

## Suffocated in the nuclear family

# Aline

HELEEN DEBRUYNE

In 'Aline' a young woman looks back on a period marked by struggles within her relationship, the challenges of motherhood and the pressures of a hostile environment. Through conversations with her psychologist, she tries to bring structure to her fragmented memories.

It all begins when Aline and her partner leave the expensive city centre for a more affordable coastal home. It feels like a fresh start, but that hope quickly fades. Caring for their daughter Gloria drains Aline's energy, the renovation of the house becomes a financial burden, and the unequal division of childcare and household tasks fuels rising tension.

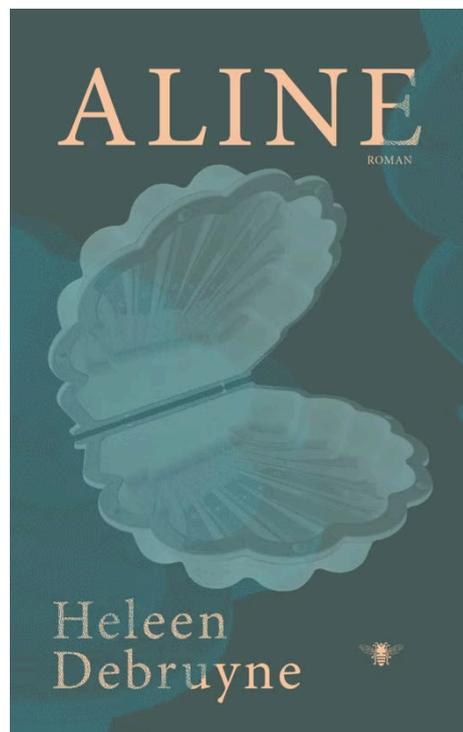
Then there is the challenging reality of the neighbourhood, where domestic violence is visibly and tangibly present. Aline becomes more involved in her neighbours' lives, and the situations she observes around her reflect her own mounting frustrations.

**Pointedly expressed and with appropriate irony, Debruyne uses small, apparently trivial events to show how the frustration mounts and the tension rises. \*\*\*\***

DE STANDAARD

In Aline's relationship the implicit expectations escalate into growing conflicts. She feels trapped in the gender roles of her middle-class life but cannot find a way out. Is this the life she wanted? A polyamorous escapade meant to rekindle excitement instead delivers the final blow to her relationship.

Feminist literature and therapy provide less and less of a footing and the inner tension grows. Aline takes her pent-up anger out on the men around her; both her partner and the violent men of the neighbourhood become targets. She gradually loses control over her emotions. With sharp prose and a keen sense of irony, Debruyne uses 'Aline' to probe the fault lines of progressive morality.



## AUTHOR



**Heleen Debruyne** (b. 1988) is a radio producer with Klara and writes about art and culture for deBuren, Humo and De Morgen. She made her debut in 2016 with 'The Opportunists' (De plantrekkers), a tragicomic novel about the lies people tell themselves. Together with Anais Van Ertvelde she produces Dirty Sheets (Vuile lakens), a podcast about sex, the body and everything you're not supposed to talk about in polite company. In 2017 they published a book of the same name, in which they shatter the illusion of sexual freedom. Photo © Carmen De Vos

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