



My name is Isabelle Hyde, and I am a third-year French with Japanese student. In addition to those languages, I can speak a little bit of German. This story was inspired by a holiday location in France that my parents and I have been to multiple times - the titular La Racou - that holds a special place in my heart. I always found the photos of the area absolutely stunning to look at, and the memories of how I felt at the time still stick out so much, that I wanted to try and replicate it in a piece of writing.

#### 4. Racou (KS2-5)

*Isabelle Hyde*

Exhaustion rising, exacerbated by the evening heat – the likes of which my English skin was little accustomed to – I took a gentle sip from my wide glass, savouring the sharp tang of pineapple on my tongue, leaning back in my seat, finally pausing to take in the atmosphere of Argelès-sur-Mer.

The distant reggaeton tones from a tapas bar blending with a subdued serenade from the pizzeria next door, all but drowned out by a street performer stationed at the end of the marina. The orders barked by a cockswain aboard a quadscull boat completing its twelfth lap of the marina, became indistinguishable from the loud and drunken chatter of groups departing from one of the multiple other restaurants.

That was Argelès.

## FRENCH

A small beachfront holiday town, a stone's throw from Catalonia, and the south coast's crown jewel. In my humble opinion.

A sharp contrast to yesterday's outing on this well-earned holiday. The small hamlet of Maleville, along L'Aveyron river, where a family friend lives.

Compared to the liveliness of Argelès, Maleville was like something out of a fairy tale book. This friend lived in an isolated rustic stone cottage out in the middle of nowhere, surrounded by endless forest of all shades of green. A steady shallow river ran along the back of the estate, the occasional fish swimming through the refreshingly cool water, the smoothness of their scales against my legs contrasting the awkwardly strewn rocks at my feet.

From the glimpses I managed, the river led to a deeper chasm buried further into the woods – the friend says they frequent it for swimming during the hottest days (another Brit, they too aren't entirely adjusted yet).

Truly a mystical sight to behold...if not for the dirtied caravan next to the gate.

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As the sun finally began to dip, I leaned back against the sand, the fine stones sliding through my fingertips. My coat, finally out of its bag for the first time in the whole two weeks, rested over my shoulders, the vanishing sun casting a sheet of ice over the air.

## FRENCH

I looked out over the horizon, watching as the iridescent bridge leading from the sun fully extended towards me. One last boat left a bubbly trail behind it as it steered towards no doubt the seaside village just over the border.

The distant ambience from the marina drifted in my direction, the jumbled hullabaloo of performers and drunkards still reaching my ears despite the distance.

A completely opposing force to the calm in front of me, yet somehow a fitting backdrop as I took in the last of the sun, the slither of red left behind entirely absorbed by darkness.

### **QUESTIONS:**

- 1) Where is the story set? Can you find it on a map?  
Which region of France is it in?
- 2) At what time of the day does the action taking place?
- 3) Where in town is the narrator having cocktails?
- 4) What are the differences between Argèles and Maleville according to the narrator?