



HANK THE COWDOG

LOST IN THE DARK UNCHANTED FOREST
PODCAST SERIES 1, EPISODE 1

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Based on
Hank the Cowdog
Book #11, Lost in the Dark Uncharted Forest
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101-1 EXT. RANCH - MACHINE SHED - DAY

101-1

The sound of a warm, spring day on the ranch. Birds chirp, a distant cow bleats as a light breeze creaks the rusty hinges on the machine shed door that won't quite close.

HANK (V.O.)

It's me again, Hank the Cowdog.

Another sound emerges. A smattering of nonsense mixed with the guttural snores and whines of a noble, unrefined beast. None other than, **HANK THE COWDOG**.

HANK

Snarfle irkle tuna sarfle pancakes.

HANK (V.O.)

It was your typical spring day, nothing out of the ordinary: calm, bright, a little on the warmish side, the air full of cotton from the cottonwood trees. Myself, I was up at the machine shed hard at work...sleeping.

HANK

Ruffles sarkle bacon flort.

The sound of Hanks jowls flap with passing snorts.

HANK (V.O.)

Since Loper and Sally May had left the ranch the day before on a mysterious trip to a place called, "Hospital," I made the decision to double up on night patrol, which meant I needed to double up on my day sleep.

DROVER

Hank!

A snort halts the snoring as Hank opens one eye with a *PING*.

HANK (V.O.)

My sidekick Drover, a smallish breed in both size and mind, was over by the water well, engaged in a meaningless conversation with J. T. Cluck, the head rooster.

DROVER

Hank, come here and look at this thing and tell us what you think it is.

HANK

That's a rooster, Drover.

The rooster, **J.T. CLUCK**, does just that with a flap of his feathers. **DROVER** continues in his slow, East Texas accent.

DROVER

No, I mean this down here.

Hank rolls to his feet with a shake before trotting over. He gives the ground a quick sniff.

HANK

Well, that's dirt, Drover, just common ordinary dirt.

DROVER

Yeah, I know, but is that some kind of track in the dirt?

HANK

Oh.

Hank runs a more thorough search of blustering sniffs. The sniffing halts with a *BING* as Hank's head pops up.

HANK (CONT'D)

Drover, where did you find this track?

DROVER

Well, it was right there...

HANK

Yeah, yeah, yeah...

DROVER

...right there in the dirt.

HANK

That checks out. Who else knows about this?

DROVER

Just me and J.T. I guess.

HANK

Question: Has anyone or anything passed by here in the last hour?

DROVER

Well, just me and J.T., and a fly.
A big, noisy fly.

In the distance, a fly buzzes away.

HANK

And therefore you think the fly
left this here track, is that what
you're saying?

DROVER

Well...

HANK

Nice try, Drover. I saw the alleged
fly and I know he was big, but not
big enough to leave tracks like
this.

DROVER

Well...

HANK

I don't want to alarm anyone, but I
should point out that this is one
of the biggest tracks I've ever
seen.

DROVER

Yeah, I know. That's just what J.T.
said when he found it. He thought
maybe it was a bobcat track.

Hank scoffs, incredulous.

HANK

Number one, J.T. did not find this
track. I did.

J.T. CLUCK

(with literal clucking)
Now just a darn minute!

HANK

OW OW OW!

Hank unleashes a series of barks in the Rooster's face that
send it squawking off behind the well.

J.T. CLUCK

(clucking off)
No good, mangy, stinkering...

Hank clears his throat to continue enumerating his points.

HANK

Number Two, you should disregard anything J.T. might have said about this here track, because chickens don't know beans about tracks.

J.T. lets out a final squawk in the distance.

HANK (CONT'D)

Number Three, we haven't seen a bobcat on this ranch in years. Number Four, this track was made by an exceptionally large raccoon. Number Five, I'm betting so said raccoon is still hiding on the ranch; and Number Six, our primary mission on tonight's patrol will be to search him out and throw him off the place before he gets into some serious mischief.

DROVER

You mean...

HANK

Exactly. Prepare for combat, Drover. Catch all the sleep you can between now and dark. I got a feeling we're gonna need it.

At this pronouncement, Hank drops to the ground and slips effortlessly back into snoring.

DROVER

Hank? Hank!

HANK

Sarfle sassafras slaperdash.

Left with nothing but snores, Drover sighs.

DROVER

Sure doesn't look like a raccoon track to me.

101-2 EXT. RANCH - NIGHT

101-2

Crickets chirp at the cool night sky. The sounds of sniffing noses builds in the distance.

HANK (V.O.)

At precisely 2100 hours, I awakened Drover and we began what turned out to be one of the most dangerous patrols of my career. It began in a fairly routine manner, with us checking out the saddle shed, the medicine shed,

(Sniffs)

The sick pen,

(Snorts)

The front lot,

(Sniffs and Snorts)

And the side lot.

(Sniffs and a Sneeze)

Nothing. And yet, maybe I have a sick sense...

(clears his throat)

That is, a sixth sense about these things. You see, it's a tiny voice that warns me when something isn't right. I'm sure it was trying to warn me as we headed toward the feed barn, but unfortunately it might have been too faint.

A horse stamps in a nearby corral.

HANK

(A forced whisper)

Drover, my hunch tells me that our friend the raccoon is over there in the feed barn. Now, chances are he's busted into a sack of horse feed and he's eating the corn and the molasses out of it. Now I'm gonna go in first...

DROVER

Mmm hmmm, I hear that.

HANK

We'll hold you in reserve just outside the door. Now, if things get bad, I may have to call you in. Come on, let's move out.

Stealthy footfalls as Hank moves to the door.

HANK (V.O.)

Drover didn't budge as I slipped up to the door.

(MORE)

HANK (V.O.) (CONT'D)
You might recall, this is the door that's warped at the bottom, which allowed me to wiggle the top half of my body inside without committing the bottom half.

Wood squeaks as Hank's body shimmies under the door.

HANK (V.O.)
Once in position, I did a thorough scan.

A long sniff, then short, then long. The door squeaks again as Hank pulls himself back out from under it.

HANK
(Forced whisper)
Drover? Drover!

Hank wheezes as he tries to muffle his tickled laugh.

DROVER
What's so funny?

HANK
You won't believe this. It's almost too good to be true. We have just been handed the best ornery prank of the year. You know who that is in there? It ain't no raccoon, Drover, but Pete the Barncat!

DROVER
Pete?

HANK
Yeah, yeah, yeah!

DROVER
Are you sure?

HANK
He must be looking for mice or something. He's got his front-end on the ground and his hind up in the air and his head between two bales of hay. He thinks he's all alone in the world, but when I go crashing in there and jump right in the middle of him, he's gonna think he's been attacked by the biggest raccoon that ever was!

Drover sucks his teeth as he puzzles on this.

DROVER

Sounds pretty good...if it is Pete.

HANK

Oh, it's Pete, alright. Don't you think I know what a cat smells like?

DROVER

Yeah, but, uh...

HANK

This place here, it reeks of cat. Why, he couldn't smell any cattier if he'd been living in the wild for the last six months.

DROVER

Oh, Hank.

HANK

The time has come, Drover. Stand by for a barrel of laughs, because I'm fixing to let the cat out of the bag.

Hank pads off as Drover lets out another sigh. Crickets fill a moment of calm.

DROVER

Yeah, but which cat?

101-3 INT. FEED BARN - NIGHT

101-3

The wooden door squeaks again as Hank shimmy underneath.

HANK (V.O.)

I slipped through the door again, all the way this time. A few arrows of moonlight were coming through the cracks in the roof, just enough so that I could make a visual confirmation of my original nosatory data. Everything checked out. We had us a cat cornered, fellers, and the fun was about to begin. I took a big gulp of air, leaped through the air, and yelled...

Running footfalls followed by the whoosh of air as a great howl bursts from Hank's jowls.

HANK

Watch out for the raccoon, Pete!

The howling continues, until...

Time whirs down to a slow motion morph, settling into a hollow breeze trapped in space and time. *DING.*

HANK (V.O.)

I had reached the apex of my dive and had begun my downward arc when I noticed...Hmmm, ol' Pete's coat had changed colors, his tail had been shortened, and by George, he looked bigger than I...he looked real big, almost the size of a...BOBCAT?

The sharp, hissing snarl of **SINISTER THE BOBCAT.**

HANK (V.O.)

Holy smokes, do you realize how big and tough bobcats are? They're terrible! I wouldn't jump on a bobcat for all the bones in Texas, and yet...

A wild, wretched commotion of tumbling hay bales and high pitched yowls explodes into a full-on rumble.

HANK (V.O.)

I straddled him, fellers, landed right in the middle of his back. You think a bobcat can't buck? Well, think again. He threw an arch in his back and blew me right up off my rigging. I went straight up in the air, hit my head on the ceiling, and started back down. But before I hit the ground, this giant maniac of a cat slapped me across the mouth with a paw that was about the size of a T-bone steak. That sent me flying in a different direction, south this time, until I came to the wall, and at that point I came to a sudden stop and dropped in a heap on the floor.

Chirping sounds whirl around Hank's head.

HANK (V.O.)

I was seeing stars and checkers and little pink elephants with umbrellas dancing around, but that didn't keep me from getting a real good look at the monster cat, and boy, he was big, mean, ugly, and ferocious.

Low, guttural growls.

HANK (V.O.)

Listen here, your ordinary bobcat is about two or three times the size of your ordinary barncat. Well, this guy, he was two or three times the size of your ordinary bobcat. And I'd seen him before, mind you, at a distance. His name was...Sinister the Bobcat.

The low growls build and finally unleash in a sharp snarl.

HANK (V.O.)

He was a cold-blooded professional killer with a rap sheet as long as your leg, and I had definitely made a big mistake.

HANK

(Forced whisper)

Drover! I don't want to alarm you, but at this moment I am trapped in the feed barn with a gigantic bobcat.

DROVER

(Through the door)

Oh my gosh! Then J.T. was right about the tracks!

HANK

I wouldn't put it exactly that way, but the point is that our main column is surrounded. It is time to BRING IN THE RESERVES!

A swish of air with retreating footfalls outside.

HANK (CONT'D)

Drover? Drover!

Outside the shed, nothing but crickets remain.

HANK (V.O.)

The little runt had abandoned me.
Sinister took a step in my
direction, his long white teeth
glowing in the darkness.

Like a sword unsheathed, Sinister bares his teeth with a hiss.

HANK

Uh, hi there, you're Sinister the
Bobcat, I do believe. We haven't
met, but, uh...you probably won't
believe this, but I came in here
looking for a cousin of yours, old
Pete...yeah, yes sir, old Pete.
Pete and I have been friends for, I
don't know...obviously you're not
Pete and, well, I probably ought to
be...

Sinister lets out another snarl, this one getting closer.

HANK (CONT'D)

Now Sinister, I've always figured
that there's a middle ground
between surrender and annihilation,
and if you'd care to be diplomatic
about the situation and discuss...

The SNICK of Sinister's claws bared as his thick paws stomp closer.

HANK (CONT'D)

You're not a talker. Okay.

A clobbering paw sends Hank skyward with a wailing howl.

HANK (V.O.)

He knocked me up in the rafters.
Coming down, I tried to latch onto
one of the ceiling joists but
couldn't quite hang on. I headed
for the floor again, but never
reached it because Sinister caught
me under the chin with a roundhouse
right that sent me a'flying.

Glass explodes and sprinkles down as Hank rustles in the bushes.

HANK (V.O.)

I woke up outside the barn, limb
deep in a bush.

(MORE)

HANK (V.O.) (CONT'D)
My legs were wobbly...
(rubber sounds)
But I still had all four of 'em.

A more playful bobcat *REEOW* emerges.

HANK
Ha! Will you look at that.

Hopping paws playfully tumble bales of hay as the tiny *EEK* of a mouse goes running.

HANK (V.O.)
Sinister was still inside, turning over bales of hay pouncing after a mouse. He didn't even look tired.

Hank clears his throat to exclaim...

HANK
Sinister, you got lucky this time, but next time...

Sinister lets out a low snarl in Hank's direction and he disappears like a ricocheted bullet.

HANK (V.O.)
I think he got my point. So I lit out and I didn't slow down until I got near the gas tanks up the hill. Looking back, I saw Sinister slink away into the darkness.

As the crickets take back over a silent ranch. Hank lets out a sigh of relief.

HANK
Well, he's gone. For tonight anyway.

101-4 EXT. RANCH - MACHINE SHED - NIGHT

101-4

HANK (V.O.)
I limped up to the gas tanks and found Drover hiding beneath his gunnysack bed.

Hank winces as he limps up to the machine shed. Buzzing floodlights reveal a quivering lump under Drover's gunnysack.

HANK

(with a wince)

Drover, you'll be interested in knowing, even without your help, I just suffered an incredible beating.

Drover's nose pokes out from under the bed.

DROVER

Well, I didn't think it would help for both of us to get beat up.

Hank pads over to his gunnysack.

HANK

That's very noble of you. I promise not to forget it.

DROVER

Thanks Hank. Is...is the bobcat gone?

HANK

Disappeared, into the dark past the creek. He'll probably be two ranches away by sunup.

Drover's eyes peek out.

DROVER

Well, that's a relief.

HANK

I'm sure it is, Drover. I'm cancelling night patrol.

DROVER

That's a good idea, Hank.

Drover retreats back into hiding as Hank plops down.

HANK (V.O.)

I flopped down on my gunnysack. Everything hurt, especially my pride. See, for a dog, there is nothing to compare with the humilification of being pounded by a sniveling cat, even a big sniveling cat. There was only one thing left for me to do...

As crickets chirp, Hank's snoring begins, but now it's punctuated by an occasional whimper.

101-5 EXT. RANCH - MACHINE SHED/HOUSE - DAY

101-5

A hot sun sizzles as a circling hawk calls out high in the sky. The faint sound of a truck approaches in the distance.

HANK (V.O.)

I awoke the next morning at the crack of noon to the rumble of an approaching truck. I gave your standard code red response to trespassers.

Hank unleashes a torrent of barks. He's off and running before the pain in his joints can catch up.

HANK

(between barks)

Ouch. Ouch. Ouch.

As tires crunch up the gravel drive, Hank's bark is relentless despite the limping gait.

HANK (CONT'D)

OW! OW! OW! Oh, it's Loper.

The truck squeals to a stop as it pulls up to the main house.

HANK (V.O.)

It was no intruder. Just Loper, Sally May, and Little Alfred back from the "hospital," wherever that was.

LOPER(early 30s), a working rancher complete from boots to hat, climbs out of the rusty driver's side and turns to help **LITTLE ALFRED(4)**, a toddler in striped overalls, down.

LOPER

Come on Alfred. You need help down?

ALFRED

I can do it.

Loper scratches Hank's head.

LOPER

Hello Hank. Boy, you've got ticks.

HANK

Huh?

ALFRED

(chuckling)

Hank has ticks.

HANK

I don't...

HANK (V.O.)

Sally May was smiling, beaming,
rather. I'd never seen her in such
a good humor.

DROVER

Hank?

Drover sidles up to Hank as **SALLY MAY(early 30s)** emerges from
the truck holding a swaddle of pink blankets.

DROVER (CONT'D)

What's Sally May got in that pink
blanket?

HANK

What do you think, Drover?
Groceries.

DROVER

I thought groceries came in a brown
sack.

HANK

Mostly, but now and again they wrap
them in blankets.

The sound of Sally May's door easing shut.

HANK (V.O.)

Now, I figgered this might be a
good time to mend a few fences, so
to speak, with the lady of the
house, so I went around to the
other side of the truck.

SALLY MAY

Oh look Molly, there's old Hank,
and there's little Drover.

DROVER

She's talkin' to the groceries
Hank.

HANK

Hmmmm.

SALLY MAY

Dogs, I've brought home a special
surprise for you.

HANK/DROVER
(with sincerity)
Bones?

SALLY MAY
It's right here in this blanket.

The hair on Hank's back shoots up and his throat makes a sound somewhere between a growl and a gurgle.

HANK
Holy smokes Drover! Sally May brought home a giant baldheaded lizard from the grocery store!

Hank starts barking at her. Sally May and Loper start to laugh, which confounds Hank.

SALLY MAY
Don't be silly Hank. It's just a baby.

DROVER
It's just a baby Hank.

HANK
That ain't no baby! It's the first full-grown giant baldheaded lizard I've ever seen...Wait.

Hank interrupts himself, figuring on it. He limps over to Sally May and sniffs the base of the lizard swaddle as it lets out a few coos.

HANK (CONT'D)
The puzzle pieces are coming together.
(sniffs)
Drover, this is no lizard.

DROVER
I know Hank.

HANK
This is a human baby child.

Sally May bends down again and rests the baby upright against her knee so that she faces Hank.

SALLY MAY
Hank, this is Molly. I want you to take good care of little Miss Molly. She's a real treasure.

HANK

Mmmmmmm hmph.

Hank leans in and begins to nod. Finally, he holds his head high with eyes closed, a stance emboldened by the noble sound of a bugle and snare drum.

HANK (CONT'D)

Yes. I herby take an oath to protect and defend this human baby child named Molly against monsters, snakes, and other crawling things. Even bobcats. Now to seal the oath...

Hank licks baby Molly's face. Needle scratch. Sally May immediately jerks the baby back and shrieks.

SALLY MAY

DON'T LICK MY BABY HANK!

Loper thunders up.

LOPER

For crying out loud Hank, don't lick the baby!

Hank's ears press back on his head and his tail slips between his legs as he retreats a few steps.

DOVER

Don't lick that baby Hank.

HANK

I...Is there an echo? I was sealing the...

SALLY MAY

That dog is just a no good mess! If that dog even thinks he's coming into my house ever...

Sally May trails off as she and Loper take the baby inside, ending in the slam of the screen door.

HANK

Well. We can only hope the poor little thing gets more attractive with time.

A *THUD* from a rock Little Alfred kicks in front of Hank. Alfred walks by with his bottom lip stuck out and his hands crammed deep in his overalls.

ALFRED

I don't like that baby. I want to take her back to the hospital.

Hank noses up next to him placing his soft head under the boy's arm. Drover flanks them.

HANK

Son, I know your little sister's not real pretty right now, but she'll grow out of it. And, unlike your parents, since you're still young enough to hear me, let me give you some advice. One day, you're gonna be proud to have her on your place.

Alfred stamps his foot.

ALFRED

No I won't! You don't care about me and you're not my friend anymore and I don't like you either. And I'm going to hit you.

HANK

Now, I don't think...

Alfred bops Hank on the nose.

HANK (CONT'D)

He hit me.
(to Alfred)
You're lucky I took an oath...

Alfred bops him again.

HANK (CONT'D)

Now hold on...

Hank turns away with a paw across his nose as Alfred cackles and grabs hold of his tail.

HANK (CONT'D)

Not the tail! Not the... ARH-
WHOOOOOOOOOOO!

ALFRED

I got your tail Hank!

Alfred is yanking with all his might, dragging Hank across the yard.

HANK
MY! TAIL! WHOOOOOOO, NO! It's a
very sensitive communicative
device! WHOOOOOO!

Sally May bursts out of the front door.

SALLY MAY
Alfred! What on earth are you
doing?

HANK
Oh thank heavens.

Alfred releases the tail and gives a nasty little grin.

ALFRED
I'm playing with Hank.

SALLY MAY
You're hurting Hank. Hank doesn't
like you to pull his tail.

ALFRED
I don't like Hank. He's a dummy.

HANK
Oh, you're lucky I don't bite
children.
(to Drover)
Part of the oath.

DROVER
Mmhmm.

SALLY MAY
If you can't be nice to Hank, you
can't play with him. You play
quietly with your trucks while we
put Molly down for a nap.

ALFRED
I don't like Molly either!

SALLY MAY
Hush now.

Alfred's eyes drop in a sulk. She feels for him.

SALLY MAY (CONT'D)
Mommy will be right out to play
with you.

She goes back into the house. Once inside, Alfred spits and makes a fast swipe for Hank's tail again.

ALFRED
Come here Hank.

HANK
Nope. Too slow. If you're so big on tail pullin', go find a more deserving creature. I'm sure Pete the Barncat would love a visit. Come on Drover, let's get some chow. Time to let Little Alfred stew on his tomatoes awhile.

As Hank and Drover sprint away, Alfred kicks at another clod of dirt and yells after them.

ALFRED
Aw, you're no fun Hank!

101-6 EXT. RANCH - PASTURE/MACHINE SHED - DAY

101-6

HANK (V.O.)
Drover and I went sprinting up the hill and trotted past the chicken house where I saw one of my favorite things.

With the pounding thuds of Hank and Drover running, a clucking group of chickens emerge.

HANK
Drover. Chickens. On my mark. Mark.

On this command, Hank and Drover execute a sharp barrel roll.

HANK (V.O.)
We rolled straight through the whole flock.

With piercing barks, the chickens flap and scatter in a cloud of dust and feathers.

HANK (V.O.)
I've always enjoyed scattering chickens, you see. Even on days when I'm in a bad mood and nothing seems to be going right, I can just run through a bunch of chickens and, I don't know, it just seems to give my life new meaning.

The footfalls of dog feet decrease to a single set.

HANK (V.O.)

I was still feeling sore from my beating the previous night. Between that and the tail-pulling, I couldn't help but worry. And that's when I noticed my less than trusty sidekick had fallen behind.

HANK

Drover! Drover, come on! Let's get some food!

HANK (V.O.)

Even at the mention of a meal, Drover didn't budge, which was not a good sign. He just kept staring off at that caprock.

Hank walks back to a shivering Drover.

HANK

Drover, what're you staring at?

HANK (V.O.)

The little guy's ears were pinned back on his head and his right leg quivered as he pointed.

DROVER

Th...the...there.

HANK (V.O.)

And that's when I saw it. In the distance, down by the edge of the dark, uncharted forest, Sinister the Bobcat.

DROVER

He...he...he's not two ranches away Hank. He's still on OUR ranch.

HANK

I see that, Drover.

A gentle thud as Drover goes catatonic.

HANK (V.O.)

Drover's quivers turned to shakes and he nearly fell over in place as we watched Sinister disappear into the tree line. The bobcat was still on our ranch. This was not good.

EPISODE END.