

Wet Lands

by: Naomi Eckford

Mavis is twelve years old, living in a typical suburban home in northern Mexico, but her world is filled with adventures and quirky tales. She is particularly drawn to historical chapter books that transport her to different areas. Her absolute favorite series is "A Series of Unfortunate events" in which she found a strange comfort in the Baudelaire orphans' resilience and darkly humorous situations. She is known to smile with her friends, but deep down, she often craved solitude and time to herself.

She felt misunderstood by her parents, who often dismissed her ideas as impractical. An argument erupted over her latest project, which involved technological research and building a model of an EPIRB (emergency position indicating radio beacon). Her parents criticized her "Unrealistic ambitions" and wanted her to focus on "practical matters".

"Mavis, this EPIRB project is ridiculous!" her father exclaimed, waving his hands, "You need to focus on your studies not some fantasy invention.", "But dad, it's not a fantasy, it's a technological model, and it's important!" Mavis shouted. "Important? What's important is getting good grades and thinking about your future," her mother added her voice sharp.

"Your ideas are just... Impractical." Her voice hung in the air, like an apple dangling from a branch.

It wasn't just the project, it was the way they always dismissed her, like she was just a child with silly dreams. If they didn't believe her, who would? The argument escalated, with Mavis feeling increasingly unheard. She felt she had no other choice but to leave. With pressure pouring over her, she stormed out of the room, overwhelmed by anger and a sense of desperation.

Mavis decided to run away. Before she left, she wrote a note to her parents, hoping they would understand. She quickly packed a backpack with snacks, two water bottles, and a copy of "The Bad Beginning." She shut the door quietly behind her. A stray dog began to follow her, showing a gentler demeanor. Mavis noticed how clever the dog was, and how it seemed to understand her, she decided to name him Sam. Under the cover of darkness, Mavis and Sam slipped away, heading towards the nearby rail yard. They found an empty freight container, a temporary refuge from the storm of emotions and the night. They entered the container and hid. Sam, a wary stray, paces nervously. But the warmth of Mavis's hand, and the gentle strokes on his matted fur begin to ease his fear. He presses close, finding a rare comfort. His head droops, a soft "whimper" escapes as he curls up beside her. Exhausted Mavis and Sam drifted into a deep sleep in the container, oblivious to

the late hour.

2° Unbeknownst to them, the container was quietly loaded onto a freight train beginning its journey. Mean while at home, Mavis's parents awoke to find her room empty. Panic seized them as they discovered her note. Their hearts pounded, and they searched frantically, then they called the police. The parents' worry grew with each passing moment. At the same moment Mavis awoke to the rhythmic clanging and swaying of the container. Realizing she was on a moving train, she peered out, seeing the blur of passing landscapes, and decides to observe. Suddenly a violent jolt threw Mavis and Sam against the walls. The train had derailed. Mavis saw the container lurch and then collide and crumple. Her container detached, rolled to a stop in a unknown location. "Shh... It's going to be okay." She whispered to Sam. Mavis assessed the situation. The container was damaged, but it could be made into a shelter. She gathered willow branches and brush, reinforcing the walls and creating a more secure space. Realizing the importance of a fire she sets out to build one. She remembered that paper could make a fire and that paper comes from trees. "Bark will have to do." She mumbled.

1° While exploring the wreckage she found a small sharp hatchet and some silver rocks. "Flint!" she exclaimed. With the flint and the hatchet, she created small sparks.

Unfortunately they didn't catch on the pile of dry bark and twigs, she "signed" and took a break. Finally on her fifth try she patiently created sparks eventually kindling her scraps and building a small but steady fire. She also found a bucket, which she carefully placed under a small hole in the roof to collect rain water. She finished reinforcing her shelter, feeling a sense of accomplishment, she curled up next to Sam and took a much needed nap. The next day, Mavis woke up feeling a renewed sense of determination.

She collected extra bark and put it in her back pack. She shared one of her snacks with Sam, "hey I won't hurt you." She said so. Then she read a chapter of the book beginning to Sam, even though she had read it several times. As she was reading a storm erupted, scraps of twigs and bark flying. She clung on to her shelter and Sam as it felt like it was being torn off the ground, limbs were crashing into her shelter and animals crying from every direction. Then she heard something "SNAP!", next, every thing around her turned into a black canvas.

Not knowing how much time had passed Mavis woke Sam, and they thoroughly searched the wreckage. She discovered a damaged but functional EPIRB (Emergency Position Indicating Radio Beacon). A small smile played on her lips as she thought of her parents' dismissal of the

project, "It wasn't so foolish after all," she whispered, "I knew I could do it!" she murmured as she soldered a loose wire, her hand trembling slightly. "Just a little more..." she whispered. With a final click, she connected the antenna. "Okay Sam," she said, her voice filled with anticipation, "let's see if this works."

She switched on the EPIRB, the small device humming to life. A faint red light blinked, then a steady green glow on the small device. "Yes!" she exclaimed, a wave of relief washing over her. She adjusted the frequency, following the instructions she memorized. "Sending distress signal... repeating it," she said. She positioned the EPIRB on a square rock near her shelter. "Now we wait," she said, sitting beside Sam, her heart pounding.

3.

Days passed, filled with the rhythm of survival. One morning, Mavis heard a distant sound. A low rhythmic thumping that grew louder and louder. "Sam, do you hear that?" she asked, her voice trembling with fear. Sam perked up.

The sound grew closer, and then, through the trees, she saw it: a helicopter. Mavis jumped to her feet, waving her arms frantically. "Here! We're here!" she shouted. The helicopter landed nearby. "Mavis!" one of the people in the helicopter shouted, and she recognized the

voice, her father. she ran towards them tears streaming down her face like a water fall. "Dad! Mom!" she cried, throwing herself into their arms. "I'm so sorry" she sobbed. "I just wanted you to understand. Her parents held her tightly. "We understand now Mavis," her mother said. he voice choked with emotion. "we were wrong, you're incredibly resourceful and brave."

Back at home, Mavis's parents had changed. They encouraged her projects, and apologized for not understanding her before. They agreed to adopt Sam with no hesitation at all. Mavis continued to explore her passions, her confidence bolstered by her experience. Now she knew that even in the face of adversity, she could find her way just like her favorite Baudelaire orphans.