



HANK THE COWDOG

LOST IN THE DARK UNCHANTED FOREST
PODCAST SERIES 1, EPISODE 2

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Based on
Hank the Cowdog
Book #11, Lost in the Dark Uncharted Forest
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102-1 INT. RANCH - MACHINE SHED - DAY

102-1

HANK (V.O.)

It's me again, Hank the Cowdog.

A single **CRRRRUUUNCH!**

*

HANK (V.O.)

Now, a bobcat sighting on the ranch wasn't good for anybody, especially when it was a bobcat as mean as Sinister. It troubled my stomach, and a troubled stomach can't be neglected.

*

MORE CRUNCHING!

Hank and Drover's jowls crunch down hard on Co-op dog food from an overturned hubcap that *CLANKS* with every snort.

HANK (V.O.)

So Drover and I were busy getting our fill of the Co-op crunchy kernels dog food. You know, the hard, dry, yellowish kind that comes in a 50 pound sack. There are times I question what kind of stuff they put into those kernels, and other times, I'd just as soon not know.

*

Hank tilts back his head to work over a particularly hard kernel and swallows with a *GULP*.

HANK

(Intermittent Crunching)

You know Drover, I've often wondered how much it would cost the ranch to buy us a real dog bowl, instead of an upturned hubcap that retains the taste of axel grease.

Drover *CLANKS* a bite.

DROVER

Yep.

*

HANK

I know grass is short and cattle prices are down, but I also know that the cowboys on this outfit eat out of plates and bowls, not hubcaps.

DROVER

Mmm hmm.

Drover's snorts and crunches build and build throughout Hank's musings.

HANK

It just seems funny to me that there always seems to be enough grass and enough cattle market to buy plates for them, but you mention buying anything decent for the Head of Ranch Security, huh, and suddenly we're in the midst of a drought, and a plague, and a depression!

*

*

DROVER

Yumph.

Hank's voice rises over the increasingly furious chomping.

HANK

I suppose it's better not to think of all the injustices in the world. Too much brooding can ruin your digestion, and life without digestion is...well, unbearable. Full of burps. But it does make a guy think that the people in charge don't realize just how important their dogs are to the overall...

Hank is finally interrupted by the peak of Drover's snorts. Hank clears his throat as a warning.

HANK (CONT'D)

Do you suppose you could be a little quieter in eating your food?

DROVER

(muffled with food)

I don't know Hank. It's pretty hard.

HANK

Of course it is. It's always harder to eat with manners than to eat with the wild abandon of a hog, but who wants to sound like a hog?

DROVER

Not me.

HANK

Hogs make no pretense at being civilized, Drover. They crunch and they smack and they grunt, and nobody cares because they're only hogs who eat like pigs.

*

DROVER

That makes sense.

HANK

But we're not hogs, Drover. We aspire to something higher and better. We try to bring a certain air of dignity to the ritual of eating. The act of imposing dignity on the chaos of experience is called civilization, and protecting civilization has always been hard.

DROVER

Yeah, but I meant the kernels were hard...to chew.

Drover crunches a final, loud kernel.

HANK

Oh. Yes, I see. You make a good...wait...hush!

Hank holds out a paw to silence the mutt's chewing.

HANK (CONT'D)

I'm receiving something. A distress call.

Hank's ears perk up at the *SOUND* of Morse Code beeps fade up.

HANK (V.O.)

My ears, which are very sensitive and operate pretty muchly independent of the rest of my body, picked up the sound, and within seconds had passed the information along to my Brain Data Control Center.

HANK

It's a...a cat. It's a cat in distress.

HANK (V.O.)

I switched my ears from automatic to manual, lifted them a half-inch, and opened the exterior flaps to increase their sound gathering capacity. And gather they did.

Hank's message trance breaks, silencing the beeps, and he looks to Drover as a wide smile takes over.

DROVER

What're you smiling for, Hank?

HANK

Drover, we gotta see this. Come on!

*

102-2 EXT. RANCH - HOUSE - DAY

102-2

Galloping footfalls add rhythm to the adventure.

HANK (V.O.)

We went streaking away from the machine shed, down the hill, past the gas tanks, and towards the overflow of the septic tank. Right there the scene unfolded before us.

*

*

REEEEEEER! A CAT'S SCREECH!

ALFRED

You smell Pete. You need a bath.

Alfred carries a wriggling **PETE THE BARNCAT**.

HANK (V.O.)

Little Alfred had Pete the Barncat by the midsection and was headed straight for the overflow pond of the septic tank. Now, for those who don't know, a septic tank's overflow pond is the exact wrong place to give a cat a bath, but since it was a bath for Pete, who am I to judge?

*

*

ALFRED

Take your bath Pete!

Alfred sends Pete airborne.

HANK (V.O.)

Alfred launched that cat sky high. It was glorious.

(MORE)

HANK (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Pete's eyes grew wide as saucers as he floated out over that green bog of nasty water.

A dopplering REEEEEEEEEER suddenly stops.

HANK (V.O.)
Of course, as soon as Pete saw me and Drover watchin' with big slobberin' smiles, his look of terror changed to one of annoyed resignation. He prepared for the inevitable, made worse by the audience of...me.

SPLASH!

Hank and Drover let out uproarious howls of belly grabbing laughter.

HANK
HAHA OOOOWWWWOOOOO! It's good. Oh,
it's so good, Drover.

*
*

Alfred laughs too as Pete shakes off the icky water.
Until...

WAM! The screen door to the house slams shut. All laughing
needle scratches to a stop.

HANK/DROVER
Uh oh.

HANK (V.O.)
The good times were over the second
we saw Sally May stomping out of
the house.

SALLY MAY
Alfred! What on earth?

HANK (V.O.)
Pete crawled out of the muck with
more dignity than one would expect,
and do you know what he did? He
winked at me.

DING!

HANK (V.O.)
Now why would a cat, covered in bog
water, wink at me? More on that
later, 'cause Sally May was coming
in hot.

SALLY MAY

You're just being terrible today,
Alfred! I don't know what's gotten
into you, but I won't allow a child
of mine to be cruel to dumb
animals.

HANK

She means Pete.

DROVER

Obviously.

SALLY MAY

Hank's tail and now Pete. Just look
at that poor cat.

Sympathy gathering *BOW BEND*.

HANK (V.O.)

On cue, Pete, all wet and stringy,
threw off a trembling look that
would steal a tear from most any
warm-blooded animal lover. A total
charade!

SALLY MAY

Alfred he's soaked. That's not nice
young man. You ought to be ashamed
of yourself.

ALFRED

(sniffing)

Hank said Pete needed a bath.

HANK

Not true!

(to Drover)

...but not wrong.

SALLY MAY

Cats don't bathe in water, Alfred,
they wash themselves with their
tongues.

ALFRED

Well, his tongue was dirty.

Sally May calcifies in her argument.

SALLY MAY

No. You were being mean and cruel.
I've got a new baby in the house
and I can't be watching you every
second of the day. If you don't
play nice, you'll have to come
inside and take a nap.

*

HANK (V.O.)

With that, Sally May turned back to
the house, but not before wagging a
finger at my nose.

SALLY MAY

And you don't be giving my child
anymore ideas about tormenting the
cat, Hank McNasty.

*

HANK

Me?

*

SALLY MAY

If I hear anymore yowling, I'll...I
don't even know what I'll do, but
you'll be the first one to find out
Hank.

*

*

SLAM! The screen door frames her exit.

HANK

And...she's gone.

DROVER

Hank, why's Pete smiling at you?

HANK

That's not a smile, Drover. That's
a smirk.

DROVER

That sounds even worse.

HANK

What are you smirking about, Pete?

PETE

Hi Hankie. You got in trouble
again, didn't you?

HANK

Maybe I did and maybe I didn't, but
you got throwed in the water.
That's what really matters.

DROVER

Yeah, that's what matters.

HANK

How was your swim, Pete? Tell us all about it, because your unhappiness is the most important thing in the world to us.

DROVER

Yeah. Tell us about it.

Pete, the smirk still on, flicks water from a front paw in Hank's direction.

PETE

It was really very nice, Hankie.

HANK

Oh no it wasn't. You hated it.

DROVER

Yeah. You hated it, and since you hated it so bad, we love it.

Pete begins to slink around Hank, his tail taking quick nips toward Hank's nose with a subtle *PURRRR*.

PETE

Oh, I didn't care for the water itself, but there were other benefits.

HANK

What benefits?

DROVER

Yeah.
(genuinely confused)
What benefits, Hank?

PETE

Well first, Sally May came to my rescue.

HANK

Of course she did. You have her completely bluffed out.

Hank swats as Pete's tail tickles at his nose again.

HANK (CONT'D)

Get that tail out of my face! She doesn't know what a sneaking little weasel you are.

PETE

Um hummmmm, and the second benefit is that I can do almost *anything* to you now, Hankie, and if you do anything back to me, you'll be in big trouble with Sally May.

HANK

Oh, you're bluffing, cat, you can't...

*

DROVER

Look out Hank!

SNICK! HISSSSSSSS! SWAT!

The sound of Hank quickly sucking teeth, and then, *SILENCE*, as if stuck in a bubble of time.

HANK (V.O.)

Pete's claws sliced the tenderest part of my nose. Whoohoo, and it hurt. My eyes squeezed shut, and a feeling started to grow, like a fever, rising up and boiling out of my ears...

*

*

An Ironside Siren, deep from inside Hank's mind, grows louder and LOUDER!

A sustained siren holds at its peak!

HANK (V.O.)

The cat must pay!

A TORRENT OF VICIOUS BARKING!

PETE

REEEEEEEEER!

DROVER

Get him Hank!

A true dust up of *pouncing, swatting, banging* and *clanging*.

HANK (V.O.)

Oh I lunged, but Pete zigged and then he zagged.

*

*

(MORE)

HANK (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 I lunged again but he bobbed and he
 weaved, even again, but he flipped
 and he flopped. I only needed to
 land one paw to bury this cat. But
 then...

*
*
*

WHAM! The screen door again.

SALLY MAY
 HANK!!!!

Hank's snarling attack is jerked to a stop in a whimper.

SALLY MAY (CONT'D)
 I HAVE HAD IT!

*

HANK (V.O.)
 I glanced at Pete who, even though
 I hadn't touched him, was suddenly
 limping around in circles, moaning
 and dragging one leg behind him.
 But in spite of his so-called
 "injuries," he still managed to
 shoot me another wink!

*

PETE
 Oooooohhhhhrrrrrrrr.

*
*

DING!

HANK
 Faker.

*
*

SALLY MAY
 I warned you to leave my cat alone!

*

DROVER
 Oh, she's going for the dirt clods
 Hank!

*

The *WHISTLE* of artillery pulls Hank's attention to Drover.

HANK
 Take cover Drover! INCOMING!

Hank and Drover duck for cover as a barrage of dirt clods pepper the ground around them.

WHACK! Hank let's out a wail as dust flies off his rear.

HANK (CONT'D)
 She got me, Drover!

HANK (V.O.)

As Drover and I dodged a barrage of dirt clods that could level the best of us, I saw Pete roll on his belly and smile. Faker.

HANK

Head for the brush, Drover!

With dirt clods pelting at their behinds, Drover and Hank light out for the creek leaving the barrage and a smiling, purring Pete behind.

102-3 EXT. CREEK/FOREST - CONTINUOUS

102-3

The *THRASHING* of bushes and brambles gives way to the pleasant *TRICKLE* of a winding creek. The dogs *PANT* with tongues wagging.

HANK (V.O.)

We went streaking down to the creek where we vanished into the willows and tamaracks that saved our lives. I had only one regret about the...Well, no, come to think of it, I had several regrets about the incident, but I'd rather not discuss any of them. So, we sat to lick our wounds.

*

DROVER

OOF. Yep, she bruised it. Ahh, my full back end.

*

HANK (V.O.)

Just then, my ear jumped to the Full Alert position.

Hank's heavy breathing stops.

HANK

You hear that? It's...

A low, mournful *SOUND* rises up and echoes through the canyon of the creek bed.

HANK (CONT'D)

It's like a moan.

Drover's voice trembles at the eerie sound.

DROVER

Is it a deer?

HANK

Deer don't moan, Drover, they fawn.

DROVER

I don't know what that sounds like. *

HANK

Hush.

The low sounds go in and out. Hank strains to hear. Unsure, he leans down into a stalking pose.

HANK (CONT'D)

(forced whisper)

Hmmmm. Come on now, let's slip through the brush in stealthy crouch mode and establish a forward position. In case it's dangerous, stay behind me. *

DROVER

You don't need to worry about that.

They move up the creek bank through leaves and brambles.

HANK (V.O.)

Maintaining our Stealthy Crouch Mode, we slithered through the brush. I peered out into a small clearing, and there, sitting beside the creek on a log, I saw it. A small boy dressed in striped overalls.

HANK

(Hushed)

It's Little Alfred. He's crying.

DROVER

And I mean *crying*.

The muffled *SOUNDS* of the boy's crying come in more clearly.

HANK (V.O.)

Now I know that ornery little stinkpot was pulling my tail no less than an hour ago, and I know he didn't deserve a loyal dog friend as good as me, but when I saw those tears running down his face well... You wanna talk about cowdog instincts? My cowdog instincts demanded a response.

Hank moves out of the brush toward the boy.

DROVER

You'd better stay away Hank. He'll pull your tail again. *

HANK

Then let him.

DROVER

He's mean, and naughty.

HANK

Maybe he is, Drover, but he's my boy.

Hank moves out of the bushes.

HANK (V.O.)

I went down to the creek bank and sat beside Little Alfred and started licking the tears off of his cheeks. He looked up, kind of surprised, and there for a second I didn't know what he would do.

Quiet sniffles.

HANK (V.O.)

Then he threw his arms around my neck and cried.

Sobs.

HANK

Come on now, it's not that bad.

ALFRED

My mommy doesn't love me anymore. She brought home a new baby and she doesn't care about me. I don't like her dumb old baby, and I don't like her anymore either.

HANK

I know, but...

ALFRED

I'm gonna run away from home, Hankie, far, far away. They won't see me again, and then they'll wish they had Alfred back, but I'll be gone, gone away.

HANK (V.O.)

This demanded a serious response.
So I cleared my throat and readied
the lecture of life lessons...

Throat clearing.

HANK

Well. I have several points to
make, pardner. So here goes...

Alfred watches as Hank begins pacing with an occasional
pointed paw to emphasize each piece of evidence.

HANK (CONT'D)

In the first place, your ma did in
fact bring home a new baby, but
that doesn't mean she's stopped
caring about you. In the second
place, I can testify that you've
been something less than a perfect
child today, and those of us with
tails might even say you deserved a
scolding as we don't enjoy tail-
twisting as much as other forms of
entertainment.

Hank's really getting into his own speech. He gazes up to the
heavens with a thoughtful air as he paces back and forth.

HANK (CONT'D)

In the third place, for that
business with the cat, I kind of
agree that your ma went overboard
and I may have possibly hinted that
Pete needed a visit. Your ma has
strange ideas about cats. But
that's just how she's built, can't
help it. In the fourth
place...Alfred. Alfred?

*
*
*

HANK (V.O.)

Perhaps I let the pacing oration
get away from me, but just as I was
warming up my summation, I turned
around and Little Alfred was gone!
Now the only thing sitting in his
place, was Drover.

A lazy tail pat from Drover.

HANK

Where did he go?

DROVER

Who?

HANK

Little Alfred you dunce! Who else was sitting here just a minute ago?

DROVER

Oh, he left.

HANK

I realize that Drover, but where did he go?

DROVER

Not sure. He musta got bored with your speech.

HANK

I doubt that. I was giving him some good, sound advice about...just tell me which way he went.

Drover puzzles on this.

HANK (V.O.)

Drover looked left, right, and finally, with some hesitation, up into the trees.

DROVER

Nope. I can't remember.

HANK

You better start remembering, son, because taking care of that boy is our primary mission today.

*

DROVER

Well settle down. We know he went somewhere, or else he'd still be...here.

Drover points to the spot next to him. Hank's eyes darken and the volume of his growl increases.

HANK

Reach into the huge vacuum of your mind, Drover, and pull out the answer, and be quick about it because if anything happens to that kid...

DROVER

Wait. He went...yes...he went across the creek. I'm at least half sure of that. Yes.

HANK

What? And you just sat there and let him go?

DROVER

Well...sort of. I thought about barking but I've had this sore throat all day...

*

HANK

Sore throat!

DROVER

Allergies.

HANK

Drover do you realize what lies on the other side of this creek?

DROVER

Sand?

Hank winces and grits his teeth with anger.

HANK

Yes, sand, but no...beyond the sand, Drover. Out there. Out there is...THE DARK UNCHANTED FOREST ON THE PARNELL RANCH!

Drover's ears fall back on his head and his voice trembles.

DROVER

Oh.

HANK

If Alfred gets lost in there, we might never find him again.

DROVER

Gosh.

HANK

Huge trees, Drover, draped with hanging vines. It's dark in there, and scary.

(MORE)

HANK (CONT'D)

On every side, you got thorny plants and stinging nettles, and no one knows what kind of creatures you might find in there: coyotes, snakes, all kinds of monsters.

*

DROVER

MONSTERS?!

HANK

Yes, but Drover, there's something else in that forest. One something that is even worse than monsters.

DROVER

What could be worse than monsters, Hank?

*

*

HANK

Oh, it's bad for us, but could be even bigger trouble for Little Alfred.

*

Hank walks to the edge of the creek to stare deep into the impenetrable forest, his mind turning on the details.

HANK (CONT'D)

Don't you remember, Drover? Sinister the Bobcat went into that forest.

DROVER

SINISTER THE BOBCAT!

Drover lets out a trembling yelp. He immediately holds up his front paw in a dangle of defeat.

DROVER (CONT'D)

You know, Hank, this leg of mine...

HANK

You know what that means.

DROVER

Yeah. He was a nice kid in many ways.

HANK

It means that we must prepare ourselves for the very most dangerous journey of our lives.

*

*

DROVER

Back to the house.

HANK

Not the house, Drover. For you see,
what we have here is...The Case of
the Lost Child in the Dark
Uncharnted Forest! A forest with
Sinister the Bobcat in it!

*
*
*

EPISODE END.