



Hide And Seek

Emile ducked behind a tree and tried to get his breath back. His chest was heaving with the effort, but he needed to stay out of sight of the people chasing him. He crouched down, his calves burning with the effort, and tried to catch a glimpse of them moving through the trees.

“Come out, Emile,” somebody shouted. It sounded like Helene. “You’re the last one, and you know we’re going to get you.”

Dammit. Helene had a nose like a bloodhound. She could seek better than any of his other friends. Hiding just got a whole lot harder.

He knew it would give away his position, but he had to get out of there. Emile pushed off against the soft mud, his heels digging into the dirt, and sprinted in the opposite direction to the voice.

“I hear you!” Helene screamed somewhere behind him. “Guys, he’s over there.”

Now he knew they were after him. If he really was the last one, then that meant that they’d caught the other four. Six people all seeking him, what a thrill!

The ground passed under his feet like a treadmill; his sole focus was on trying to get deeper into the woods. Suddenly, the trees gave way to an open clearing with a crystal-clear pond in the middle. He’d never been here before, and Emile thought he knew every inch of the woodland.

In the distance, the sounds of the others were muffled and lost, as though they were travelling through a fog. Emile tried to listen harder, but they just drifted away.

There was something strangely alluring about the water. It was a hot summer day, and he was sweating with the effort of fleeing his friends. The crystalline water beckoned him towards it, promising cool relief from the sun.

Behind him, the screams and shouts of his friends crashed back into his reality. They were close,



possibly even on the other side of the closest trees. Without thinking, he plunged into the water and waded out until it reached his chest. Taking a quick glimpse behind him and seeing Helene emerge from the tree line, he ducked down and felt the cold water wash over his head.

He knew the water was clear enough for them to see him if they got close enough, but he had to try. His lungs burned with the effort of holding his breath, and his hands kept losing their grip on the weeds that he was clinging to, to stop himself from floating back to the surface.

Eventually, the pain grew unbearable, and he splashed out of the water, gasping for air. It took a moment for him to wipe his eyes and get his bearings, but something was wrong, very wrong.

Gone were the trees and the open clearing. Instead, he stood in a lake, frozen over with thick ice, except for where he had broken the surface. Around the lake was a desolate, barren land covered in deep snow. Leading away from the water were twelve lines: exactly the kind of marks that would be made by the heels of six people being dragged away.

PREDICTION FOCUS

1. What do you think happened to Emile?
2. What do you think happened to his friends?
3. Where might he be?
4. What might he decide to set out to do?
5. Who or what might stand in his way?

VIPERS QUESTIONS

E In the first paragraph, how has the author used physical reactions to tell the reader how Emile is feeling?

V If something is “alluring”, what does it mean?

V Find and copy a word that links to “alluring” and that personifies the water.

R What did Emile use to stop himself floating?

R How many people were playing the game in total?