  Once more Blake asked, “Why have you been hiding from me?” His voice was deep and sonorous, even threatening. “I…I…don’t…I don’t know,” she gasped. “Dara, you must tell me why you’ve been running away from me, why you haven’t answered my calls. Tell me,” he said in a commanding voice. “Let me go,” she gasped, and she struggled against his tightening hold. Finally, he released her, and she sagged against the wall, tears beginning to form around her eyes.  Blake was still breathing hard, his clear blue eyes gazing steadily at her.  She realized she was crying, gently, softly, as tears began to fall slowly down her cheeks.  “Dara,” he said huskily, taking her face in his hands. His long fingers grasped her chin. “Look at me. Look me in the face and tell me." Dara couldn't trust herself. She tried to look away, but he held her face firmly. Now she began to sob, tears coming unchecked.  “I don’t know what you mean,” she mumbled, as she tried not to look into his piercing blue eyes. She couldn't take the closeness of him, his searching gaze.  More tears came, new tears, and finally she pulled herself away from his grasp, collapsing into a nearby chair. Blake came to her, gently lifted her out of the chair and held her once more against his hard chest. She could feel the strong pulse of his heart as it beat against her own.   He put his lips against the top of her head and muttered thickly into her hair. “You must trust me,” he said huskily. “Tell me why you’re avoiding from me.” She was sobbing now. She struggled against the strength of him. Tears changed to panic: “Please, please, let me go!” she sobbed. How could she tell him what she saw, what she knew! “It’s none of your business!” she cried.  “It is my business,” Blake countered. “Everything about you is my business. I love you. Do you understand? I want to make my life with you,” he said softly but  firmly. She was weeping openly now; deep sobs shook her body.  Finally, reluctantly, Blake released her. She sagged down along the wall, her legs weak and trembling. Through a haze of tears, Dara could see only a blur in front of her. But she could feel his powerful presence, his intense blue eyes as he stared down at her.  She was terrified. She was a trapped animal.   “Oh, God, Dara,” he groaned. “I love you.” He came toward her with one long, stride and took hold of her again, grasping her face between his strong hands.  “Stay away from me,” she whispered, weakly, tears streaming down her cheeks.  But it was too late. His lips came down on hers, pushing ardently against her quivering mouth. He kissed her lips, her face, her eyes. He kissed the shining tears on her cheeks. He kissed her with a hard, desperate passion—the way she had never been kissed before.  “Dara, my love, you are mine. My very own,” he said huskily. She was sobbing now. She couldn't bear the nearness of him, and she began to give into his ardor, to kiss him back with all her force. She wanted this man. She knew she would always want him.  But she stopped herself. She pulled back, crying, and yanked herself violently from his embrace. “Stop it! Stop it!” she sobbed. She backed up. She took a long, deep breath to give herself strength and to steady her trembling nerves. She knew she must confront him, the man she loved, with the knowledge she knew would destroy him. But it didn’t matter, as tears and more tears ran silently down her cheeks.   “I saw you,” she said slowly but directly. “I saw you with her. I saw you give her the check, the money.”  His deep blue eyes looked at her penetratingly. But he said nothing. “And you embraced her, and kissed her, too,” she cried. More tears traced their way down her cheeks. “You've lied to me; you've lied to all of us.”   Finally, she blurted it out, all the pain, all the fear: “You’re the one who’s been embezzling the funds.” You...and...and...that woman...it's been you all along!” “Oh my God, Dara.” He walked over to his desk. You saw us? You saw me with her?” Dara’s heart sank. All the while she’d been hoping against all rational reason, hoping that somehow she’d been mistaken. Yet there was no denial, no protest of innocence on his part.  He sat on the corner of the desk, his cold blue eyes focused intently on her. “What exactly did you see?” he asked. His voice sounded almost threatening.  She began to fear…but she went on. “It was four nights ago. I was working late, and I saw her come out of your office. You handed her the envelope. And then you took her in your arms and kissed her and held her for a long time. And then it was over.   Blake stared at her, his face expressionless, at first. Then he put his face in his hands and shook his head. “Oh God, Dara,” he muttered. “Is that what all this is about?” She stared at him and nodded. She realized that a flood of new tears was running down her cheeks, tears she could not stop.   Blake sighed, a deep, long sigh and shook his head slowly. “I should have told you, I guess. Except that it’s been a secret for so long that I don’t know how to talk about it. In fact, I’m ashamed.”  “No, no” she screamed—but silently, inside herself—“I can’t hear this!”  Outwardly, she was silent, her tears the only external clue to her internal turmoil. This man, whom she had come to love, to adore, whom she had trusted….  She didn't think she could bear to hear his confession, to have him tell her of his guilt. This extraordinary man before her had betrayed not just her own trust, but the trust of so many others.  Quietly, Blake said, “Dara, that woman was my wife.”  ***Chapter 15***—***summary*** In this chapter, Dara learns that Blake had married his childhood sweetheart right out of high school; but it was a mistake, they both knew. The marriage ended without rancor, the two remained friends, and his former wife quickly remarried. But the man she married turned out to be irresponsible and abusive, eventually abandoning her—and their young infant who was born with a serious congenital disorder. Blake stepped in to help support the two, and had been doing so for years.  ***Chapter 16***—***last lines*** Dara lay in Blake’s arms. She was barely awake, but even awake, her life was like a dream. A dream come true.   It had all happened so fast. During the trial of Carshaw Marks, it had been her expert testimony that had convinced the jury of his guilt. Blake had been there in the courtroom watching intently as the web of justice closed in on his previously trusted friend and associate. It was for him a moment of both sorrow and relief when the jury brought in the guilty verdict.   They had married immediately afterwards, a quiet ceremony with a few friends and family members. They both had wanted it that way.   And, now, here they were—in this huge bed on the island of St. Kits, in the bridal suite, wrapped in one another’s arms. Blake lifted his head from the pillow to smile down at her, his eyes still blue. And the warm Caribbean sunlight streamed in through the balcony, full of promise for yet another glorious day—and full of promise for the married life that lay before them.   It was all so perfect. Her books, her numbers, and her calculations could all wait. With Blake she felt whole and happy.  \* \* \* \* \* \* |

**About the Author**  
Alicia d'Marvel doesn't really exist. Nor does her novel, Calculating Love. LitLovers created Alicia...and adapted the so-called "excerpt" from an actual romance novel. The scene is very close to its original, but the plot, title, and names, have been changed—to protect the innocent (and to avoid copyright infringement).

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| [**The Story of an Hour**](http://www.pbs.org/katechopin/library/storyofanhour.html) by Kate Chopin (1851-1904)  **In Brief** |
| course1-book2Chopin wrote this story in the late 19th century when women led far more restricted lives than today. The story opens as Mrs. Mallard receives some shocking news, and her reaction is equally as shocking—at least it was during the time this story was written. Her views on love and marriage are vastly different from Dara's and would have disturbed, even offended, many of Chopin's contemporaries.  **About the Author** Considered a minor writer of the late 19th century, Chopin was ignored for over 70 years. Feminist scholars rediscovered her works in the 1960's and have come to value their highly realistic style, provocative themes, and revealing insights into women's roles in her era.   Chopin's best known work, The Awakening (a novel), was considered radical and offensive when first published in 1899. "The Story of an Hour," the short story for this LitCourse, has a similar theme. |

**The Story of an Hour**

Knowing that Mrs. Mallard was afflicted with a heart trouble, great care was taken to break to her as gently as possible the news of her husband's death.

It was her sister Josephine who told her, in broken sentences; veiled hints that revealed in half concealing. Her husband's friend Richards was there, too, near her. It was he who had been in the newspaper office when intelligence of the railroad disaster was received, with Brently Mallard's name leading the list of "killed." He had only taken the time to assure himself of its truth by a second telegram, and had hastened to forestall any less careful, less tender friend in bearing the sad message.

She did not hear the story as many women have heard the same, with a paralyzed inability to accept its significance. She wept at once, with sudden, wild abandonment, in her sister's arms. When the storm of grief had spent itself she went away to her room alone. She would have no one follow her.

There stood, facing the open window, a comfortable, roomy armchair. Into this she sank, pressed down by a physical exhaustion that haunted her body and seemed to reach into her soul.

She could see in the open square before her house the tops of trees that were all aquiver with the new spring life. The delicious breath of rain was in the air. In the street below a peddler was crying his wares. The notes of a distant song which some one was singing reached her faintly, and countless sparrows were twittering in the eaves.

There were patches of blue sky showing here and there through the clouds that had met and piled one above the other in the west facing her window.

She sat with her head thrown back upon the cushion of the chair, quite motionless, except when a sob came up into her throat and shook her, as a child who has cried itself to sleep continues to sob in its dreams.

She was young, with a fair, calm face, whose lines bespoke repression and even a certain strength. But now there was a dull stare in her eyes, whose gaze was fixed away off yonder on one of those patches of blue sky. It was not a glance of reflection, but rather indicated a suspension of intelligent thought.

There was something coming to her and she was waiting for it, fearfully. What was it? She did not know; it was too subtle and elusive to name. But she felt it, creeping out of the sky, reaching toward her through the sounds, the scents, the color that filled the air.

Now her bosom rose and fell tumultuously. She was beginning to recognize this thing that was approaching to possess her, and she was striving to beat it back with her will—as powerless as her two white slender hands would have been.

When she abandoned herself a little whispered word escaped her slightly parted lips. She said it over and over under her breath: "free, free, free!" The vacant stare and the look of terror that had followed it went from her eyes. They stayed keen and bright. Her pulses beat fast, and the coursing blood warmed and relaxed every inch of her body.

She did not stop to ask if it were or were not a monstrous joy that held her. A clear and exalted perception enabled her to dismiss the suggestion as trivial.

She knew that she would weep again when she saw the kind, tender hands folded in death; the face that had never looked save with love upon her, fixed and gray and dead. But she saw beyond that bitter moment a long procession of years to come that would belong to her absolutely. And she opened and spread her arms out to them in welcome.

There would be no one to live for during those coming years; she would live for herself. There would be no powerful will bending hers in that blind persistence with which men and women believe they have a right to impose a private will upon a fellow-creature. A kind intention or a cruel intention made the act seem no less a crime as she looked upon it in that brief moment of illumination.

And yet she had loved him—sometimes. Often she had not. What did it matter! What could love, the unsolved mystery, count for in face of this possession of self-assertion which she suddenly recognized as the strongest impulse of her being!

"Free! Body and soul free!" she kept whispering.

Josephine was kneeling before the closed door with her lips to the keyhole, imploring for admission. "Louise, open the door! I beg, open the door—you will make yourself ill. What are you doing Louise? For heaven's sake open the door."

"Go away. I am not making myself ill." No; she was drinking in a very elixir of life through that open window.

Her fancy was running riot along those days ahead of her. Spring days, and summer days, and all sorts of days that would be her own. She breathed a quick prayer that life might be long. It was only yesterday she had thought with a shudder that life might be long.

She arose at length and opened the door to her sister's importunities. There was a feverish triumph in her eyes, and she carried herself unwittingly like a goddess of Victory. She clasped her sister's waist, and together they descended the stairs. Richards stood waiting for them at the bottom.

Some one was opening the front door with a latchkey. It was Brently Mallard who entered, a little travel-stained, composedly carrying his grip-sack and umbrella. He had been far from the scene of accident, and did not even know there had been one. He stood amazed at Josephine's piercing cry; at Richards' quick motion to screen him from the view of his wife.

But Richards was too late.

When the doctors came they said she had died of heart disease—of joy that kills.