

Senior Division, Short Fiction
Allison Kelly, St. John's
Aloe Burn Aloe Burn (an excerpt)

THE PHONE CALL

It was late when he called her. Late in Newfoundland. Earlier for him, but still late. She had just fallen asleep with her book next to her. She'd been reading the same sentence for 15 minutes before her eyes dimmed and the book slid from her hand.

He was walking home from a bar. He'd gone for a drink with the cast after their show. He had a soda water and lime. That was Alice's favourite drink. He drank the fizzy uncomfortable beverage and felt sick for her. Ill. That was the word he used to describe his current state. Sick to his stomach always. Talk to her and feel ill. Stop talking to her and feel ill. There's no good way for this to go and they both knew it from the beginning.

Alice's phone was making uncomfortable buzzes on the table next to her head. She was stirred from a hazy dream that he'd never actually loved her. When she realised her phone was ringing her heart turned sharp with worry. Something to do with her mom, or her brother who was working in Greenland. When she saw his name, first and last, sliding across the screen of her phone her body fell into a calm state of readiness.

Alice: Hi.

Ben: Hi.