



HANK THE COWDOG

LOST IN THE DARK UNCHANTED FOREST
PODCAST SERIES 1, EPISODE 3

Written by
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Based on
Hank the Cowdog
Book #11, Lost in the Dark Uncharted Forest
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103-1 EXT. CREEK/FOREST - DAY

103-1

HANK (V.O.)
It's me again, Hank the Cowdog.

Low, rumbling *THUNDER*.

HANK (V.O.)
There we were, standing on the sandy banks up over Wolf Creek. Drover wasn't really standing as much as trembling because...

Drover's bones *TINKLE* under his skin.

HANK (V.O.)
Little Alfred was lost! Only moments ago, according to Drover's muddled recollections, Alfred had run away into the worst possible place for a young boy to go running...The Dark Unchartered Forest! And to make things double bad, he was lost in the same forest where one of the meanest, nastiest creatures I've yet to encounter was on the prowl. Yeah, *SINISTER THE BOBCAT!*

Thunder *CRACK!*

HANK (V.O.)
The reality of the task ahead was gathering in my mind, much like the dark storm clouds above our heads.

DROVER
You know, Hank, this old leg of mine is sure givin' me fits.

HANK
Now Drover, it's up to us. It falls on our shoulders to find that boy before Sinister does.

DROVER
Speaking of shoulders, this leg...

HANK
Forget your leg! This might be the most important mission of our career.

A *THUD*. Drover literally falls over where he's standing.

HANK (CONT'D)

Get up, Drover.

DROVER

Oh, my leg. All my legs! I. Just.
Can't. Make it.

HANK

You'd actually do such a thing?
You'd let me go into the Dark
Uncharnted Forest all alone?

DROVER

Oh heck yes, I wouldn't worry about
you, 'cause you're big and strong.

HANK

True.

DROVER

And you're Head of Ranch Security.

HANK

I am.

DROVER

And you're not afraid of anything.

HANK

That's true as... Well, that might
be a slight overstatement. To be
honest with you, I wouldn't mind
having you...

A *SCRATCHING* sound as Drover begins to claw his way toward
the brush.

HANK (CONT'D)

Drover, you don't have to crawl
son, your legs are fine.

DROVER

(Faint and pained)
I'll just...slip on back to the
ranch...

HANK

(unimpressed)
Drover.

DROVER

...and sound the alarm.

HANK

Drover!

DROVER

You find Alfred, save the day, and that will be the end of it.

HANK

Now hold on, Drover, let's talk this...

Drover is off like a ricocheted bullet, just the faint rustle of undergrowth in his wake.

DROVER

Bye Hank, and good luck with the snakes and monsters!

HANK

Wait! Drover!

Silence as Hank looks out after him. Finally...

HANK (CONT'D)

Oh, uh huh, you're pretty fast on that bum leg!

Hank lets out a frustrated breath.

HANK (V.O.)

Too late. The little mutt had disappeared into the brush, and now Little Alfred wasn't the only one left alone. No siree Bob, not that I needed anyone to help with...

Wind moans through the top of the trees, interrupting Hank's thought. More thunder rolls.

HANK (V.O.)

I mean...Look, it was the stormy season. Those clouds did look like bad weather. And that forest was getting even darker than usual. I started to get that feeling up my back where all the hairs stand up and a shiver starts to shake through.

A literal shiver runs down Hank's spine as he steps closer toward the Forest. Hank lifts and examines his own paw.

HANK (V.O.)
Come to think of it, *my* leg was
beginning to act up on me.

Hank turns in a circle to give the new injury a test.
Hobbling starts in with a few *GROANS*.

HANK (V.O.)
Whew. It was pretty dog gone sore.

Hank looks back toward the ranch. A loud roll of *THUNDER*
rumbles across the sky.

HANK (V.O.)
I mean, look, factually speaking, I
couldn't be expected to execute an
important mission all crippled up
like that. You run the risk of
endangering the whole operation
trying to be a hero on your own.

Hank begins walking back to the ranch laughing off the
situation.

HANK (V.O.)
Right? Yeah, that boy will find his
way back. I mean kids don't just
disappear. They walk off and come
back, and Sinister's probably not
even in that forest. He probably
lit out for the...

The *SOUND* of a voice in the distance, calling out. Hank
stops and cranes his neck to tune it in.

SALLY MAY
ALFRED! COME ON IN ALFRED!

HANK (V.O.)
That's when I heard Sally May,
calling from the house.

Her voice is faint at this distance, but Hank receives it.

SALLY MAY
COME HOME ALFRED!

HANK (V.O.)
That stopped me in my tracks. I
could see the sky was getting dark.
I could hear the wind moaning
somewhere deep inside that forest.

Rumbling thunder, moaning wind, distant creaking trees.

HANK (V.O.)

And my, oh my, I sure wanted to go home. But my little pal was lost out there, and he needed me. I didn't want this job, but dern it, there was nobody else to do it. No turnin' back. No turnin' back!

Taking in a deep breath, Hank walks toward the creek bed. The walk turns to a gallop, which becomes a sprint.

HANK (V.O.)

I got up to galloping speed by the time I hit the creek bed.

SPLASH!

Hank crashes into the water. Strong paddles bring him across and he doesn't even pause for a shake off.

HANK (V.O.)

I didn't even bother to shake off the water. No, I shot up the other bank and let out a holler as I rushed into those woods.

With an echoing HOWL,

HANK

Awoooo! Alfred, here I come...

Hank's voice disappears, swallowed up in the mouth of the Dark Uncharted Forest.

103-2 EXT. DARK UNCHANTED FOREST/LARGE COTTONWOOD TREE - DAY 103-2

Strange, unsettling sounds emanate from deep in the forest. *COOS* and *CALLS* mix with *MOANS* and *SKITTERS*.

Hank thunders in and skids to a stop across a forest floor carpeted in dead leaves. Huffing and puffing from the run, the bravery of his entry begins to recede.

HANK (V.O.)

My old heart was banging like a bass drum and I could feel those little needles of fear pricking up the back of my neck again, but I told myself, Hank, put it all out of your mind.

Hank takes in a deep breath and listens.

HANK

Settle down, Hank. Settle down,
Hank! Just breathe.

A limb snaps in the distance causing Hank to spin around.

HANK (CONT'D)

What's that?! No, no, it's you,
Hank. Talk to yourself. Think,
Hank. Think. Hank. Think. Think.
Landmark. Landmark. Find a
landmark.

Hank starts sniffing the territory around him.

HANK (V.O.)

Going into the Dark Uncharnted
Forest was the easy part. Getting
out was the problem. It's easy to
get turned around and lose your
sense of direction. And despite my
unrivaled skills as a tracker, my
training is more geared to open,
field-type spaces, and not dark,
creepy tree-type spaces. So before
I went plunging too far into those
woods, I'd better have a few
landmarks memorized.

PING! Hank's nose points to a spot.

HANK

There, there, there, right there!
That creepy cottonwood tree. That's
a landmark alright. There you go,
good job, Hank.

More urgent sniffing.

HANK (V.O.)

I memorized every detail of that
big cottonwood. It had gnarled
limbs that reached up like a boney
hand, a fresh scar running down the
trunk where it was struck by
lightning, and it made a low
creaking sound every time the wind
bent it on one way or the other.

Low, creaking.

HANK (V.O.)

Now you might think a creepy tree is an odd landmark to pick in a forest full of creepy trees, but I was working with what I had. And this tree did seem...well...

(GULP)

Especially creepy.

A *CRACK* of thunder and lightning punctuates the visage.

HANK

Calm down, Hank, Hank, Hank. Just calm down. You just need to calm down and find the scent...

DING! Hank's nose snaps to attention.

HANK (CONT'D)

The scent! It's Little Alfred.

Hank's nose scans the ground with rapid fire sniffs as he zigs and zags across the leafy floor.

HANK (V.O.)

Not surprisingly, I found the scent in no time. Pete had done some damage to the leathery exterior portion of my nose, but the interior mechanisms were still functioning at full capacity. I mean, my nose is a pretty impressive piece of equipment. Not only is it the most striking feature of my face, but it's also...wait.

Hank's ears snap to alert as his frenzied sniffs pause.

HANK

TRACKS! Oh we're on it now boy, good job Hank.

Hank's sniffing nose follows the footprints until his head cocks at a questioning angle.

HANK (CONT'D)

Wait a minute. That's odd. There's TWO sets of tracks.

Hank lowers his nose to investigate.

HANK (V.O.)
I'd seen these tracks before. The first set definitely belonged to Little Alfred, but the others...they belonged to...oh...

HANK
SINISTER THE BOBCAT!

Hank's breathing quickens as he spins around to scan the forest.

HANK (CONT'D)
Sinister's not just in these woods, he's following Alfred. ALFRED!!!

HANK (V.O.)
I broke into a dead run and plunged headlong into the great unknown.

Hank's barking at the top of his lungs.

HANK
ALFRED! WATCH OUT, SON! THERE'S A BOBCAT ON YOUR TRAIL!

His barks echo as he disappears deeper into the woods.

103-3 EXT. DARK UNCHANTED FOREST/HACKBERRY TREE - DAY 103-3

The wind creaks the trees. Hank's barking arrives before he does.

HANK
ALFRED! ALFRED! ALF...Oh no.

Hank's run slows to a trot. His head darts around, as if searching for something. Hank gives two quick sniffs.

HANK (CONT'D)
The scent.

Hank goes on a frantic sniffing spree.

HANK (CONT'D)
I've lost the scent.

His furious sniffing slows as a realization takes over in his mind.

HANK (V.O.)
Oh no, no, no, no, oh no, oh no.
I've lost the scent.... Hank, you
lost the scent, and...

A single bird SHRIEKS as Hank's voice momentarily echoes at a distance.

HANK (V.O.)
And I've lost myself!

Hank steps cautiously through the tall underbrush.

HANK (V.O.)
I don't like forests, mainly
because they're outside my area of
vocational expertise. As I told you
earlier, I'm a ranch animal. I'm
not meant for this. I prefer wide
open spaces. Heavily wooded areas
creep me out because I can't see
what's ahead of me, and I have this
active imagination that is very
good at turning bushes and shadows
into...

A SHAKING BUSH in a RUSH OF WIND!

HANK
AHHHHH! MONSTER! IT'S A CLAW
MONSTER!

The shaking settles with the wind. The quiet reveals Hank's breathing.

HANK (CONT'D)
Not a claw monster. It's just a
bush. Hank, it's just a bush. Just
a bush monster.

Hank lets out a calming breath.

HANK (CONT'D)
Okay. We're fine. We're fine.

A CLAWING SCRAPING SOUND!

HANK (CONT'D)
ACK! What's that?!

Again, relative quiet.

HANK (CONT'D)

Tree monster. Tree monster, tree tree monster. All good. Just a tree monster.

Hank continues on through the brush.

HANK (V.O.)

Fellers, once I entered that dark spooky forest, I saw more monsters in five minutes than I'd seen in my entire life. You never saw so many monsters! I saw three Leaf Monsters, four Bush Monsters, two Shadow Monsters, and seven Tree Monsters. Which gets me back to what I was saying earlier about my area of vocational expertise. If a guy has trained in a spooky forest situation, he learns that even though these monsters look scary, the statistics show that the vast majority turn out to be tree and bush related, and, for the most part, don't often eat dogs. And once he knows this, he can then go on about his business without being distracted. In other words, he can follow the scent. Which, I admit, I had lost, along with myself. I turned around and I found myself...well, I found myself turned around. It's a well known fact that you can't backtrack if you've lost the track and don't know which way is back. I had lost the scent, the trail, my sense of direction, my sense of well being, my courage, my confidence, my curiosity, and my devotion to duty. But most of all, I had lost all desire to be where I was. And there was at least one more scare to come...

FEMALE VOICE (O.S.)

Oh my goodness!

Hank jumps yet again with a...

HANK

Gosh doggit!

(twists around)

Who's that? Who said that?

FEMALE VOICE (O.S.)
Who should be coming through the
forest but Hank the Rabbit!

Hank spins but finds nothing to attach this voice to.

HANK
What? Who's talking here?

FEMALE VOICE (O.S.)
I did. I think I did. Or maybe I
didn't. That depends on what you
heard.

HANK
I heard someone say something about
Hank the Rabbit.

FEMALE VOICE (O.S.)
Oh yes, I did say that.

HANK
Yeah, well, there's a couple of
things we ought to get straight
from the get go. Number One, I'm
not a rabbit. Number Two, I cannot
see you and it makes me
uncomfortable to carry on a
conversation with nobody.

FEMALE VOICE (O.S.)
If you're talking with nobody, and
if nobody hears, then nobody cares,
so it really doesn't matter, does
it?

HANK
Well... Look, can you just tell me
where you are?

FEMALE VOICE (O.S.)
Well, I'm here and you're there,
and we don't know any more than we
did before, so what's the point of
knowing where we are?

HANK
You know, you have a way of
confusing words, and it seems to me
that I met somebody once who talked
that way.

FEMALE VOICE (O.S.)
Oh my goodness, who could I be?

HANK

Well whoever you are, I don't have time to keep going in circles...

FEMALE VOICE (O.S.)

I could be a tree if I had roots. Or I could be a cloud if I could float. Or I could be a dream if I could sleep. But I can't and I'm not, and I'm only who I am instead of who I could be, but you are Hank the Rabbit.

HANK

No I'm not! I'm a dog, D-O-G, Hank the Cowdog, Head of Ranch Security.

FEMALE VOICE (O.S.)

Oh I know all that, I know all that, but I like Hank the Rabbit better. So I'll call you that.

HANK

All right, enough of this. Who are you? Where are you?

FEMALE VOICE (O.S.)

I hate simple questions. They require simple answers, and whoever I am, I'm not simple. I simply can't answer your question.

HANK

Wait a second. Recollection collected. I remember running into somebody once like you, someone who called me Hank the Rabbit. Yeah, I think I just figured out who you are!

FEMALE VOICE (O.S.)

Oh no.

HANK

Oh yes! You're Madame Moonshine, the witchy little owl!

MADAME MOONSHINE (O.S.)

Rubbish!

HANK

Yeah, the one that cured me of my Eye-Crosserosis.

MADAME MOONSHINE (O.S.)
Double rubbish sassafras
horseradish balderdash!

HANK
That explains why you've been
talking in circles. Shucks, you're
a witch.

MADAME MOONSHINE (O.S.)
Yes, I'm a witch, but also a
switch. Make a switch and find a
witch, trah-lah-lah, lah-lah.

HANK
Hmrrrrrr.

Hank puzzles on this with tapping claws on his lips.

HANK (CONT'D)
Do some math here, switches come
from...

Hank rolls his eyes upward.

HANK (CONT'D)
Trees.

HANK (V.O.)
I raised my eyes and there she was,
Madame Moonshine, a small, brown
burrowing owl with big yellow eyes,
hanging upside-down from a tall
hackberry tree.

HANK
I found you.

MADAME MOONSHINE
I knew you could do it.

HANK (V.O.)
She was smiling at me, which was a
little peculiar since an upside-
down smile is about the same as a
frown.

MADAME MOONSHINE
Oh Hank! You're such a clever
rabbit, and I do need your help.

HANK
I'd be glad to help Madame, because
I need some serious help myself.

MADAME MOONSHINE

I've caught my foot in this vine
and I'm hanging downside-up.

HANK

Not upside down?

MADAME MOONSHINE

Picky picky! It's all the same,
isn't it? Downside-up and upside-
down, wrongside-up and rightside-
down, backside-up and topside-down!
The problem is the same, and the
problem is that I'm backwards

A *FLUTTER* of wings.

HANK (V.O.)

It was a problem. She was so dog
gone tangled when she'd get excited
and flap her wings it just made her
twirl around in a circle. Heck, I
got dizzy just watching.

HANK

Well shucks, Madame, if I was a
witch like you, I'd use my special
powers to get myself unhooked.

MADAME MOONSHINE

No you wouldn't. No you wouldn't.

HANK

Uh, yes, I do believe I would.

MADAME MOONSHINE

But what if the power works
backwards? There is always that
danger with magical power.

HANK

Well, I think it's worth a shot,
Madame.

MADAME MOONSHINE

Do you now? And tell me again what
your title is?

Hank sits up straight and lifts his chin with pride.

HANK

H.R.S. Head of Ranch Security,
ma'am.

MADAME MOONSHINE

My goodness, the Head of Ranch Security!

(more flutters)

How could we go wrong in the presence of Head of Ranch Security?

HANK

A lot of people ask that very question.

MADAME MOONSHINE

Very well!

HANK (V.O.)

She closed her eyes and started to mumble some incantations.

Mumbling. The sounds become more clear until she finally bursts out with...

MADAME MOONSHINE

Topsy-turvy, downside-up, vertigo and *spirally*. I wish, O Power, you'd intervene: reverse the scene *entirely!*

Hank waits, nothing but stillness.

HANK

(whispering)

Well Madame, it, uh, sounded good to...

Suddenly, a RUSH OF WIND spins up a tornado of dried leaves that engulf Hank.

WOOSH!

Stillness again as the dust settles.

A creaking sound.

HANK (CONT'D)

You changed the scene entirely all right...but I think it came out backwards.

Madame Moonshine clicks her tongue at him.

MADAME MOONSHINE

I was afraid of that.

HANK (V.O.)

Her fears had proven right. The magic worked backward, and instead of Madame Moonshine ending up on the ground, yours truly got swept up in the tree. Now we were both tangled up in those vines.

Madame flutters in a panicked loop.

MADAME MOONSHINE

Oh Hank, I never should have listened to you. I knew better.

She tires out and dangles to a stop.

MADAME MOONSHINE (CONT'D)

But on the other hand, now that you're up here with me, I don't feel upside-down anymore.

HANK

You don't?

MADAME MOONSHINE

Oh no. Now we can pretend that everything else is upside-down and that we're the right-side up!

HANK

Well, just hang on a sec Madame, I don't have time...

MADAME MOONSHINE

Oh yes! How wonderful? It makes me want to sing.

HANK

Let's not.

MADAME MOONSHINE

(singing)

We muuuuuuuuust!

HANK

No Madame, being upside-down is only half my problem. I...

MADAME MOONSHINE

Oh, well you think that's bad, I have three halves to my problem.

(singing)

Now let's sing a tune!

HANK

Huh? Madame, I have a real problem.
Little Alfred...

MADAME MOONSHINE

(singing)

*I can't hear you, unless you're
singing.*

HANK

I...

MADAME MOONSHINE

(singing)

Sing!

HANK

Need...

MADAME MOONSHINE

(singing)

Sing!

HANK

(singing)

*My Little Alfred, he's run away. In
this forest he might fall prey to
the meanest cat I've smelled all
daaaaaay.*

Music begins and Hank takes command of the song.

HANK (CONT'D)

(singing)

*It's Sinister that's on his trail,
he's mean and nasty with that bob
cut tail. I need your help, Madame,
what do you say?*

MADAME MOONSHINE

Now you're cooking!

HANK

*Now, Madame Moonshine, tell me
truly, with this Sinister cat is
stalking cruelly, how can we figger
this out? See my downside is up,
I'm confused as a pup, I can't
distinguish up from about.
Disorientation. It's a revelation.
It will turn your head around.
'Cause it's hard to keep your feet
on the ground, when you're hanging
upside-down.*

MADAME MOONSHINE

(singing)

Now, early in our history, the world was cloaked in mystery, but two sides began to take shape: You see, the up-side was up and the down-side was down. A simple logic hard to escape.

HANK

That's what I'm saying.

MADAME MOONSHINE

(singing)

But why should simple logic rule this universe, this big whirlpool, that's vast beyond our wildest surmise? You've no idea what might could be, you're just a dog, you cannot see that certainty in life's the big surprise.

HANK

Just a dog?

HANK/MADAME MOONSHINE

(singing)

Disorientation. It's a revelation. It will turn your head around. 'Cause it's hard to keep your feet on the ground, when you're hanging upside-down.

HANK

(singing)

That's well and good, all of that, but a dog's a dog and a cat's a cat. A blackbird's black and a bluebird is blue. But when they're walking upside-down, the ground's sky and the sky's the ground, I tell you Madame, I am thoroughly confused.

MADAME MOONSHINE

(singing)

The answer, Hank, is plain to see: You think you're you, you think I'm me, But sometimes we're not what we think.

HANK

That's a head scratcher.

MADAME MOONSHINE

(singing)

*There's a lesson to be learned from
reality upturned: That everything
can change in a blink.*

HANK/MADAME MOONSHINE

(singing)

*Disorientution. It's a revolution.
It will turn your head around.
'Cause it's hard to keep your feet
on the ground, when you're hanging
upside-down. I said it's hard to
keep your feet on the ground when
you're hanging upside down.*

As the music continues, a GROWLING SOUND lays over it all.

HANK

(singing)

Madame, what's that noise?

MADAME MOONSHINE

(NOT singing)

Well Hank, that's the third half of
my problem.

HANK

We're not singing anymore?

MADAME MOONSHINE

No Hank. It's time to talk out the
rest of my problem, as it looks to
be yours now too.

HANK

And what problem is that Madame?

MADAME MOONSHINE

The viciously hungry coyotes
circling below us.

Needle scratch. The music abruptly stops.

HANK

COYOTES!

GROWLING.

HANK (V.O.)

As sure as I said it, they
appeared. Rip and Snort.

(MORE)

HANK (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Two of the scraggliest, meanest
outlaws in the county...and as
usual, they looked hungry.

EPISODE END.