AN ANIMATED SCREENPLAY ADAPTATION BASED
ON JOHN R. ERICKSON'S NOVEL:

THE ADVENTURES OF

HANK THE COWDOG

THESIS

Presented to the Graduate Council of the University of North Texas in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements For the Degree of

MASTER OF SCIENCES

By

John W. Wier, B.S.

Denton, Texas

August, 1994
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Screenplay for animated feature film. Story and characters are based on a short novel, *The Adventures of Hank the Cowdog*, first in a series. This adaptation aims to translate the humor and unique dog-centered perspective of the original source into the medium of film.

Hank the Cowdog, head of security on an isolated ranch, works undercover inside a pack of coyotes to solve a series of chicken murders. To solve the case, Hank defends his ranch, sheep and chickens from a devious and powerful coyote leader, Scraunch. With help from a variety of friends and a change in attitude, Hank saves the ranch.

Screenplay places detective film conventions in an action-adventure cartoon format. Thesis includes notes on adaptation process.
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FADE IN:

EXT. POOL IN CANYONS - DAY

Dawn breaks over a clearing in the West Texas brush country. The sloping canyon walls surround the thick mesquites and sagebrush. The walls keep most of the clearing wrapped in heavy shadows.

From the shadows, a sandy brown dog with one white forepaw, HANK, lopes into the clearing. Two buzzards, one ancient, WALLACE, and one young, JUNIOR, fly low to the ground behind him.

The dog and birds stop in the middle of the clearing. The birds look around for something. They look harder, surprised to find it gone. Hank taps a paw, impatient.

HANK

Ok, where is it? If you two birds are trying to pull a fast one...

WALLACE

I'm telling you, he was here! He looked dead! He smelled dead! I'm a buzzard, sonny, and if there's one thing I know, it's when the expiration date has passed.

Hank walks over to the buzzards. He points his nose to the ground.

HANK

Where was he? Here?

Wallace looks up to the sky.

WALLACE

Let's see, if we circled there, and the wind blew this way, then yeah, I'd say right there.

Hank shakes his head, clearing cobwebs in the early morning. He puts his nose to the ground and sniffs. He raises up, looks at the buzzards and sniffs some more.
HANK
Yup. That's the old man all right. Ok. Let's hash this out. I'll tell you most of what I know. There's no sense in keeping it secret any more. But if an ugly varmint of the coyote persuasion would happen to find this out, I'll know just where to look first. Got me?

The buzzards nod.

HANK
(continuing)
Let's get our story straight, and do it quick. If this evil deed really went down, I'm toast.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. BARN - DAY

Hank naps on a gunny sack in the afternoon sun. The dog lies behind a faded red barn. He yawns. An eye pops open. Blinking, Hank settles back on his haunches and stretches his front legs long. He rises.

HANK (V.O.)
(continuing)
A few days ago, I wasn't toast. I was toasty. I had just caught forty winks behind the barn that day, the day it all started to go south on me. I figured I might as well mosey on up to the corral and check things out, sort of start making the rounds.

Hank stops for a minute. He paces a small circle round and round in the dust. He sinks to his paws. He yawns. Then he falls asleep, snoring heavily.
HANK (V.O.)
(continuing)
Now, looking back, that was probably mistake number one. If I had known that low-down Scraunch was out there, watching my every...

WALLACE (V.O.)
Scraunch? Did you say Scraunch? We follow that coyote around, kind of clean up his leftovers, if you know what I mean. I remember one day, not too long ago, me and Junior here, we thought we had it good, boy...

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. CANYON TRAIL - DAY

A huge, mangy, coyote, jet-black fur and a slight limp, stalks through the almost desert-like brush country. SCRAUNCH.

The coyote looks around, brilliant sunlight. The heat of the border-country day. He yawns. He sniffs, and startled by something in the ground, he looks down.

INSERT - ON THE GROUND

A gleaming metal trap lies in the dust, partially covered.

BACK TO SCENE

The coyote backs away, then raises an eyebrow. He looks around, he crawls under a nearby mesquite tree to wait. One eye open, he waits.

The sun crawls across the sky. Two buzzards circle overhead.

A JAVELINA, a miniature wild boar, trudges across the brush. Head high, fat as anything, he follows the path right into the trap. The hog YELPS and looks around, caught.
He thrashes, trying to free himself. He flaps double-hard when he sees what's coming for him from under the tree.

Scraunch stalks the hog, drooling and licking his chops.

The hog begins to SHRIEK and SQUEAL. Scraunch gets closer, closer, taking his time, and watches him squirm.

The hog suddenly stops his struggle. Calm comes over his wrinkled face.

   JAVELINA
   Wait! Don't kill me! I want to make a deal!

Scraunch turns and rolls his eyes. The hog renew his plea.

   JAVELINA
   No! Let me go and I'll give you the secret. And the secret is power. Power enough to catch hundreds, maybe thousands more like me!

Scraunch is still calm. But he pauses.

   JAVELINA
   Oh, coyote! It is true. The powers of the full moon! Just trip that switch right there and I'll show you! I won't run away. And even if I tried you would catch me and eat me anyway, so big and strong you are.

Scraunch gives it some thought.

INSERT - THE TRAP

A paw hits the lever. The trap is sprung.
EXT. BARN - DAY

Hank springs to his feet, awake with a start. His hair sticks up. His tail points straight out. He faces all points of the compass, rapidly, as if surrounded. Then he relaxes.

HANK (V.O.)
Oh. That fits things together nicely. Let's see, where was I? Oh, yeah. Making the rounds.

Hank trots off.

EXT. CORRAL - DAY

Hank approaches a pen of cattle from across the corral.

HANK (V.O.)
You see, checking things out was my business. I was Head of Ranch Security. The top dog, you might say. My job on this ranch was to keep things runnin' smoother than molasses in August. And if they weren't, it was up to me to set 'em' right. If that involved a little danger now and again, that was OK by me.

Hank runs up to a pair of cowboy boots, attached to a cowboy, SLIM. He sniffs them, looks up, wags his tail. No response from the person in the boots. Hank BARKS a couple of times. The boots nudge Hank in the ribs. The dog jumps back, looks up. His face falls, and he trots across the corral.

HANK (V.O)
Well, that was typical. That was Slim, my owner. If you ask me, he didn't give me enough respect.
(MORE)
HANK (V.O.) (CONT'D)
If humans gave dogs more of a say
in how things were run, or at least
listened to us part of the time,
the world wouldn't have as many
problems as it does now. But no one
ever asked me, and that's how we
all ended up in the fix we were in.
I just tried to do my job.

EXT. CHICKEN HOUSE FENCE - DAY

A small frame shack sits inside a wire pen that
borders it. Two big trees also are in the yard. A
few white HENS CACKLE as they peck in the dust. Hank
pulls up on the outside of the wire and takes a
quick head count.

HANK (V.O.)
Those fat, dumb birds kept Slim
and the other cowboys at the
ranch in eggs. They also counted
for a little goin-to-town money
and the occasional Sunday dinner.

INT. CHICKEN HOUSE - DAY

Rows and rows of hulking chickens in the shack sit
there and look stupid. One SQUAWKS.

HANK (V.O.)
(continuing)
To me, those chickens weren't even
worth chicken feed. With the trouble
they would cause me, I doubt they
were even worth that.

EXT. CHICKEN HOUSE FENCE - DAY

Hank trots off, further surveying the immediate
vicinity: the gas tanks, the garage, the machinery
shed. All is quiet.

EXT. HOUSE - DAY

Hank checks to see that the coast is clear.
He steps up the stairs onto back porch of a two story white house. He sniffs two shabby work boots with great interest. He starts to gnaw.

HANK (V.O)
Seemed pretty quiet that day. Thought I'd take a break. In spite of the lack of respect, the constant danger, the rain, hail, sleet, snow, and the call of duty and so forth, I liked parts of the job. And some of the um, fringe benefits were ok, too.

Hank starts off the porch, stops, then heads back to pick up the boot. Grabbing it in his mouth, he breaks into a run as he leaves.

EXT. PASTURE - DAY

Hank, boot in mouth, approaches a lone barbed-wire fence, the only landmark on the prairie, save a few mesquite and sagebrush. On the opposite side of the fence waits a border collie, BEULAH. Hank drops the boot under the fence for her.

BEULAH
Oh, Hank! For me? You're so wonderful!

HANK
Aw shucks.

Beulah tears into the boot, chewing mightily. She gnaws a little, speaks, gnaws some more.

BEULAH
Oh, it's so smelly! And tasty, too! I just love old leather. Where did it come from?

HANK
Oh, it was just lying around. It didn't smell like anything important.
Hank hops around, playing while Beulah chews.

BEULAH
Oh, it's perfect. I'll save it with the rest of my collection.

HANK
I'm really glad you like it, sweetheart.

BEULAH
I do. Hank, you're the best friend a girl dog could have. You're wonderful, just like the things you bring me.

Hank flops back onto his back, wiggles his paws, and rolls into the dirt, darn close to being in doggie heaven.

BEULAH
Silly dog. Come here.

Beulah beckons to Hank. Through the fence, the two dogs rub noses.

BEULAH
Oh, Hank. I'd love to stay and play with you all day, but I've got to go watch the sheep. I'll see you later, ok? Thanks again, so much. Goodbye, love.

HANK
Goodbye, sweetheart. See you soon.

Beulah picks up the boot, flutteres her eyelashes, and sashayes away. Hank sighs and turns to go. His tail wags.

HANK (V.O.)
Well, I guess being a cowdog does have its advantages. Pretty sheepdogs, to name one.
EXT. CORRAL - DAY

Trotting slowly in the morning sunlight, Hank stops beside the corral. His head snaps up. His eyes focus into the distant dust.

HANK
What in the wide, wide world of sports...

HANK’S POV

A little white dog, DROVER, stands in the middle of the yard. He BARKS over and over, at nothing in particular.

BACK TO SCENE

Hank breaks into a run.

HANK (V.O.)
That was my assistant, Drover. Even-tempered. Predictable. And about as worthless as a one-legged dog in a flea-scratchin' contest.

EXT. CHICKEN HOUSE - DAY

Hank leaps the fence and rushes up to Drover.

Drover continues his HIGH-PITCHED YAPPING.

HANK
Hold it son! Never sound the alarm unless you need to... Anything wrong?

DROVER
No, sir!

HANK
Did you mark the tires of that strange car that pulled into the drive earlier?

DROVER
Well, no.
HANK
Drover! You always spray the
tires of any strange vehicle.
That's one of our most important
jobs! All four of them! How
about the birds. Did you take
a head count?

DROVER
Well, no.

HANK
Well, go on then.

DROVER
(deliberately)
One... two... three... uh, three...
Hank, what comes after three?

HANK
You don't know? Assistant head
of Ranch Security nad you don't
know what comes after three?

DROVER
Well, I'm only three yrears old.

Hank looks over the chickens. He stops. He looks
them over again.

HANK
Looks to be a couple short. We
might be in big trouble here.
Look, Drover, this is gonna
require some real detective work.
And a different attitude.

Hank marches around the chicken house to a chess
board. Drover follows. Hank studies the board. All
the pieces are dog-headed. Hank rubs his chin.

DROVER
Hank?
HANK
...Quiet! I'm taking a new mangle on this.

DROVER
How about some tracks, Hank?

HANK
No, that'd never work... let's see. Yes sir, we need to attack this with a little more military intelligence.

DROVER
What can I do?

HANK
Well, I've got the intelligence end of this covered. Why don't you try to act a little more military?

Hank shakes his head. He turns from the chessboard and starts pacing again.

DROVER
Ok, Hank.

Drover snaps to attention. His tongue still flaps in the breeze. Hank looks him over, disgusted.

HANK
On second thought, why don't you sort of police the area with your nose? Look for anything, scent, tracks. Whatever.

Drover rushes off, nose first. Hank, sniffing the air, follows him off the ranch.

EXT. PASTURE - DAY

The dogs pull up quickly, reaching mud. They look at a maze of tracks in the mud. Hank spots some tracks and puts his nose to work.

HANK
Yep, just as I figured. Looks like a big ol' coon.
DROVER
In the daytime?

HANK
You bet in the daytime. Probably figured we wouldn't be looking for it. Typical sneaky coon behavior.

DROVER
Hank, but how can you tell with all these different trails? Looks like a million critters been here and gone.

HANK
You don't go by the look, son. You go by the smell and by the smell of things, I figure he headed off that way. Come on!

The dogs charge into the brush, making their own path, heads down, sniffing.

EXT. CANYONS - DAY

Hot on the trail, Hank sniffs and Drover follows close with his head in the air. Reaching a wall of brush, Hank puts on the brakes. Drover, unaware, bumps into him. Hank jumps about a mile, straight up.

HANK
Drover! Pay attention! Listen, you ready for some combat experience?

Drover snaps to attention again. Hank marches back and forth, giving him the once over.

HANK
Ok. Head up. Tail out. Suck in that gut....

Drover obeys every command, the best he can. Hank, getting excited, paces faster and spits orders like a drill sergeant.
HANK
(continuing)
... What a disgrace, son. Feet out.
Hair straight. Eyes Front!
Neck over. Spine left. Straighten
your gig. Align that clavicle.
Grommet your dangler...

Drover twists almost beyond recognition. Certainly
beyond physical laws of balance.

DROVER
How's that?

HANK
Well, those claws could use a
shine.

Drover collapses in a heap. Hank doesn't notice.

DROVER
I'm ready.

HANK
Alright, he's in there. I hear
him chewin' on something. Here's
the deal. I'll jump and go for
his neck. You come in the second
wave and get a hold of what's
left. If you run away this time,
I swear I'll tan your worthless
hide myself. Got it?

DROVER
Yes.

HANK
Ok. Here goes. Wait for me to
get a piece of him.

Hank tenses, eyes on the bushes. Drover tries to
compose himself.

DROVER
Uh, Hank?
HANK
What now?

DROVER
(squinting into bush)
That doesn't look like any coon
I ever saw.

HANK
Like I told you son, you don't
go by the look, you go by the
smell...

Drover quizzically sniffs the air.

HANK
This nose of mine don't lie.
Now stay close and watch me
tear him apart.

Hank tenses again, shoots Drover a look and then
bravely soars over the bushes. Total surprise.

He comes down square on a lazy SKUNK. Hank barks and
growls and attacks the skunk first, then sneaks a
look at what he's shaking in his teeth. He backs off
gingerly, all smiles. He sniffs the air backing up.

Hank almost backs away clean. Drover comes sailing
over the bush and lands square on Hank. Drover
bounces into a thornbush. Hank bounces into the
skunk.

The skunk registers annoyance, turns tail and lets
Hank have it. Hank flops into the dust, overwhelmed
by the smell. The skunk throws his tail in the air
and waddles away.

Hank scrambles his way around the brush. Gasp, pant,
spit. He looks for his partner. The bush rattles.

EXT. OUTSIDE SCRÀUNCH'S DEN - DAY

Scraunch, the jet-black coyote, sits on a cliff
outside a cave. He watches the the dogs run from the
canyons across the pasture.
His eyes flash red. He chuckles. He turns into his cave, back to the pile of chicken feathers and bones. He CHUCKLES.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. CHICKEN HOUSE - DAY

ANGLE ON DROVER

Drover shakes, quivers, sweats and pants. He squints his eyes and grinds his teeth. He shakes harder — every bone in his body screams in pain.

He is being held down. His arms and legs are pinned by four chickens each. Drover HOWLS. The fat hens look scared.

A "BOINK" sounds off-screen. Drover HOWLS LOUDER and shakes like a madman.

ANGLE WIDENS to show Hank, positioned near Drover's tail. He rolls his eyes. He pulls a thorn from Drover's tail. "BOINK."

Drover HOWLS again. Hank rolls his eyes.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. BACK PORCH - DAY

Hank sits up and wags his tail when he hears footsteps inside. A pair of boots, Slim's, comes out and the screen door CREAKS and SLAMS. A hand slings down a bowl of dog food.

SLIM (O.S.)
Whe-ew! You stink, dog!

The boots stagger back into the house. Hank plops down.

HANK (V.O.)
Hmph. Dog food again.
(MORE)
HANK (V.O.) (CONT'D)
You'd think for all I did for this ranch, they'd shell out for some decent chow. All day fighting crime and I get the raspberry for a minor implication. Jeez, make one mistake on a ranch like this and they nail you to the wall.

SLIM (O.S.)
Dadburnit! Where's my other work boot?

HANK (V.O.)
Ooop. Make that two mistakes.

Hank perks up at this, thinks for a second, then slinks off the porch and, looking over his shoulder, trots off.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. CHICKEN HOUSE FENCE - NIGHT

Hank and Drover crouch a short distance away from the pen. They sit in tall weeds under a tractor parked near the gas tanks.

HANK
This is it, son. I'm sure we lost a couple of chickens today. Our job tonight is to make sure we don't lose any more.

DROVER
So how are we gonna stop the killer from way over here, Hank?

HANK
Well, son. This is a stakeout. Or to put it real simple, a trap. All we have to do is wait for the killer to make his move, And then we hit him with the old one-two.
DROVER
That's it?

HANK
In a nut-case, yeah. Just sound the alarm if you see anything suspicious.

DROVER
Got it.

The dogs lie in wait. Off in the distance, coyotes HOWL.

EXT. CHICKEN HOUSE - NIGHT

A giant red explosion shatters the night. From near the fence surrounding the chicken yard, a huge chicken with bulging red eyes marches across the yard. He reaches the ramp to the tar-paper shack. He looks over his shoulders and marches inside.

EXT. CHICKEN HOUSE FENCE - NIGHT

Drover and Hank lie under the tractor, asleep.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. CHICKEN HOUSE FENCE - DAY

At daybreak, the dogs are both fast asleep. The tractor roars to life above them. They jump, dodge the huge moving wheels, and scramble out to the pen.

HANK
Dang. We blew it, son.

They jump the fence.

EXT. CHICKEN HOUSE - DAY

The chicken yard is abuzz. About thirty chickens FLAP and SQUAWK inside the small fence that surrounds their home. They cluster in a tight circle around an obscured something.
The stupid hens create a mob, elbowing and flapping each other to see what lies at the center. SHRIEKS and general, hysteria add to the confusion.

The dogs fight their way through the mob.

HANK
One side, one side! Out of my way!

The chickens part. Some flap up to the trees overhead where they roost, curious. Hank and Drover reach the center and discover a very fat white hen, lying in the dust in a pool of feathers. Her neck lies at a twisted angle. She is dead.

Hank takes a deep breath. He sets his jaw.

HANK
Steady, son. I know it's bad, but we've got a job to do.

Hank begins to push the chickens back, herding the mob away from the body.

HANK
Drover! Drover! Give me some help here!

Drover recovers, pushes back the chickens, looking over his shoulder at the and then quickly away.

HANK
Get back! Get back! This is a crime scene, dang it! Get back!

The dogs turn to the vacated area around the body.

HANK
C'mon, son. Let's see what we can learn.

They begin to sniff everything in sight, the chicken, the ground, the trees, the feathers. They work out from the chicken until they have covered most of the yard in a hurry. Hank finally sticks his nose up, exasperated.
HANK
Nothing! Nothing but chicken tracks, chicken smells, chicken food, nothing! Those stupid birds fouled up a fresh crime scene.

DROVER
She sure is fresh, too.

Both dogs look hungrily at the chicken. They drool all over themselves.

HANK
Drover! C'mon, we've got an investigation here. If we don't catch on to the killer right quick, I know one Head of Ranch Security and one assistant that'll likely be in the doghouse. You check the shack, I'll give the perimeter the ol' once over.

Drover rushes inside, Hank begins to take his time, sniffing and inspecting the fence deliberately. About halfway around, he stops, and looks through the fence.

HANK'S POV
Through the criss-cross chicken wire, a path lies beaten in a circle around bones in the dust. A spot of blood covers the bones. In a circle around the bones, the dirt has been singed.

BACK TO SCENE
Hank runs back to shed.

HANK
Drover! Get out here!

Hank turns, runs, gets some speed up and flies over the wire. Drover follows. Hank circles the pattern slowly, covering all the angles and looking back to shack. Drover watches, cocks his head to one side, confused.
DROVER
Uh, Hank. What is it?

HANK
What do you mean, what is it? It's a clue, you pea-brain, a clue!

DROVER
Oh yeah, yeah...
   (beat)
...uh, why is it a clue?

HANK
Look! See the bloody bones...
and the burnt dirt!

The two dogs stare at the pattern in the dust.

DROVER
Uh, Hank. What does it mean?

HANK
Well, I don't know. Do I have to do everything around here? Do I?

DROVER
No.

The dogs stare some more. Hank scratches a flea. Drover's face lights up.

DROVER
Maybe there was a fight! The chicken coulda scapped with the uh, the uh...

HANK
Perspirator.

DROVER
Yeah, the perspirator! A fight!

HANK
Maybe. But how'd the chicken get all the way back inside the pen if the fight was out here? I doubt it.
Hank gingerly sniffs the air.

HANK
Drover, do you smell something?

Drover blushes. He begins to jump around Hank.

DROVER
Honest, Hank. It wasn't me. I swear! You told me don't go doing that unless I wanted to impress someone real special and I've been a good dog...

HANK
No! Not that! I mean the other smell. It's real faint...

A coyote HOWLS in the distance.

HANK
(continuing)
But it still doesn't figure. He's hungry. And he's dangerous. Why not devour your prey?

Hank races back toward the shack.

EXT. CHICKEN HOUSE - DAY

Hank sizes up the bird again and sniffs some more. His stomach GROWLS again, louder. He begins to drool, saliva running down his face.

DROVER
What, Hank?

HANK
(embarrassed)
Oh, uh, nothing. I was just saying what a difficult case this was. Obviously the killer wasn't stupid, sneaking his way past two highly trained investigators to do this dastardly deed.

(MORE)
HANK (CONT'D)
On the other hand, there has to be something a little off about somebody who would pass up on a ten piece chicken dinner. He's got to be crazy. Either that, or he just went for mashed potatoes.

Hank sniffs the bird some more. He wipes his chin, furtively, hiding it from Drover. His stomach GROWLS. He and Drover both stare at the bird, then each other. The drool flows freely from Hank's mouth.

HANK
So far, I just don't get it.
What's his angle?

DROVER
Oh, I'd say about here.

Drover leans sideways about fifty degrees. Hank goes back to sniffing.

HANK
Hmm. The bird's still warm.

DROVER
Are you thinking what I'm thinking?

HANK
NO!

DROVER
You look awful hungry there, Hank.

HANK
Hmm, yeah. Must be the humidity. Or the excitement of the case. Yeah, that's it.

DROVER
Well, which is it?
HANK
Uhh, the humidity.

DROVER
Seems pretty dry, actually.

Hank is drooling all over the yard by now. He coats the victim with slobber, spills it all over the yard, even flings some on Drover.

HANK
I was, well, I was thinking it was about time we asked one of them if he saw anything.

Hank jerks his head toward the shack.

DROVER
The chickens?

HANK
Yeah, I didn't want to have it come to that, but let's grill a few, so to speak, and find out how little they know.

The dogs run over to the shack. Drover slips in a puddle on the way.

HANK
Oh. Heh-heh. Watch yourself there.

They enter the shack.

INT. CHICKEN HOUSE - DAY

Hank and Drover enter the house. The chickens go berzerk, flapping and SQUAWKING.

Off in the corner, four chickens fight inside a cluster of onlookers. Two chickens, neck deep in hay, carry the other two on their shoulders, who gouge and scratch and claw. Wagers are placed, contestants are cheered.
DROVER
Hey, look! A chicken fight! I
didn't know they really did
that.

CHICKENS
Dog! Dog! Dog! Help! Help!

HANK
Simmer down! Simmer down! We just
want some answers. Hold it!

The chickens settle and start to preen themselves.

HANK
(continuing)
Did anybody notice anything out
of the ordinary last night?
Anything unusual?

The chickens look at each other.

HANK
(continuing)
Anything at all?

The chickens look at each other. Some look around
the pen at the walls of the shack. One, an OLD HEN,
perks up and gets off her roost. The egg she was
hatching, very tiny, breaks open. Hank moves closer
for a good look.

Out of the egg pops a teeny, portly, brown and white
QUAIL. One feather on his head, he looks around the
shack, then up at Hank.

KID QUAIL
Hey! How ya doin'!

HANK
Hmph. Precocious little cuss,
 isn't he? Well, stay out of the
 way, son. We've got important
 business here.

KID QUAIL
All right, gumshoe, reach for it!
Hank is merely amused. He scratches himself. He thinks for a second.

**HANK**

What do you remember about last night, little man? Did you hear anything?

**KID QUAIL**

What?! Buried under that?

(points at hen)

You must be crazy! I don't know nothin', dog, nothin'!

The quail is immediately smothered by the affection from his enormous mother. Hank turns back to the rest of the henhouse.

**HANK**

(continuing)

Do you all remember last night?

The chickens look at each other. Finally, one perks up.

**CHICKEN**

Seed?

The chickens react to this. They start flapping and nodding in agreement.

**CHICKENS**

Seed? Seed? Seed! Seed!

**HANK**

C'mon, Drover, this is hopeless.

The dogs leave the shack and trot out to the crime scene.

**EXT. CHICKEN HOUSE - DAY**

Hank looks at the chicken. Then Drover, who is staring into space.
HANK
Say, uh, Drover. Why don't you do a little scouting for us? Head on down to the canyons, and see if you can pick up on a fresh trail. We're getting nothing done fast here. Take your time.

DROVER
Yeah, Hank?

HANK
Yeah. Look things over real good, and if you don't find anything, try checking way up at the north cow pasture. That's it. Run along now.

DROVER
Ok. You gonna do some looking?

HANK
Yeah, I'm going to check out the breakfast, er, victim, a little closer. Pull out the old fine-toothed comb, run some tests, you know. Get going, son. I'll check back with you later. Much later.

Hank turns back to the chicken, sniffing and drooling. Drover shrugs and begins to shuffle away. Hank's stomach GROWLS again. Drover stops.

DROVER
Did you say something, Hank?

HANK
No, course not. Now beat it.

DROVER
Ok, ok. I just thought I heard something.

Drover trots off, perplexed. Hank turns his attention back to the chicken.
HANK (V.O.)
Now, I know what you're thinking.
But, shoot, there wasn't anything
more could be done for the victim.
I was hungry, and he wasn't gonna
get any deader. You boys could
understand that. I just kinda
figgered that maybe somebody could
dispose of him in a proper and
satisfying manner. An as Head of
Ranch Security, I filled the bill.
After all, those chickens all met
the same eventual fate, right?

Hank picks up the chicken and, looking around,
sneaks away.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. BARN - DAY

Hank lies on his gunny sack behind the barn, belly
bulging and a contented, half-sleepy look on his
face. Chicken bones and feathers litter the ground
around him.

HANK (V.O.)
Yes, a lengthy investigation like
that always did make me feel a bit
sleepy. I was primed for a snooze
when the hammer fell.

Slim appears around the corner, swinging a gas can
in one hand. He stops in his tracks when he sees
Hank.

Hank struggles to his feet. He looks up at his
owner. He rushes back and forth in front of him.

Slim stops for a moment, lost in thought. He looks
at Hank. He sees the chicken feathers everywhere.
The Gas can comes flying at Hank. Hank stops running
and stares. His tail wags hopefully.

Slim stomps off in the direction of the house.
HANK (V.O.)
Now Slim thought I was the murderer. This was not good. I had to explain.

Hank runs after him.

EXT. HOUSE - DAY

Slim appears on the porch. Hank is right there, coming up the steps, tail wagging. At the first sight of the shotgun in his hand, Hank turns and runs. He is halfway across the yard by the time the birdshot starts to fly. Hank zigs and zags at full throttle while Slim fires again. He stops to reload.

Slim fires one more shot for emphasis. Hank is long gone.

EXT. BLUFF - DAY

Hank runs up a small rise to a hilltop. Trotting to the edge, he collapses at the top of a blind bluff, from which he can see the entire ranch in the distance. He pants for awhile. His whole furry body shakes and heaves. The drool pours off his tongue.

HANK (V.O.)
Boy, I've been in many a tight spot in my day, but none were so desperate as this. I had screwed up, there's no denying that. That chicken didn't taste near as good now, now that it had cost me Slim's trust...

Hank rolls over. He rubs his belly. He WHINES.

HANK (V.O.)
(continuing)
I started to run over my options, what I could tell about who set me up and how I was gonna root 'em out. All good detectives did this. But at this point I had more questions than I had options...
Hank stretches aching legs.

HANK (V.O)
(continuing)
...I tried to work up a possible profile of the killer, but all I knew was that he was a lunatic that left lots of goofy tracks. I couldn't even narrow down a species to get suspicious of, except for the skunk, and I wanted to stay down wind of him. No sir, The big problem was with the chickens. Those fat, lazy farm chickens were so stupid that their entire language is made up of only a dozen words, and half of them are just different ways of saying "help." Dang fowl. Naww, I had to go sleuthing on my own. I'd have to watch my step, though. Slim would be gunning for me for sure. I needed a break on this case so bad I decided to take one, right there.

Hank falls asleep in the sun.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. CHICKEN HOUSE - NIGHT

The CHICKENS COO in the pen, bedded down for the night, CRICKETS CHIRP. The air, otherwise, is still. Hank tiptoes into the yard. He begins to pace back and forth outside the pen. A few scattered feathers are all that remain of the carnage. He studies them as he thinks in the moonlight.

HANK (V.O)
It occurred to me that if I wanted to keep my job, I might oughta get down to business. Figured I'd give the crime scene another look-see. No Slim, that was good.

(MORE)
HANK (V.O.) (CONT'D)
No chicken, the place looked different. Then it hit me. When the chicken had been killed, he hadn't been eaten. The killer, presumably a wild animal, hadn't immediately converted the chicken into supper, a likely move in a case like this. And that fact meant only one thing. We weren't dealing with your average murderer, if there was such a thing. We were dealing with a psychograph. Or a pathopsyche. Whatever. Anyway, a real tough hombre. Now we were getting somewhere.

He checks the night wind.

He filters some dirt through his paw.

He looks to the sky for help.

He stops. Then paces around the pen.

He marches out to the fence to look at the ground. He sniffs around it.

He sniffs the air.

HANK (V.O.)
The details were sketchy. But they were there. A bloody bone... burnt dirt... and then something new. A smell. That was what had been bothering me, the flea in the spot I couldn't reach. I remembered it, but couldn't place it. Then it hit me, like the supper dish hits the porch. Coyotes.

A coyote HOWLS in the distance.
HANK (V.O.)
(continuing)
The word sent chills down my spine. This case was going to be a bear, for sure. Not that the killer was a bear. I didn't know. But I knew a little more than I had. I was just beginning to get a hold on the problem. Then she walked in.

Beulah lopes in from out of the night. She approaches Hank, then backs off, swooning.

BEULAH
My goodness, Hank. You've been blasted.

HANK
Yup. Skunk trouble. Listen, sweetheart. A lot's changed. They hit the chicken house this afternoon. Danger is everywhere. In fact, this place isn't safe.

BEULAH
Well, what are you doing here?

HANK
I'm a detective. Danger is my business. But I'm afraid this is no place for a lady.

BEULAH
Hah!

HANK
Ok, alright. But my brand of renegade detective genius works best without distraction, and I was just on the verge of a breakthrough concerning the particular...Hey!

Hank stares off suddenly, toward the house.

BEULAH
What is it?
HANK

Slim got some new tires for his pickup today...

HANK's POV

An old beaten-up Ford with shiny new tires sits in the driveway.

HANK (O.S.)

...don't those look sharp!

BACK TO SCENE

BEULAH

Ok, Sherlock. I'll leave the big, smelly detective to his big, important case. I wouldn't want to distract you. I just thought you might want to help me round up the sheep. Just you, me, the moonlight and the lambs.

Hank winces, then WHINES. Then he starts to scratch a flea on his stomach. Beulah turns to go.

HANK

Well, maybe I could use a break.

BEULAH

No, no. If it's not convenient, you just stay right here.

Hank winces again. Then he whines just a little.

HANK

Hey, have you seen Drover?

BEULAH

Not lately. The last I saw of him he was down at the pond. Ooh, is that a flea you're scratching, or are you just happy to see me?
HANK
Hmph. That figures, if there's serious work to be done, he's off somewhere being worthless.

BEULAH
Don't be too hard on him Hank. After all, he's still just a pup. Did it ever occur that you might need some help to solve this?

HANK
Well, ok. Maybe we could swing by the pond and get him to relieve me. I really need to talk.

The dogs leave the chickens together.

EXT. BEULAH'S PASTURE - NIGHT

Hank and runs alongside Beulah, patrolling the perimeter of the flock. They run over hills, into gullies as they talk, always nudging strays to the center in groups of three or four.

BEULAH
And he ran you off, just like that?

HANK
Yeah. I tell you Beulah, I'm wanted. Probably all over the county by now.

The dogs trot up one hill, down into gully.

HANK
(continuing)
Somewhere, a crazy critter killer wants me out of the picture.

BEULAH
Well, you didn't help matters by eating that chicken.
HANK
I know, I know. The investigation made me hungry. The grunt of it all is that now this looney tune has got me where he wants me - off the ranch.

The dogs travel up another hill.

BEULAH
Do you think Drover's up to it?

HANK
Normally I'd say no, but with a crazoid on the loose I'd have to say definitely not.

Two SHEEP, a mother and child, stray far off their path. Hank and Beulah run toward them, snapping.

HANK
(continuing)
Get back there! I don't think he'd know a raid if it jumped up and bit him on the, uh, tail. Go on! Git!

The sheep graze slowly in the direction of the flock. Hank and Beulah trot down the hill.

HANK
(continuing)
...If I could just solve the case before Drover was really in danger. There are just too many things to add up. There's the tracks. The blood. The bones. The quail. The chickens (they pretty much equal a collective zero if you ask me, so we'll subtract them.)

The dogs stop. Beulah looks at Hank.

BEULAH
Subtract them? From what?
HANK
Um, the mystery. Of the quotient.
Let's see. What else? Crime scene calculations: Height, depth, speed, altitude, longitude, levity, apostrophe, temperature...

A HUMMING escapes through the breeze. Beulah looks around the pasture, then back to Hank. His whole body is shaking. Smoke pours from his ears. Suddenly, a POP! Hank shakes his head.

BEULAH
What's that?

HANK
Data control reports system overload. Whew! Oh, yeah, the sheep.

Hank and Beulah start trotting again.

The dogs crest another hill.

BEULAH
But who is it? That's the real question. If you could just know for sure, I know you could catch him, Hank.

HANK
Really?

BEULAH
Yeah.

HANK
Thanks, I needed that. You may be the only one who thinks that, sweetheart. This is a real six-mover. I just hope I'm not stumped.

BEULAH
Don't worry, Hank. You'll figure it out.
HANK
No, I know I'll figure it out. I just hope I'm not hit with a really large stump in the process.

A loud, high-pitched BAAA comes from the pasture behind them. Hank and Beulah stop, turn, and look back and toward the canyons.

HANK
Didn't we round them up already?

Beulah takes a laser fast head count.

BEULAH
We sure did, come on!

Hank and Beulah charge back over the slight hills. One, two three. They reach a large plain just yards from the canyons.

EXT. BEULAH'S PASTURE LARGE PLAIN - NIGHT

Hank and Beulah crest the hill and look off to the canyons

HANK AND BEULAH'S POV

The large momma sheep nudges a little one on the behind with her nose. She pushes her toward the canyons, most of the way across the plain. The little one keeps looking back over shoulder, trying to turn around. Over and over, she BA-AAAs for help.

Hank and Beulah BARK

The momma sheep keeps right on pushing, like a bulldozer.

HANK AND BEULAH (O.S.)
Hey you!

The momma sheep turns around, suddenly. Her eyes flash red. Leaving the lamb, she runs for the canyons.

BACK TO SCENE
Hank and Beulah charge after the sheep. The sheep heads straight for the canyons. The dogs close some ground, not much. The lamb nears the steep dropoff at the edge of the pasture. It looks like a suicide rush.

EXT. CANYON CLIFF - NIGHT

The sheep reaches the edge and leaps right off the cliff. The cliff is ten feet down. In the middle of her fall, her eyes flash red, lighting up the trees at the bottom of the drop.

Mid-air. Red flash. The white fluffy sheep metamorphoses into a huge muscled, jetblack coyote. SCRAUNCH. He lands with a thump, snarling, drooling, breathing hard. He runs off.

Hank and Beulah reach the edge. They look over, expecting to see a squashed sheep.

HANK AND BEULAH'S POV

Nothing. Then, LEAVES RUSTLE, and a black furry flash streaks through the brush. He is gone.

BACK TO SCENE

Hank and Beulah stand on the cliff, blinking their eyes.

HANK
What in the world was that?

BEULAH
Whoo! I don't know. I've heard of a wolf in sheep's clothing before, but that's weird!

HANK
Yeah, and it's about the third weird thing to happen around here lately. Did we actually see that?
BEULAH
I think so. That sheep wasn't part of my herd. I counted.

HANK
What is this? Sheep kidnapping sheep? Coyotes running wild? Chickens, well, you know... What in the world is going on here?

A coyote HOWLS. The dogs' heads snap around to the canyons. Darkness.

BEULAH
C'mon. He's long gone. C'mon Hank.

EXT. BEULAH'S PASTURE LARGE PLAIN - NIGHT

Hank and Beulah trot up to the motherless sheep, wandering lost on the plain.

BEULAH
Hello, little one. C'mon now, honey. Let's go. I'll race you!

The lamb perks up and runs. Beulah has quite a way with sheep. Hank lags behind, lost in thought. The dogs run back to the herd, behind the little sheep. Hank suddenly stops.

He dashes through the flock, nose to the ground. The sheep part as he pushes through. Finally, he stops. He looks at the ground.

HANK'S POV - THE GROUND

Two bloody bones, ground into a circle of scorched earth.

BACK TO SCENE

Hank paws at the bones, looks around, then sniffs the air. He raises an eyebrow. A coyote HOWLS.

HANK
In sheep's clothing! That's it! Haa!
He looks up, runs to Beulah. He stops her.

HANK
Beulah that's it!

BEULAH
That's what?

HANK
The case. I've got it! Look, I have to go away for awhile.

BEULAH
Hank!

HANK
Just a few days, I hope. Don't worry.

BEULAH
Where are you going?

HANK
Not far. Look, do me a favor and look in on Drover for me. He'll have to go it alone for awhile.

BEULAH
Sure, but...

HANK
Beulah, sweetheart, I love you. I just can't say anymore. Here...

He nuzzles her. She takes in a big whiff of Hank, burying her nose in to his sandy fur and bumping up against him.

HANK
Goodbye, and thanks.

BEULAH
For what?

HANK
The idea!
BEULAH
Goodbye Hank!

He runs off in the moonlight.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. BARN - NIGHT

Hank lopes up to the barn. Drover is on duty.

HANK
Son, there's been a break in the case. I'm going undercover.

DROVER
You're going inside to take a nap in Slim's bed? Now?

HANK
No, son. I'm gonna go pretend I'm someone else. See if I can't sell those old coyotes on the idea of Hank the Outlaw.

DROVER
Great! When do we leave?


DROVER (O.S.)
Boy, I've never been out on a case before! Can I make sandwiches for the trip?

HANK
Nope. I'll be travelin' light.

Drover pokes out from behind the barn, draggin a cloth bundle full of camping supplies, suntan lotion, sunglasses, etc.

DROVER
How light?
HANK
Yep, real light. You're staying here.

DROVER
All by myself?

HANK
Yep. That's about the size of it.

DROVER
The size of what?

HANK
The size of the pickle I'm in.

DROVER
I like pickles. They're crunchy.

HANK
Me too. But that's just a figure of speech.

DROVER
I was never much good with figures.

HANK
How do you figure?

DROVER
Not very well. In fact, not at all.

HANK
Well, you better learn. Cause while I'm gone, you may need a calculator, a slide rule, a table of elephants, anything to help you run this ranch. I won't be able to help.

DROVER
I'll do my best, Hank. Why can't I go with you?
HANK
Well, it would look mighty suspicious for us two to go waltzing into coyote country. I'm afraid you'd blow my cover. And besides. I need you to stay here, and guard these dang chickens with your life, if necessary.

DROVER
Do you really think I can do it?

HANK
No. But pay attention and don't quit on yourself and you might get lucky. And remember the signs. Bloody bones... burnt dirt... and that peculiar smell.

A coyote HOWLS.

DROVER
I'm gonna miss you, Hank.

HANK
Yeah, I'll miss you, son. But I have to go. Sleep with one eye open. You'll be fine. Adios.

Hank trudges off in the moonlight. Amid the vacation gear, Drover watches him leave.

EXT. POOL IN CANYONS - DAY

The birds listen to Hank. The sun has risen over the canyon walls.

HANK
And that was about the time you boys pointed me in the direction of the coyotes.

JUNIOR
I-I rememb-ber. We ate your c-c-c-collar.
HANK
Right! And if I hadn't shed that collar, I wouldn't be in the trouble I'm in now!

Hank GROWLS at the birds.

WALLACE
Hold it now! As I remember you asked us to get rid of that piece of leather.

HANK
I did?

WALLACE
You bet you did.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. CANYONS - DAY

Hank nods to the two buzzards who stand on the canyon floor. Hank starts to trot away.

WALLACE
Hey! What about us? We're hungry, you whippersnapper! I waste my time and energy trying to pass on a little wisdom to you young folks and it's just rush, rush, rush. Go, go, go. Never a thought for us old buzzards. I've kept these canyons clean for almost forty years! No one to thank me, no one to say howdy. No respect at all. Just Junior here, and that ain't much. Reminds me of the time I...

HANK
Hold it! What do I have to give you to shut up?

WALLACE
Got anything to eat?
HANK
(looking around)
Eat, eat...Hmm. Say, how about this old collar? Kind of makes me stick out like a sore thumb around here.

WALLACE
Well, that thingybob around your neck looks like it'll do. Why'n't you let Junior come on over and kind of take that off?

HANK
Ok then. But mind you keep that beak on the collar.

JUNIOR
Oh b-b-boy!

Junior waddles over, Hank ducks his head, and with a few quick pecks, the leather collar comes loose.

HANK
Alright then. You boys take care.

Hank's salutation is lost on the buzzards. They fight over the collar, SQUAWKING and FLAPPING. Hank shakes his head and trots off.

EXT. BLIND CANYON - DAY

Hank trots toward the blind end of a box canyon. The walls of the canyon become steeper as he lopes to its end.

Hank stops in his tracks and looks toward the end of the canyon.

HANK'S POV

A BEAUTIFUL COYOTE plays with a field mouse on the floor of the canyon. She catches it, lets it go, catches it, lets it go. Not exactly fierce hunting. She seems to take great delight in her little game, which just makes her more attractive, child-like.
HANK (V.O.)
Well, well. There she was. She was in the canyon, chasing mice. And a whole lot prettier than a turkey buzzard. Funny, now that I look back on it, that we should meet like we did. If I'd had better sense, maybe, I would've turned and walked away right there, just headed back up that canyon and never thought twice. She was, after all, a coyote. And coyotes and cowdogs just don't mix. But no, like a fool, I decided to chase after her. If I'd have known then what I know now, maybe I wouldn't have. But I did.

She looks up, straight at Hank. She turns her attention back to the mouse, making little jumps and pounces across the ground. Another quick glance back, and she runs toward the end of the canyon.

BACK TO SCENE

Hank runs after her. She leads him through the canyon, over rocks, under logs, always glancing back to keep him following, never going flat out fast to get away.

Suddenly, she zooms behind a rock. Hank follows.

EXT. BEHIND THE ROCK - DAY

Hank smiles, ready to catch her as he comes around the rock. Nothing. She is gone. Hank looks around, then up. The girl coyote is on top of the rock, eyeing him from a safe distance.

Hank smiles and wags his tail, panting from the chase.

HANK
Hello miss.

(MORE)
HANK (CONT'D)
You're awfully cute to be a coyote. Could I ask your name?

MISSY
Yes. You could.

HANK
Well, ok. What is your name, pretty miss coyote?

MISSY
I'm called Girl-Who-Drinks-Blood.

HANK
Whoa! Where'd you get such an ugly name?

MISSY
My name isn't ugly to a coyote. Blood makes the coyote strong. It keeps my fur shiny in winter. I guess you don't understand.

HANK
No, no. I understand. It's just, well, it's just such a long name, such a mouthful to say all the time. Hmm. Mind if I just call you Missy?

Missy hops down from the rock. She walks toward Hank.

MISSY
Ok. Missy. I like that.

HANK
So, Missy. What's a nice girl like you doing stuck in a species like this?

Missy giggles. She twitches her tail.

MISSY
What's your name, dog?
HANK
My name's Hank. Hank the, uh...
Hank the... Hank of the Yukon!

MISSY
Ok. Hunk.

HANK

MISSY
That what I said. Hunk. What is
the last part, of the Yuck-on?

HANK
No, Yukon! It's from when I was a
pup, raised in the frozen tundra
of the north... Ever been up north?

Missy shakes her head.

HANK
Great! I mean, too bad. You see,
up there I was a sled dog. Know
what a sled dog is?

Missy shakes her head.

HANK
Even better! I mean, what a shame.
See, I was a lead dog and pulled
the sled, a huge 300-pound thing,
through the snow, sometimes all by
myself, well, practically. And there
was this dog, right? He was a dog
just like me, except stupid and
slow. And he did none of the work.
And one day he says, 'I'm gonna be
lead dog.' So I've gotta whip him.

Missy, looking into the bushes behind Hank, suddenly
pales. Her eyes go wide, her jaw drops. Hank
interprets her reaction as interest.

HANK
It's ok.

(MORE)
HANK (CONT'D)

We fought it out, right
there in the snow, in front of all
the other dogs...

MISSY'S POV

In the bushes behind Hank, a BOBCAT rocks back and
forth, waiting to pounce on Hank. Hank moves about
in front of fat branches and skinny ones at crucial
points in the story. Missy sees, but can't interrupt
to warn him.

HANK
(continuing)
...And he jumped on me. But he
was slow. So for a second there,
it was all teeth and claws,
teeth and claws, until finally,
I gave him just a little poke in
the eye with my tail...

Hank straightens out his tail and pokes the bobcat
in the eye. The cat falls to the ground, just as he
was about to make his move. Missy sees their chance.

BACK TO SCENE

HANK
...and he was out.

MISSY
Uh-huh. Are you hungry, Hunk?

HANK
Well, yeah.

MISSY
I know where to get mice. C'mon.

Missy runs back into the canyon. Hank chases her.
The bobcat rubs his eye in the bushes.

EXT. BLIND END OF CANYON - DAY

Missy runs straight to the sheer wall at the end of
the canyon. She stops, turns around.
Hank comes behind, stops a few feet away, slightly wary. Missy approaches him slowly.

She nuzzles his face with her nose, behind his ear. Hank raises an eyebrow. He sniffs. She glides over him with her nose, throws her hip into his shoulder, testing his weight. She nozeles him again.

MISSY
(whispering)
Hunk very pretty dog. Do you like me, Hunk?

HANK
You know, you are one of the most interesting-smelling critters I've ever run across.

MISSY
You're so funny. You really should meet my family.

Hank grins. He takes a step to her.

HANK
Really? So you mean there's more at home like you?

MISSY
No, not exactly like...

Some mean-looking COYOTES, four of them, come creeping toward them from the canyons. They are snarling, crouching. Hank is surrounded. He looks up from Missy, wipes the hypnotized look from his face as he sees them. The coyotes advance and Missy backs away. Hank looks quickly for an exit. There is none.

Hank stands tall as the oldest of the coyotes, CHIEF GUT, steps forward.

CHIEF GUT
(smiling)
Look, my daughter caught a dog!

Coyotes LAUGH.
CHIEF GUT
(continuing)
You're a very foolish dog to be caught out here all alone. What are you called?

HANK
Hank.

CHIEF GUT
Ah, Hank. Tell me, do you like Girl-Who-Drinks-Blood? You think she's... pretty?

HANK
Mighty pretty, yes she is.

Gut and other coyotes LAUGH again.

CHIEF GUT
Hah-hah. Well, you are in big trouble now, Hank.
(continuing to Missy)
Grzzhizney difulnik. Bltat oosh ee ee grot.

Hank looks directly at the camera and cocks his head. He waits impatiently for a second, then TITLES appear at the bottom of the screen.

TITLES: "This is great, daughter! Now we can torture the dog and eat him."

Hank looks down and reads the titles upside down, somewhat slowly. He reacts, the fear floods his eyes.

This pattern continues through the scene. When the coyotes speak to each other, Hank reads subtitles with everyone else.

MISSY
Don't hurt him. I want to keep him.

CHIEF GUT
But he's a dog.
MISSY
But not just any dog. Hunk is
very brave. And fast. And strong.

CHIEF GUT
Hmm. Do you like this dog very
much?

MISSY
Oh yes. I love Hunk.

CHIEF GUT
Well, Hunk, er... Hank. Let's take
a look at you. You don't have a
collar, so you don't belong to the
humans...

Missy's brother, SCRAUNCH, springs forward from the
pack. He is bigger than the others. The hair on his
neck bristles.

SCRAUNCH
NO! This is not a coyote. We should
tear him apart. Right now.

Scraunch faces Hank and glares at him. Hank glares
back.

CHIEF GUT
Scraunch. Your temper is bad.
She says he is a good dog. You
should listen.

Scraunch's hair rises. He continues to glare.

SCRAUNCH
Good dog! Without a person and
gun to back him up, he is nothing.
Good dog, hah!
(beat)
He is a chicken dog.

Hank, still reading, finally reads this phrase. He
leaps toward Scraunch, GROWLING.
HANK
Chicken dog! Them's fighting words.

Hank takes a single step toward Scraunch. The coyote stands his ground.

SCRAUNCH
You're a dog!

HANK
And what's wrong with that? Some of my best friends are dogs!

SCRAUNCH
Grr. Humans.

HANK
Ok. I'll give you that one. But shoot, I never had much use for humans. Coyotes either. But now, there's one particular coyote I'm interested in. Kind of changes things, don't it, good buddy?

Hank shoots a wink at Missy.

The coyotes look around. Gut stares down Hank, watches him closely. Scraunch steps toward Hank. The hair on his back rises from his neck to his tail. The coyote's back arches to the sky.

SCRAUNCH
(breathing heavily)
I will kill the chicken dog.

HANK
Oh! You really think so! Boy, you are dumb! You have fallen right for it! You've been out in the sticks too long, Scraunch. You are so country it hurts!

The coyotes stare at Hank in utter disbelief. Hank is oblivious, enjoying the confrontation. He marches up to Scraunch. The two are nose to nose.
SCRAUNCH
(trembling with rage)
I will kill the chicken dog!

Hank and Scraunch are squared off. All eyes are on them. Seconds pass. Gut looks at Scraunch, then Hank. Gut looks at Missy, then Hank, then back to his daughter. It’s a showdown. Gut walks over to Scraunch. He WHISPERS in the young coyote’s ear.

SCRAUNCH
No!

CHIEF GUT
Yes! Not another word.

Scraunch turns away and stalks off. Hank reads the exchange, and then visibly relaxes. He runs a paw across his forehead. Gut turns and stands in front of Hank.

CHIEF GUT
No fighting today.

HANK
Glad you see it my way, chief.

CHIEF GUT
Yes, this is an old coyote tradition. You must stay, learn our ways, hunt with us. For my daughter, we must get you ready.

Missy blushes and looks to the ground. Hank cocks his head, clueless.

Gut, Missy and the other coyotes lead the surprised Hank away. He is swept up in the small pack, Chief Gut beaming, Missy eyeing him coyly. The pack breaks into a quick trot, dodging through the canyons.

HANK (V.O.)
Yes, the plan was in action. I don’t mind telling you folks that I was just a little scared facing down that big, smelly Scraunch.
(MORE)
HANK (V.O.) (CONT’D)
Just a little...
(beat)
Shoot, I was so petrified that even my fleas were shaking. But now I had 'em right where I wanted 'em, and a pretty girl on my arm to boot. All I had to do was a little quick investigatin', pick out the killer and bring 'em to justice. Or so I thought.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. CANYONS - DAY

Hank runs through a wide open canyon, behind two coyotes in blazing sunlight. Their tongues flop, their tails bounce, muscles strain.

CHIEF GUT (V.O.)
(continuing)
... Coyotes hunt for food. They take care of their brothers and sisters. These two coyotes are called Rip and Snort. They will be your guide. They will teach you how to hunt. And for Missy, Hank, you will hunt.

DISSOLVE TO:

A SERIES OF SHORT SCENES:

A) Snort chases a roadrunner through the canyons. Hank chases a roadrunner through the canyons.

B) Snort catches his bird in his teeth. Hank catches one, too. Chief Gut watches and nods.

C) Hank and Gut speak their own languages to each other. As they speak, TITLES appear on the screen. Gut picks TITLES off the screen and shows to Hank. Hank slowly REPEATS the gibberish. Gut LAUGHS.
HANK
What'd I say?

CHIEF GUT
"Bunnies are crunchy"

Gut pats him on the back and they continue, Gut speaking, the titles appearing, and Hank reading and repeating.

C) Hank chases a mouse into a log. The mouse in his mouth, Hank deposits it on top of a pile of mice and trots off for more. Gut sneaks out of the trees and up to the pile, then sneaks off with a couple.

D) Hank growls at a baby bobcat, shooing the youngster away from his kill. Hank turns around to face a huge, angry, green-eyed mother bobcat. She YEOWLS. Hank's hair sticks straight up. Hank runs away, leaving the food.


F) Hank GROWLS and shows his teeth to Rip, defending a plump, juicy bird-meal.

G) Hank huffing and puffing. He runs over logs, rocks in the canyons. Catching his breath, he turns to Snort, who is cool as a cucumber.

HANK
What'd you say these critters were called?

SNORT
(trying not to laugh)
Snipes.

H) Hank adds another mouse to the pile. He walks off as before. Gut sneaks off with a couple, just like before.

EXT. TRAIL IN CANYONS - DAY

Gut smiles as he trots down a trail, mice hanging by their tails in his mouth. The trail runs next to small cliff.
EXT. TOP OF CLIFF - DAY

Hank pushes a small rock off the cliff with his two front paws.

EXT. TRAIL IN CANYONS - DAY

The rock lands in some trees behind Old Gut. He drops the mice and turns around, quickly.

Hank leaps down, snatches the mice. He stands behind Gut and snarls. Gut hears him land and turns back around. The old coyote knows he's been had. He smiles. Hank LAUGHS.

    CHIEF GUT
    Very good, my son. You are sneaky as well as brave.

    HANK
    Yep. And if anybody knows sneaky when he sees it, it's you, old man.

    CHIEF GUT
    Come on. Let's go. I must tell Girl-Who-Drinks-Blood she finally has a fine dog.

Gut's face breaks into sudden fear. His bristly hair sticks up on his neck.

    CHIEF GUT
    Hank! A bobcat!

    HANK
    Huh? Wait a minute...

Hank starts to turn around, then plants his paw on the mice's tails. He catches Gut in mid-snatch. Gut smiles again. Hank smiles. Gut nods, they leave, Hank now swinging the mice from his mouth by the tail.
EXT. COYOTE CAMP - DAY

The small pack emerges in an open clearing along a canyon wall. A few MORE COYOTES, about a half a dozen, sleep in the sparse mesquite shade at the edges of the clearing. Some depressions in the rock wall of the canyon, not quite caves, provide a bare minimum of shelter. The coyotes stir and slowly lope toward the clearing to meet the group. They appear mildly curious.

CHIEF GUT
Brothers! Come out, gather round! I have news for you!

Other coyotes slink out and form a lazy circle around Gut and Hank. A few pups follow their mothers, bringing the total number of the pack to about ten. Gut is the oldest coyote by far.

CHIEF GUT
(indicating Hank)
Today, my heart smiles. As most of you know, this young dog's name is Hank. Over the last few suns, he has shown himself to be brave, selfless and cunning...

Hank, next to Gut, begins to puff out his chest.

CHIEF GUT
(continuing)
...yea, verily, he has run with the swiftest of our swift, hunted with the bravest of our brave, and swum with some of your most buoyant brothers. On this special and sacred occasion, I want you to stop looking upon him as "that dog" and take him in as a brother, as one of your own...

Hank affects the look of a visiting dignitary at a solemn occasion in his honor.
CHIEF GUT
(continuing)
... in spite of his more obvious
dog-like flaws: his dinky tail,
his pale, sickly coat, his chubby
rump. Be patient with him. He does
not know even the most simple
things about life. Have pity, he
has obviously been fed from human
spoons for many moons. Look
inside, and you may all soon know
that some day he will make a fine
brother to us all...

Hank hangs his head, slightly indignant and plenty
shattered.

CHIEF GUT
(continuing)
... I know this is true. My
daughter knows it also. And so, I
declare that when the time comes,
this dog I now call Hank will be
the coyote I call son. This dog
is the future husband of
Girl-Who-Drinks-Blood!

Hank sits up straight, in complete shock. Missy,
blushing, enters the circle to stand beside him.
Chief Gut beams. The women in the circle begin to
cry. Slowly, Hank recovers his wits, and opens his
mouth to protest. But Chief Gut leans back, giving
AN ENORMOUS HOWL. The other coyotes HOWL IN UNISON.
Hank is drowned out, helpless.

Scraunch watches the scene from the rim of the
canyon. After the howls die down, he gives one
solitary GROWL, low and mean.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. COYOTE CAMP - DAY

Hank lies in the sun, scratching his belly, next to
Missy. Several other coyotes lie around the camp.
Scraunch is not among them.
HANK
So, what's this Scraunch's deal, anyway? He's shown me nothing but attitude ever since I hitched on with you all.

MISSY
Well, Scraunch is my...my brother. He's just naturally protective, that's all.

EXT. COYOTE CAMP - DAY - CLOSE ANGLE - HANK'S TAIL

As Hank talks, three COYOTE PUPS scoot into position around his twitching tail. Two rush to their posts on either side, and stays in front, following the twitching back and forth, back and forth, with his head.

HANK (O.S.)
Oh, so he's not cranky, he's your brother?

MISSY (O.S.)
No, well, yes. I guess you just have to know Scraunch.

HANK (O.S.)
Hmm. I'm not sure I want to...

Hank's tail finally stops. The pup in front GROWLS a tiny growl, then tenses. He jumps. The others jump.

BACK TO SCENE

Hank continues to blather. Missy looks at him.

HANK
...matter of fact, reminds me of a feller I knew once...

Hank looks up. He YEOWWS. And he leaps into the air, clawing at his tail. The tail has the three pups, hanging on for dear life with their teeth. Missy starts to LAUGH.
Hank finally knocks off the pups, who scatter, GIGGLING.

HANK
Boy, for a second I thought I had some giant fleas. Why, those onery little midgets, somebody ought to...

MISSY
(laughing)
Oh, they do that to everybody. It just means they love you, Hank. Come on, sit down.

Hank begins to brush himself off and sit down. Missy LAUGHS.

HANK
I know, but a guy's tail? Jeez, there's something just sort of extra special about...Hey! What are you laughing at!

INT. SCRAUNCH'S DEN - DAY

Scraunch lives under a shallow overhang in a cliff overlooking the canyons. Dirt floor, skulls and bones, fur and feathers are scattered around. The big coyote lies in the dirt. Rip stands in the doorway, next to Scraunch.

Scraunch turns to Rip. He SNORTS.

SCRAUNCH
This chicken dog takes your woman and you're not even mad, bah!

RIP
Just one moon back, you told me to leave her alone.

SCRAUNCH
Ahh! Forget that, doesn't the sight of them together just gnaw at you?

(MORE)
SCRAUNCH (CONT' D)
Don't you want to just
tear him apart?! Or at least,
chase him away?

RIP
We don't need to run him off.
When she gets tired of him, he
leaves. She's like that.

SCRAUNCH
Girl-who-Drinks-Blood is not worth
a fight?

RIP
Well...

Scraunch stands. he starts to GROWL. His eyes flash
in the darkened cave.

SCRAUNCH
Are you a coyote or not? Coyotes
are always ready to fight! You
smash this chicken dog or we're
gonna fight now!

Rip GRUMBLIES and GROWLS on his way out the door.

EXT. CHICKEN YARD - DAY

Kid Quail runs around in the dust with assorted
CHICKS. They're playing roll-the-piece-of-gravel-
with-your-beak. Kid is bored.

He wanders away from the group. Sniffing the ground
and walking, his one head feather bobs. He finds the
back end of a worm out of the ground. Kid attacks
it. He plays tug-of-worm, in and out of the hole.

Kid GRUNTS and struggles. The other chicks rush over
in a herd. They trample Kid, steal the worm, and
knock him into the dust. Kid leans on an elbow.

KID QUAIL
It's like messin' with a mob. Or
a gang. But it's chickens!

(MORE)
KID QUAIL (CONT'D)
Always yellow, stupid, and
following each other around.

The chicks fight each other for the worm.

ANGLE WIDENS to include pen, trees, chicken house, and Drover, asleep in the dust in front of the commotion.

EXT. CLIFF OUTSIDE SCRAUNCH'S DEN - NIGHT

Rip builds himself up to fighting mad as he winds down through the rocks and brush on the cliff. At the bottom, he marches straight for Hank.

INT. SCRAUNCH'S DEN - NIGHT

Scraunch stands, sees Rip stalk Hank. He smiles a wicked smile.

EXT. CANYON FLOOR - NIGHT

Rip runs up, surprising Hank, who stands over Missy, tickling her ribs with his nose.

RIP
Why don't you go back where you're wanted.

HANK
Well, I am wanted Rip. That's the difference between you and me. Missy here was just telling me that I was the cutest, toughest, most stimulating creature to ever run around on four paws. I'd say that made me wanted. You got a problem with that?

RIP
Girl-who-Drinks-Blood belongs to me!
MISSY
(sighing)
Ohh, Rip. Don't start. It's over.

Hank looks at Missy. She looks up in the air. Rip tenses his muscles and bristles his hair.

HANK
Over? I thought he was family!

RIP
Shoot, you just don't get it.
This is a pack. I'm her uncle's cousin. She's Snort's brother's niece. I'm Snort's sister's aunt.
That's just the nature of it.
Don't screw up, dog. She's mine.
And you won't steal her without a fight.

HANK
Steal? Nobody' stealing anybody, Ripper. Cowdogs don't steal, unlike you sorry coyotes. Oops, sorry beautiful. Didn't mean to insult the whole species there, just this mangy member of it.

Hank, still keeping his cool, swaggers over to Rip and eyes him up and down.

HANK
(continuing)
But, now that you mention it, maybe stealing is what all this is about, huh?

Rip GROWLS.

HANK
(continuing)
Yes sir, maybe that's just it. You know what I think? I think you don't care about Missy at all. I think you're scared.
RIP
I'm not scared of you!

HANK
No, not me. Scared you'll have to share what you steal. I've been watching you, Rip. And I know you've been stealing those chickens. And I'm here to tell you, brother. I want in.

RIP
In what?

HANK
In on the scam. What are you, deaf?

Rip GROWLS.

HANK
(continuing)
Hello? Rip? Anybody home? Or did all that chicken you stole suddenly affect your tongue?

RIP
Yeah, I'll steal. I'll steal the fur off of my own mother just to keep warm. I'll steal candy from a baby. And the baby, too. If I'm hungry...

Rip walks slowly toward Hank. Missy backs off, watching everything.

RIP
(continuing)
...But I didn't steal any blasted chicken! And I wouldn't do some low-down, skunky thing like steal someone's girl!...

Rip is stiff now, hair up, on his toes.
RIP
(continuing)
...And I'm ready to fight about it!

Rip snarls. For good measure, he unleashes a ferocious HOWL.

HANK
Hmm, strategy...

Hank stiffens. He starts growling.

MISSY
He didn't steal me, I left!

The dog and coyote circle each other. They snarl, growl, show their teeth and snap. Missy looks on with considerable interest, not a bit of fear.

EXT. SCRAUNCH'S DEN - NIGHT

Scraunch watches with absolute glee. His two red eyes shine in the darkness.

EXT. CANYON FLOOR - NIGHT

The dog and coyote lunge for each other. They go back and forth, slashing with teeth and fangs.

After a while, to Missy's surprise, Hank gets the better of Rip, forcing him on his back.

HANK
(panting)
All right Rip. I could finish you off, right here. Here's the deal. You and me are gonna be buddies, right? You know what that means?

Rip shakes his head, afraid for his life.

HANK
(continuing)
Well, I'll spell it out for you.
(MORE)
HANK (CONT'D)
When I need help, you're gonna help. When I wanna know something, you're gonna tell me. And when I'm hungry, you're gonna get me some food. You got it?

Rip nods his head. Hank steps off of him. Rip scrambles to his feet. Missy slinks over to Hank and begins to lick his wounds.

HANK
Now, go on. Git! We want to be alone.

Rip runs off in a hurry. He looks back once at Scraunch's cave.

EXT. SCRAUNCH'S DEN - NIGHT
Scraunch SNORTS and enters his cave, disgusted. he settles down to watch Hank and Missy and fume.

EXT. CANYON FLOOR - NIGHT
Missy fusses over Hank, the hero.

MISSY
Hunk, lover. You did that for me?

HANK
Yeah, well. Sort of. For myself, mostly. You can't let coyotes push you around too much. You gotts hand it to Rip though. He's got one thing right. Never bark when you can fight. So, uh-uh, now that I've defended your honor, what's next? It's a beautiful night. The sky's the limit!

MISSY
After that ruckus? Aren't we a tiger.
HANK
Well, I'm a dog. And you're a coyote. And we need to do something.

Missy leans over and nuzzles him.

MISSY
Anything I want?

HANK
Sure, why not.

MISSY
Oh, well, I could...watch you beat up another old boyfriend.

HANK
Whew, I don't know... We could... go chase cars?

MISSY
Huh?

HANK
Never mind.

MISSY
We could go sneak up on the cattle, howl until our lungs ached, and then stampede them!

HANK
Boy! How about a nice, long nap. There's this willow tree, see and the moon's out...

MISSY
How about chasing some rats! Or, better, some rattlesnakes!

HANK
(looking up)
No, no. We're thinking way too astrophonical here. We could grab some trees, right. And, oh, build a balloon. And float up, up... Hey? Who's that up there?!
HANK'S POV

On the hill, two red eyes in the cave pierce the darkness.

BACK TO SCENE

Missy, cuddling her dog, is untroubled. Hank's fur is up. His ears are straight.

MISSY (eyes closed)
Oh. That's just my brother. He lives up there. You don't think a lady would go on a date unchaperoned, do you?

HANK (eyes wide open)
Oh. Well, I...

MISSY
Silly dog.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. OUTSIDE SCRAUNCH'S DEN - NIGHT

Rip, Snort, and Hank stand outside. Scraunch lays out a plan from the mouth of his den. The black coyote is shrouded in darkness. His eyes pierce the shadows.

SCRAUNCH
Tonight, we will steal sheep.

HANK
Did you say sheep?

Hank swallows hard.

SCRAUNCH
Yes, quiet, chicken dog!
HANK
Sorry, just checking. Um, steal?
Sure you didn't say count?

SCRAUNCH
Will you shut up! Now, here it is. We do this quick, quiet, together. Old Gut does not need to know. Here is the plan.

Scraunch scratches the directions into the dirt with his paw as he talks. The canyon is quiet, the moon is almost full.

SCRAUNCH
(continuing)
Rip! Snort! You start on this hill south of sheep, here. You start a fight and howl. Be plenty loud.

Rip and Snort nod and smile.

SCRAUNCH
(continuing)
...Then you, chicken dog, when I signal three quick howls, you come from this hill, here, and grab a big sheep. I will come from here. And I grab one. Two come in, one sheep dog. One gets sheep.

HANK
Yup. You gotta admire this plan's subtle complexities. So that's how it's gonna play out, huh?

SCRAUNCH
Yes, chicken dog. That's how it's gonna play out... Mostly.

Scraunch looks at the others, wanting validation of his brilliance. The coyotes nod.
EXT. HILL IN BEULAH'S PASTURE - NIGHT

Hank waits on a hill, not far from the flock. The moon is out, the coyotes are putting up a terrific RACKET. He is nervous, fidgety. More HOWLS. Silence. Three quick HOWLS. Hank streaks down from the hill.

EXT. BEULAH'S PASTURE - NIGHT

The HOWLS jolt Beulah, standing in front of her sheep. She tries to peer off into the distance toward the GROWLING and HOWLING far away. More HOWLS. She jerks her head all around. With the wind and the howls, she sounds surrounded. Then another eerie silence.

HANK (O.S.)
Psst! Beulah!

Beulah jumps about a mile, turns and looks. She is relieved to see Hank.

BEULAH
Oh Hank! You scared me half to death.

HANK
Look, Beulah. It's a trap! Get the herd together.
(beat)
He's coming from over there...
(jerks his head)
.. and he's plenty mean. Hurry! I gotta go!

BEULAH
Hank? What? Who?

HANK
Coyotes! Be careful, dang it! Goodbye sweetheart.

Hank runs off through the sheep.

BEULAH
(confused)
Hank wait! What's going on?
He is gone. Beulah stops, then runs off through the flock in the other direction.

EXT. ONE EDGE OF FLOCK - NIGHT

Hank looks over his shoulder, HOWLS once (a ridiculous, high-pitched, wavering howl). He grimaces, then, looking in Beulah's direction, sighs. A red flash over the flock sends him circling in that direction.

EXT. EDGE OF FLOCK - NIGHT

Beulah runs through the sheep toward the flash. Toward the edge of the canyons, she pulls up among the flock.

At the edge, an enormous sheep with red eyes cuts out lambs, driving them to the canyons.

Beulah GROWLS. She jumps toward the red-eyed sheep. The sheep turns. He is caught. Beulah advances, GROWLING.

The sheep nudges a little lamb between him and Beulah. Using the lamb as a hostage, the sheep backs off. Beulah slows.

The sheep edges for the canyons. Looking back, he ditches the lamb and runs for the canyons. Beulah follows at high speed, but the lamb has a good head start.

EXT. BUSHES NEAR FLOCK AND CANYONS - NIGHT

Hank stops running at the bushes, just in time to see Missy chase off the sheep. He watches them go. He dashes the opposite direction, for the sheep.

EXT. EDGE OF FLOCK - NIGHT

Hank sniffs his way through the flock, in a big hurry. He stops suddenly and puts his sniffer into high gear.

He paws something in the dirt.
INSERT - WHAT HANK UNCOVERS

Two small bones in the dirt.

BACK TO SCENE

He looks on the ground around the bones. Streaks of scorched earth. He sniffs the air. A coyote HOWLS. He raises an eyebrow, then runs off in the direction of Rip and Snort.

EXT. OUTSIDE SCRAUNCH'S DEN - NIGHT - EXTREME CLOSEUP - SCRAUNCH

SCRAUNCH
You ruined the raid, dog!

EXT. OUTSIDE SCRAUNCH'S DEN - NIGHT

Hank and Scraunch stand nose to nose in the darkness. Rip and Snort are still back out on the hill in their minds, psyching themselves up, unable to get enough.

HANK
Oh yeah, how?

RIP
Why I'm the..

SCRAUNCH
Bah! I don't know how.

SNORT
...bite 'em firstiest...

HANK
Well, hey, Scraunch, I don't know. I did my job.

RIP
...dyin' of thirstiest...

SCRAUNCH
Then why didn't the ugly sheep dog leave?
SNORT
...doggone worstiest...

HANK
Wait a minute, she's beautiful!

RIP
...Coyote you ever saw!

SCRAUNCH
Ah ha! Now I know why the plan failed!

Rip and Snort leap into each other, scrapping like they have the last hour or so.

HANK
No! I mean I saw her! You can't deny that! She must've been practically in two places at once.

Scraunch and Hank are nose to nose.

SCRAUNCH
You act like a coyote! But you're still a dirty dog.

HANK
I don't know. She's just too smart for you, Scraunch. Maybe you shouldn't be in charge of this outfit.

Scraunch goes bezerk. He spits, he sputters. Rip and Snort finally lose interest in fighting each other. They stare at Scraunch and Hank.

SCRAUNCH
I am the boss! Don't forget, chicken dog! You ruined the raid on purpose!

HANK
Well, why would I do that, el jefe?
SCRAUNCH
You're friends with that girl sheep dog! You've got dog cooties! I'll tell Missy!

HANK
Scraunch, you're about a few sandwiches shy of a picnic. Did you see how ugly that old bag of bones was? The teeth? The mange?

SCRAUNCH
Ugly, yes, to coyote. But skinny dog like you would like her. You will not two-time my sister.

HANK
I'm not going to sit around here all night and listen to this malarkey all night. Scraunch, you are crazy. You can't prove a thing you said. And, frankly, I'm insulted. Anybody else with me?

Rip and Snort shake their heads.

HANK
(continuing)
Suit yourself. Boy, what a hothead! You really oughta sheep, I mean sleep on this one, boss.

Hank storms off down the cliff. Scraunch works himself up into a frenzy watching him go. Finally, Snort perks up.

SNORT
But boss? What happened?

SCRAUNCH
Quiet! The plan missed. This chicken dog is smarter than I thought. We'll get him next time.
Scraunch knocks Rip and Snort out of the way, storming inside his cave to sulk.

EXT. COYOTE CAMP - NIGHT

Hank rushes into camp, sees Gut waiting.

CHIEF GUT
You're in a hurry, young Hank...
Catch anything?

HANK
You're a sharp one, Gut. How'd you know that?

Gut taps his ears with a paw.

HANK
Fair enough.

CHIEF GUT
Did Scraunch call the plan?

HANK
Yep. Sure did.

CHIEF GUT
Always stealing. That coyote...
(beat)
But did you catch any?

HANK
Naww, that old sheep dog put the flim-flam on us.

CHIEF GUT
(sighing)
Good. But that's not good. We have no food. You need to go hunt now.

HANK
Whew! What a week! It doesn't exactly get easy around here, does it? Defending honor, catching mice, raids...
CHIEF GUT  
You know, Hank. Things aren't always what they seem out here...

HANK  
Like what, like... chickens, maybe?

CHIEF GUT  
(smiling)  
Well, chickens are tasty. And kind of like chickens, yes. But, well... like Scraunch. And Missy.

HANK  
Missy? Do you know where she is?

CHIEF GUT  
But... Out in the canyons, hunting mice, but...

HANK  
Great! Thanks.

Hank darts back into the brush. Gut smiles. He shakes his head.

CHIEF GUT  
(to himself)  
Always rushing...

Dissolve to:

INT. BUNKHOUSE - NIGHT

Men's boots shuffle across the wood floor. They move toward the door in a line. The last pair of boots stops and turns around.

COWBOY (O.S.)  
Hey Slim! Saddle up! We've got a night patrol to ride!

SLIM (O.S.)  
I'm just loadin' up. If I see that dog tonight...
ANGLE - SLIM

From Slim's boots, up past his loaded shotgun, he stands. He draws a hand to his throat, index finger extended.

SLIM (O.S.)
...I'm gonna be ready.

Slim draws his finger across his throat.

EXT. CANYONS - NIGHT

Missy scratches along the trail, hunting mice in the moonlight. Her head down, she doesn't see Scraunch looming in the shadows. Scraunch leaps out at her.

SCRAUNCH
BOO!

MISSY
Ah! SCRAUNCH! Ohh, poop. You made me lose my little mouse.

Missy relaxes as Scraunch approaches her. He GIGGLES over his cruel little joke.

SCRAUNCH
So, little girl. Have you had enough of that mutt of yours yet? Ready to finish him off? Spend a little time with a real beast?

MISSY
Scraunch. I believe you're jealous.

SCRAUNCH
I'm not jealous! I'm just crazy. Crazy cause I haven't been able to spend any, you know, quality time with my sweetheart since she started seeing this dog.

MISSY
Crazy like a fox.

(MORE)
MISSY (CONT’D)
Need I remind you that we have a plan, Mr. Beast? And that the canyons have eyes?

She looks around. He takes the chance and slides up really, really close to Missy. He is trembling.

MISSY
(continuing)
...We can wait just a little while longer, can't we sweets? Besides, it's not so bad.

SCRAUNCH
Not so bad? What? He's a dog!

MISSY
I know that. And he's also a funny dog that catches me things, and feeds me, and treats me nice. And that's how you planned it, sweet, remember? That's how we'll get it all!

SCRAUNCH
I know. But when I think for just a second about that prissy-haired, collar wearin', smooth talkin' lap dog gettin' under your skin, it just makes me crazy!

MISSY
I know. I know. That's why I love you. You're just the biggest animal.

She kisses him softly on the cheek. The big tough coyote almost melts to the ground, all rage gone. Except for the red eyes.

Missy turns and runs into the canyons. Scraunch watches her go, then turns in the opposite direction and runs doubly fast. His eyes blaze.
EXT. CANYONS UNDER BIG TREE - NIGHT

Hank rummages through the canyons with his nose.

HANK (V.O.)
Well, there were no sheep to eat. Thank gosh! I decided to maybe hunt up some mice. I wasn't having much luck, then I uncovered it.

Hank sniffs under the tree. He steps back. His eyes gleam. He reaches for something behind the tree with his mouth. He comes out with a big, white bone.

HANK (V.O.)
(continuing)
I just grabbed it. Now maybe that wasn't the brightest thing to do, but oh, the aroma! The playful, sweet bouquet; The ready-made chewability! It reminded me of the days on the farm. I was lost in the moment, but just for a second.

Hank looks around, suspiciously. He digs a hole at the trunk of the big tree. He slips the bone inside and covers it up.

HANK (V.O.)
(continuing)
I decided to stash that. Wouldn't want to blow my cover. As far as these coyotes knew, I was just a lonesome drifter. I wanted to keep it that way.

Hank tamps down the dirt. He leaves.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. CANYONS UNDER BIG TREE - NIGHT

Scraunch sniffs through the canyons. He stops at the big tree. He sniffs some more. He digs into the small, tamped-down hole.
He pulls out the bone Hank buried. He sniffs it carefully, looks behind him, then runs into the night.

EXT. CANYONS - NIGHT

Hank lopes through a narrow canyon. The wind whips the tall trees that grow up from the bottom. The full moon shines overhead.

HANK (V.O.)
Well, there I was, hunting mice for Missy again. She was a loony combination, a terrible hunter with a giant appetite. But was this enough to make her a chicken-killer? I still wasn't sure. All this time and effort pretending to be a coyote, and still no clues. Maybe all the weird things that had been happening on the ranch had nothing to do with coyotes. Maybe I was wrong. Nah. I just had to hold tight, not blow my cover and the weirdness would find me. I was sure of that. Sometimes I feel like a danger magnet. I can just sense it coming closer and it helps make me ready. And then there were times like now.

Rip and Snort trot forward from where the mouse ran away. Hank perks up immediately. His tail wags.

RIP
Well, you look like you could use a trip down to the pasture with us. Come, it will make you feel good. Howl at the moon with us.

SNORT
Yup, thought you might want to tag along. Unwind a little.

Hank thinks for a second.
HANK
You're on. Boy, I could use a little unwinding about now!
Thanks, fellers.

RIP
There, that's a good dog. Let's go.

The three trot off.

EXT. PASTURE - NIGHT

The coyotes lead Hank across the pasture. They are in exceptionally good spirits, chasing each other's tails, giving the sore Hank a hard time.

HANK
So, what's the big secret?

RIP
Don't worry your head none, we're almost there. This'll make you feel better, I promise.

The coyotes cross over a big dirt berm. Hank follows them down into a pit the size of a small pond. The pit is filled with corn, cobs and other grains that have been left to rot. The mixture has the appearance of a giant, stewy glop.

RIP
I see it, but I still don't believe it!

SNORT
It's just like a big dream, ain't it, Hank?

HANK
Ick, a big, gooey dream. What's the idea of dragging me out here in the middle of the night just to see an old silage pit?
RIP
Say, don't you get it? This stuff'll give you wild dreams for sure.

HANK
Whoo, I've already got those. Last night, I dreamt of a fire hydrant that was as big as a barn. And I kept running towards it. And running towards it. And...

SNORT
Huh? What's a fire hydrant?

HANK
Oh, uh. It's like a little tree.

RIP
Dang it, boy! Don't you get it? This here's hooch! Grade A! One hundred proof! You'll need all the trees in the dadgummed forest after a few minutes down here! Come on!

Hank looks skeptical. The coyotes dig in and begin to lap up the silage.

SNORT
Go on, Hank. Try some.

Hank sniffs at the edge, and gives a little taste, dipping his tongue.

HANK
Whew! That's some strong stuff!

He begins to lap it up. The fermented corn slides down his throat hard at first. He grimaces. Then another taste. And another.

DISSOLVE TO:
EXT. PASTURE - NIGHT

Hank and the coyotes chase each other around the silage pit. Rip grabs Snort's tail between his teeth. Hank grabs Rip's tail. Rip and Snort turn on Hank. The coyotes and dog are snookered, enjoying it. They roll around and BARK.

As a result of the team up, Hank tumbles head first into the pit. The coyotes help him out. Hank shakes himself to dry off, spraying Rip and Snort. All three LAUGH.

Hank and Rip and Snort collapse at the edge of the pit.

RIP
Hey Hank, old buddy, help yourself to some more.

HANK
Don't mind if I do.

Hank laps up some more. Rip and Snort join him. Hank stops for a moment, then continues drinking.

HANK
Yes, this is the life. Plenty to eat, all day to do nothing, yes sir. You all have just about got it made.

SNORT
Just watch out for snipes, huh?
And mice, too.

HANK
Yeah. Come to think of it, I'm still pretty hungry. You boys know what I could go for about now?

RIP
A snipe sandwich?

Hank wavers on his feet a little. Maybe a little too much.
HANK
Nope. A big ole fat chicken.
Sounds pretty tasty, huh?

RIP
Aww, you bet! I could really go for that!

HANK
Yeah, yeah. Sounds good. You boys know where we could find us some chickens?

SNORT
Oh, sure. That ranch over yonder.

Hank and the coyotes turn to face the ranch in the distance.

HANK
Oh really? Been there before, have you?

RIP
Well, sort of. We checked it out once.

HANK
Is that so? When?

RIP
Well, it's been a couple of moons. It kind of looked risky.

Rip looks at Snort. They nod. Rip slips over to the pit where Hank has been drinking.

ANGLE ON RIP
From a little skin pouch around his neck, Rip crushes some herbs into the silage pit.

SNORT (O.S.)
Yeah, not worth the trouble, was what me and Rip decided. They had men with guns and dogs and fences. A regular old Fort Knox.
BACK TO SCENE

HANK
High security, huh? Well, I'm really sorry to hear that. I could go for some chicken about now.

Hank trots over to the pit where Rip stands. Hank is a little unsteady. He drinks. Rip smiles at Snort.

HANK
(continuing)
I got all I need right here! C'mon, drink up!

The coyotes move away from Hank and drink.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. PASTURE - NIGHT

Hank and Rip and Snort weave and totter, furiously drunk. They are falling on one another as they try to SING. The full moon shines.

HANK and RIP and SNORT
(singing)
Me just a worthless coyote!
Me howling a-at the moon!
Me like to sing and holler!
Me cra-a-zy a-as a loon!

HANK
Singing! You call that Singing?

RIP
Shoot, it'd be great singing if you could only remember the words!

Rip tries to cuff Hank on the ear. He misses by a mile.

HANK
Oh yeah! At least I can carry a tune.

(MORE)
HANK (CONT'D)
Snort over here sounds like
someone's got a hold of his tail
and won't let go!

Snort snaps at Rip's bushy tail and comes up empty.

RIP
Ok, hold it. Hold it. Let's try'er again.

HANK
From the top now.

HANK and RIP and SNORT
(singing)
Me just a worthless coyote!
Me howling a-at the moon!
Me like to sing and holler!
Me cra-a-zy a-as a loon!

In the distance, a DOG YIPS incessantly. The chorus attempts to drown him out.

HANK and RIP and SNORT
(singing)
Me not want job or duties!
No church or Su-unday School!

The dog INCREASES VOLUME. The chorus breaks up, haltingly.

HANK
Hey! Quiet! Quiet now!

SNORT
(still singing)
Me just a worthless coyote!

HANK
SNORT!

SNORT
Huh? What?
HANK
Be quiet a minute! Can you hear that?

The high-pitched DOG YIPS are clearly audible from the direction of the ranch.

RIP
What is it, Hank?

SNORT
A dog! Hey, let's see if we can't pick a scrap with him.

RIP
Yeah! What do you think Hank?

HANK
Nope, boys. Sounds like an old friend of mine. Hmm. Yup, that's him all right. Think I'll go over and see if he wants to join us for a verse or two, just for old times sake.

SNORT
All right, we can go.

HANK
Well, you better let me go on and talk to him first. I'll see if he won't come on over. We could use a little help on the high tenor.

RIP
Well, if you say so. I'd kind of like to get in a little scrappin', but if he's your friend... We'll wait here.

SNORT
You be careful over there Hank. Watch that them guns don't get you. Or the snipes.

Rip and Snort LAUGH. Hank starts trotting toward the ranch.
HANK
Aw, there's not been a gun made
yet that could shoot me down!
Don't worry, just get in some
practice on that tune, Snort!

Hank trots away. The YIPPING continues.

EXT. BEHIND THE BARN - NIGHT

Hank trots alone by himself, the YIPPING is much
louder now, the HOWLING and SINGING quieter. Hank
wobbles a little, smiling to himself.

HANK
(muttering)
Hmmph. This ground sure is
wiggling.

Hank SHUSHES himself, drunk. He inches around the
corner of the barn until he can see Drover, YIPPING
his head off.

EXT. RIM OF THE CANYONS - NIGHT

Missy runs along the top of the canyons, looking
down into them. She is very upset, searching
frantically, dried tears stain her face. She stops,
hears a noise, and looks down into the darkness.

MISSY'S POV

Chief Gut, head down, sniffs a trail through one of
the canyons.

BACK TO SCENE

Missy, relieved, peers into the darkness and waves.

MISSY
Father! Up here!

MISSY'S POV

Gut looks up, suddenly. When he looks up, a sandy
brown dog with one white paw jumps him from behind.
Gut goes down, and the dog, GROWLING, bears his fangs and prepares to sink them into Gut's neck.

BACK TO SCENE

Missy, wide-eyed, stands in shock.

MISSY

Ahh!

She turns away, horrified. The full moon shines. Missy collapses, SOBBING.

EXT. CANYONS - NIGHT

Down in the canyons, the dog that looks like Hank runs away at top speed from Gut's still body. The full moon shines through the trees. Buzzards circle in the night sky.

EXT. OTHER SIDE OF BARN - NIGHT

Hank waits for the YIPPING to STOP. Drover stands facing the pasture.

HANK

BOO!

Drover jumps in the air and rushes away at high speed.

HANK

Drover! Drover it's just me!

Drover stops and looks back. He squints.

DROVER

H-Hank? Is that you!

HANK

Sure it's me...

He staggers out from behind the barn toward the dog.
HANK
(continuing)
...you know it's nice to see that some things never change around here. Boy, you were gone clear to the chicken shed before you knew it was me.

DROVER
Hank! Look at you! You're drunk! And you smell!

HANK
All in the line of duty, son. Or at least most of it.

(beat)
Oh yeah, yeah. Look, I was over here with a couple of friends of mine over yonder and we were kind of wondering if you wanna come sing with us for a while?

DROVER
Singing? With the coyotes?

HANK
Aww, Drover, they're good enough fellers. I'm just asking if you want to come on over and sing a little. You know you oughta, it's a lot of fun. How 'bout it?

DROVER
Gosh no, Hank! I'm on duty!

HANK
Ok, suit yourself.

DROVER
When are you coming back to the ranch, Hank?

HANK
Soon as I can pin the murders on someone, hoss.

(MORE)
HANK (CONT'D)
You see, Drover, modern cowdog justice requires two things before a cowdog can take matters into his own paws. Do you know what these are?

DROVER
Ham and eggs?

HANK
No.

DROVER
Ma and Pa?

HANK
No.

DROVER
Weenies and beans?

HANK
No, Drover. You're not paying attention.

DROVER
A saw and a square?

HANK
No, you see, I need...

From the direction of the chicken house, Kid Quail wanders up. His head is down. He's GRUMBLING.

HANK
Hey, isn't it a little past your bedtime?

KID QUAIL
Aww, I can't sleep.

DROVER
Well, you sure can't sleep out here.
KID QUAIL
Who cares? Those stupid chickens...

HANK
Hey, Drover he looks a little down. Ease up. Don't get along with the chickens, huh?

KID QUAIL
No! 'Cause they're stupid!

HANK
Well, have you tried playing games with them?

KID QUAIL
All their games are stupid. Roll the rock, around the yard. Over and over and over.

DROVER
Have you tried teaching them something? Chickens can't fly. Why not teach 'em how to fly?

KID QUAIL
Cause I can't fly. I'm too young.

HANK
Hmm. Well, there's only one thing left you can do. Know what that is?

Hank kneels down to the tiny quail.

KID QUAIL
No?

HANK
Find something to do that you can do by yourself. Over and over. Think real hard about it and make sure it's something that you like a lot and that none of the other chickens can do.
HANK (CONT’D)
And then do it again and again until you're the best. I bet those stupid chickens will want to do it too. But they won't know how. You will.

KID QUAIL
Hmmm...Like what?

HANK
Good question. But only you can answer it. Think, like I said. It could be anything you want. Try learning a nice hobby. Like jujitsu. Got it?

KID QUAIL
OK I got it. Hmm...

HANK
Now. Look at me. I want you to do all your thinking inside that chicken house or inside the pen...
   (points)
...it's too dangerous out here for little guys like you. Got me?

Kid nods, head feather bobbing. He starts to wobble home.

HANK
(shooing the nipper)
Now go on. If I see you out here again, I'll kick your tail feathers!

Hank and Drover watch him waddle to the pen.

HANK
Well, isn't that peachy. Anyway, the point is, before I can let go and open up the whole can on this case, bubba. I've gotta have a culprit and a hypotenuse. And so far, I've got neither.
DROVER
Well, if you're gonna get 'em, you better go. If the noise keeps up like this, Slim'll spit fire and there'll be a regular army out to stop it. And that means stopping you. And your coyote pals.

HANK
Yeah, yeah. If noise is the problem, why don't you give your yipping a rest? Kind of shut her down for the night.

DROVER
Darn it, Hank. There's coyotes around. On my property! I gotta bark. It's my job.

HANK
Oh, aren't we high and mighty now! My property! Don't forget, dog. This is still my ranch. I'll be back. You just be ready.

Hank turns to go. He stumbles off into the night.

DROVER
Be careful, Hank!

Hank trots off to the pasture, toward Rip and Snort, humming the coyote song, weaving a little bit. Drover shakes his head.

Hank shakes his own head. He tries to clear the cobwebs.

EXT. COYOTE CAMP - NIGHT

Scraunch lies alone in the center of the camp, breathing just a little heavily, a smug expression on his face, eyes red. Missy stumbles in to camp. She is hysterical.
MISSY
He killed him, Scraunch! This wasn't in the plan!!

She collapses at his feet, still SOBBING. Scraunch moves to give her a somewhat awkward coyote hug.

SCRAUNCH
What is it? What did you see?

MISSY
That dog! He killed my father!

SCRAUNCH
Who was? What happened? What?

MISSY
Hank! He killed father! I saw it!

SCRAUNCH
That so? Well, just stick with me, honey....

Scraunch cuddles her against himself, smiling and rocking her to sleep.

SCRAUNCH
We'll get him. That's always been the plan, hasn't it? When we agreed to this show, we knew what we would get, didn't we? Well, you just be strong now, and hold your end up, and we'll get it all. We'll get that dog, together.

MISSY
Ok, Scraunch.

Scraunch keeps rocking and plotting and smiling. His eyes blaze in the middle of camp as they sit, alone. Missy cries.

EXT. PASTURE - NIGHT

Rip and Snort are drunk and fighting each other as Hank moseys up. They stop fighting and look up.
RIP
Well, hey there, old friend! I remember you! Looks like you made it back all right!

HANK
Yep. In and out, clean as a whistle.

SNORT
Where's your pal?

HANK
Aww, he didn't feel like coming. But hey, who needs him? We got enough talent right here to pretty well raise the cultural standards of the whole danged universe! Or at least this little corner of it.

RIP
Darn right, let's give her a go.

HANK and RIP and SNORT
(singing louder than ever)
Me just a worthless coyote!
Me howling a-at the moon!
Me like to sing and holler!
Me cra-a-zy a-as a loon!

As the Hank and the coyotes SING, Drover YIPS up a storm in the distance.

The boys are so busy SINGING and HOWLING at the moon that they don't hear the HOOFBEATS approaching. Or see the cowboys on horses in the distance. A SHOTGUN BLAST rings out. They stop their tail-chasing and perk up.

HANK
Who's that?

RIP
I don't know, but I don't think they like our singing.

SNORT
Nope, they mean business.
Another BLAST. The shot kicks up the dust in front of the coyotes and Hank. Rip and Snort run. Hank mopes after them, shaking his head very hard.

**HANK**

Boy, this guy's got a real knack for showing up at the wrong time.

**RIP**

What's that?

**HANK**

Oh, nothing. Dang humans just don't appreciate culture.

The dog and coyotes race for the canyons. The horses pound the ground behind them.

**EXT. PRAIRIE - NIGHT**

The two coyotes and Hank are losing ground. The canyons are in sight. The pellets WHIZZ all around the animals.

They scamper down into the canyons. The horses follow.

**EXT. COYOTE CAMP - NIGHT**

More coyotes have come back to the camp. Missy lies in the center of the loose circle. Scraunch paces back and forth in front of her.

**MISSY**

Oh Scraunch! I'm so sorry, I should have listened. If you promise to get him for me, I promise I'll never doubt you again.

The coyotes nod their heads. They look to Scraunch.

**SCRAUNCH**

It will be done.

(MORE)
SCRAUNCH (CONT’D)
I think we can get this chicken
dog and make sure he never bothers
any of us again. If you all had
just...

The BLASTS and HOOFBEATS come close enough to the
coyotes to be heard.

SCRAUNCH
What? What's that!

The coyotes stir. Some scramble onto rocks, others
dart into the woods.

The ruckus approaches. BARKS and HOWLS cut through
the night air.

SCRAUNCH
It's him! He's brought the humans
with him. Everyone, scatter!

The coyotes rush for the shelter. Scraunch leads
Missy away as they flee.

SCRAUNCH
You come with me, my dear. I want
to show you a thing or two about
the moon.

Missy nods her head, still a little in shock.
Scraunch leads her into the tall trees. The
HOOFBEATS approach the quiet camp.

Hank, Rip and Snort break into camp, running at top
speed.

HANK
Split up! They can't get us all!

They all leave the camp in different directions. The
horses pull into camp and stop. They look around,
then follow slowly in the woods, searching for
coyotes.

DISSOLVE TO:
EXT. CANYONS - NIGHT

Hank slows to a trot through the brush. He looks around, and changes direction. The danger has passed. Hank shakes his head, trying to clear the cobwebs. The full moon shines above him. He weaves, very drunk and now exhausted. In a little clump of shelter, Hank collapses, sleepy.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. CHICKEN HOUSE - NIGHT

Hank patrols the chicken yard. The fence, the house, the trees all seem about ten times normal size. Hank hears a noise and looks up. A giant chicken towers over him. The chicken stares past his oversized, lumpy beak through blazing red eyes.

Hank turns and sees a big green pool in the yard. He doesn't look back. He dives right in. In the green, he tumbles head over heels. He pops out of the top of the pool. He stares at the chicken.

The chicken ROARS. Hank turns to run away. He can't run. He tries harder. He looks back to ten more chickens behind the first one, each almost as huge.

The chickens catch up to Hank and begin to roll him around the yard like a marble, with their noses. Everytime he rolls free, he gets up and tries to run. No use, they put him back into play.

On one roll away, Hank hears the sound of ECHOING LAUGHTER coming from the trees above. He looks up into the trees and Missy sits in one, laughing. She wears a man's pinstripe zoot suit and wide brim hat. She keeps laughing.

Hank turns back to the giant chicken just in time for him to slam a giant stump upside his head. Hank slides to the dust, down for the count.

EXT. POOL IN CANYONS - NIGHT

Hank and the buzzards pace around a shallow pool. They look on the ground. The sun slips behind the canyon walls. The full moon is out.
WALLACE
I'm telling you it was right here!

Hank plops into the dust. He holds his head.

HANK
And the killer was me?

JUNIOR
Y-yup.

HANK
Well, stranger things have happened. Thanks for nothing, boys. From the way it looks now, I have definitely been framed. The only question is, who did it?

The buzzards look at each other and take off. Hank examines his reflection in the shallow pool.

A frog pokes his head up into Hank's reflection. The water ripples. The frog RIBBITS and ducks under. The ripples smooth out. Reflected in the pool, Missy stands behind Hank. He turns to face her.

HANK
Hello there, beautiful. What've you been up to?

MISSY
Oh, crying mostly...

She pads over toward Hank.

MISSY
(continuing)
...now I've cried so much I think I'm just cried out.

HANK
I know. Missy, I'm real sorry about what happened to your father.
Missy sits very close to Hank. She nuzzles him under his chin.

MISSY
Now Hank, why would you go and say something like that? You know father loved you, nearly as much as me. He loved you, just like I love you.

Missy still nuzzles. Hank raises an eyebrow.

HANK
Oh. I love you too, sweetheart. Do you know who, um, rubbed him out?

MISSY
Why no, Hank. And I don't really want to know. Do you know what I really, really want?

Missy looks deep into Hank's eyes, a penetrating, consuming glare.

MISSY
I want something to eat. Or we could just run away together.

HANK
I already tried that once. Look where it got me.

MISSY
What?

HANK
Oh, nothing... Look, beautiful, I'll get you anything you want. Just name it. Food? Well, you just let me know what you've got a taste for.

MISSY
(smiling)
Oh, would you?
HANK
You bet. Anything for you, sweetheart. You just tell me what you want and I'll rustle it up quick and fast. What do you want? What are you hungry for?

MISSY
Will you really get me anything?

HANK
For a coyote as pretty as you are? Why shucks, you just name it.

MISSY
I've got it!

HANK
What is it?

MISSY
Hank, I want a chicken.

Hank's ears prick up. His head snaps back. He narrows his eyes and sizes Missy up. Her eyes flash red, just for an instant.

Out of the shadows, the coyotes stalk Hank. Hank looks to his sides. He is surrounded. The coyotes close in. Missy streaks off.

SCRAUNCH
Come on, dog.

HANK
What, are we going on a picnic?

RIP
This is no picnic.

SCRAUNCH
Well, Hank. Me and the boys have been thinking...

HANK
That's a first.
...and we thought that since you were so friendly with the folks on the ranch that you might want to smooth things over so we could help ourselves to some chicken. You'd want to do that for us, wouldn't you?

The coyotes move in. Rip, Snort, and Scraunch squeeze Hank from all directions.

HANK
I'd be glad to, boys. Glad to.

EXT. CHICKEN HOUSE - NIGHT

Drover lies in front of the yard. He is not asleep, but on guard. In the distance, a coyote HOWLS. Drover's ears perk up. His head tilts. The coyote HOWLS again, a high-pitched, lonesome wail.

Drover takes a few steps toward the sound, then BARKS, yipping in the wail's direction. Another HOWL.

Drover walks a few more steps, then BARKS. He walks out of the frame in the direction of the HOWLS.

The chicken house lies unguarded in the full moonlight.

EXT. PASTURE - NIGHT

Three coyotes and a dog lope across the pasture, single file, in silhouette. The ranch, with the last of the lights going out, lies up ahead. The full moon shines above.

EXT. PASTURE - NIGHT

Drover stands in the middle of an empty field, under the full moon. He stands up on his claws and BARKS furiously. A coyote HOWLS every few seconds. He keeps this up for a while.
Beulah runs up and stops behind Drover. She looks at him for just a second. She can't believe her eyes.

BEULAH
Drover! What are you doing?

DROVER
Oh, hi Beulah. Boy, I almost got her. She's been there for awhile now.

Drover turns back to BARKING.

BEULAH
You left the chickens alone! This stinks of a sneaky trap. C'mon Drover!

Drover gets in a few more BARKS. Beulah tries to run off. She stops and turns back to the barking.

BEULAH
Drover! C'mon!

DROVER
But she can't come on to my ranch and just howl like that! I've gotta bark!

BEULAH
You can bark from the chicken house, honey. We've gotta go! Drover!

Beulah runs away. Drover follows looking over his shoulder and WHIMPERING.

EXT. BEHIND THE BARN - NIGHT

Scraunch, in the lead, looks over the chicken house and yard. All is quiet and still.

SCRAUNCH
Ha. No little white dog. Missy must be doing her job, keeping him out of the way.
SNORT
Aw, I wanted to get a piece of that little yipper.

HANK
Could be a trap. That Drover can be darn sneaky when he wants to be. And tough, too. You wouldn't know it, but that little yipper's a buzzsaw to fight.

RIP
Shoot, if he was here, I'd eat him alive.

HANK
But he's not. So, I guess you boys don't need me. I think I'll just be going, then...

Hank turns to leave. Scraunch stops him.

SCRAUNCH
Hold it! You're not going anywhere!

HANK
Why?

SCRAUNCH
Because we need you!

HANK
What for?

SCRAUNCH
We just need you.

Scraunch leads them up, sneaking in a line, to the fence outside the yard.

EXT. PASTURE - NIGHT

Missy races through the night toward the ranch.
EXT. CHICKEN HOUSE FENCE - NIGHT

Scraunch digs a hole at the base of the fence. The dirt flies. He talks while he digs.

SCRAUNCH
Now, you all wait here. I'm going to march these chickens out of the house, through the yard, and right out here.

HANK
How do you figure they'll just march right out?

Scraunch looks up. His eyes blaze red.

SCRAUNCH
Shut up! Leave that to me. These chickens won't put up a fight, I'll guarantee that. You boys just wait for them to come through here and grab 'em. One by one.

RIP
Oh boy! Between us four, we oughta get twenty chickens easy!

Scraunch wriggles under the fence through the hole. He turns back.

SCRAUNCH
And remember, dog. No funny business.

Hank shrugs. Scraunch tiptoes up to the chicken house and walks around to the other side. Hank keeps one eye on him while trying to look casual.

HANK
Well, boys, it's sure been a fun couple of days, hasn't it?
HANK'S POV

Through the swarm of fireflies in the chicken yard, Scraunch chases his tail in circles, faster and faster, beginning his morphing ritual.

BACK TO SCENE

Rip and Snort face Hank, blocking the hole under the fence. Hank moves a little, to get a better view of the chicken house.

    SNORT
    Shut up, dog.

    HANK
    Shucks, fellers. That's no way to treat a pal, now, is it?

HANK'S POV

Scraunch paws at the dirt in a frenzy. The chickens inside are completely still. The fireflies blink on and off, on and off.

BACK TO SCENE

Hank plays it very cool.

    HANK
    I mean, shoot. We both want the same things out of life, don't we? A quiet bed, a little chicken. Man, am I ready for some chicken.

HANK'S POV

Scraunch has disappeared around the back of the house. All is quiet for a moment. Then, a huge red glow flashes from behind the chicken house.

BACK TO SCENE
EXTREME CLOSEUP - HANK

HANK
That's it! The burns... that's how...

RIP (O.S.)
What?

BACK TO SCENE

Rip starts to get restless. Hank quickly grabs his attention. He sniffs the air.

HANK
I said, boy! I can just smell them fowl. Hey there, Rip, old buddy. Why don't you let me in to position for that first chicken. They oughta be out any second now, and I want the first one. What do you say, buddy?

A cicada WHIRRS in the still night air.

RIP
Well, whatever. But I'm second.

SNORT
Hey! I want to be second!

Hank strolls to the fence. He stops in his tracks and looks to the house in the distance.

HANK'S POV

An enormous chicken, bulging muscles and red eyes, scampers around the house and flaps his way up the ramp inside.

BACK TO SCENE

Rip and Snort fight each other over rights to the chicken. Hank sniffs the air, looks down quickly, then back to the shack.
HANK
(to himself)
Yeah... should be out any second
now. The burns, the smell...
Well, I'll be dipped.

HANK'S POV

Electrical zaps and red flashes emanate from the shack. A single file line of chickens, eyes blazing red, stagger down the ramp toward the hole in the fence. They've been hypnotized, of course. The enormous chicken with Scraunch's red eyes looms in the doorway, watching the procession. The chickens pass under the tall trees in the yard. He turns to the fence with a demented, triumphant sneer.

BACK TO SCENE

Hank's jaw drops wide open. Then his eyes sparkle. Rip and Snort scrap behind him.

HANK
So that's it! And I'll bet there's a chicken bone or two behind that shack...Well boys, since you all don't need me for anything but to take the rap when you're through doing this killing... I think I'll just go and prevent it.

Hank wriggles under the fence and charges toward the chicken house. Rip pokes his head up from the tussle.

EXT. CHICKEN HOUSE - NIGHT

Hank flies past the line of chickens, who only faintly notice him. He bears down on the house. The enormous chicken's eyes bulge. And then, in a flash of red light and flame, he pops back into his coyote form, hair bristling, standing on a singed patch of dirt, Scraunch. Hank leaps the final feet across the yard. Scraunch rears up, eyes blazing.

The dog and coyote tear into each other with teeth, claws. They clinch, roll over, tearing and snapping.
Rip runs past the chicken procession for the fight. As he flies past, the chickens are knocked back, but they march toward the fence where Snort waits.

**GROWLING,** Rip jumps onto Hank's back. Hank rolls forward with a **YELP.** Hank jumps to his feet, snarling, possessed. He leaps for Scraunch's throat. Rip sinks his teeth into Hank's back. The dogs blur as they go at it again.

Hank turns from the fight.

**HANK**

This, folks, would be one of the dis-advantages of being a cowdog.

**EXT. CHICKEN HOUSE FENCE - NIGHT**

Snort waits for the chickens. He hops up and down at the hole in the fence, his entire attention on the chickens and the fight. In a rush, Beulah zooms past him and under the hole. She rushes the fight, **BARKING and YELLING.**

**BEULAH**

Hank! Hank!

She runs past the chickens. Her barking awakens them. As a group, they look around, stupid as ever. Snort leaves his post and runs to the chickens. Starting to **SQUAWK,** they break ranks and scatter feathers, flapping and **SQUAWKING.** Snort busts through the wall of feathers and joins the fight behind Beulah.

**EXT. CHICKEN HOUSE - NIGHT**

Three coyotes, two dogs. Fur, fangs. The commotion is tremendous. Beulah jumps on Rip, who holds down Hank.

They all tumble into Scraunch, who was poised for Hank's throat.
HANK
(winded)
You had enough yet?

SCRAUNCH
Go on, Get him!

Rip and Snort charge Hank. Scraunch advances on Beulah.

The chickens, caught between the fence and the fight, begin to climb over each other, panicked.

EXT. CHICKEN HOUSE FENCE - NIGHT

Drover runs up to the scene. He begins BARKING and hopping. He can't see through the feathers and rushes under the fence.

EXT. CHICKEN HOUSE - NIGHT

Drover bears down. The chickens run from him, toward the fight. Under the trees, some turn back, some try to fight through. Dozens of chickens, all headed different directions. Mass chaos. Drover busts through the wall of feathers. Right into the fight.

One chicken flaps up for the safety of the trees overhead. The rest follow.

Drover looks around for a second. The fight is in full swing. Wide-eyed, he jumps for the first thing he sees. Scraunch's back. Scraunch throws him off with one shake, right into Rip. Rip turns on Drover. Hank leaps for Scraunch. Missy and Snort tangle.

ANGLE ON CHICKENS

In the trees, the chickens look down on the fight, mesmerized.

BACK TO SCENE
CHICKENS' POV - THE FIGHT

From a dizzying height, the dogs and coyotes scrap. Through the swarm of fireflies, the dogs and coyotes blur and snarl.

BACK TO SCENE

The action continues, something like a tag-team wrestling match when the referee has been thrown from the ring. Hank is thrown from the fight. He jumps back in, just in time to save Beulah from Scraunch's fangs.

HANK

Is this how the plan is supposed to go, boss?

ANGLE ON CHICKENS

One chicken, dizzy, falls off his perch. He hits the dust below with a WHUMP, out cold. The others, engrossed in the action, keep staring. Another falls. WHUMP.

BACK TO SCENE

Scraunch looks up. The chickens keep falling to the ground, one by one, like ripe fruit from a tree.


The fight continues as before. Except the coyotes keep trying to snag the falling chickens and the dogs fight to stop them.

EXT. CHICKEN HOUSE FENCE - NIGHT

Missy wriggles under the fence. She sneaks into the yard.

EXT. CHICKEN HOUSE - NIGHT

Every time a coyote picks up a chicken, he has to drop it to fight off a raging dog.
Scraunch begins to bite the dogs whenever they jump for a coyote. Hank is thrown from the fight. Fur torn and adrenalin surging, he is ready to charge right back in.

Beulah points out Missy, sneaking up the ramp and into the house. Hank runs from the fight.

INT. CHICKEN HOUSE - NIGHT

A few remaining chickens cower in a low corner of the dark shack, bunched up together. Kid Quail is in the center of them, fighting for breathing room. Missy trots toward them. She drools. Hank's shadow fills the doorway.

HANK
I wouldn't do that if I were you.

She turns to face him, looking small and frightened, like a deer in the headlights.

Kid Quail sees Hank and brightens immediately. He reaches into the hay and pulls out a music stand, sheet music, and an accordion. He clears his throat and rips into a polka.

Hearing the MUSIC, Hank looks over and slaps a forehead with his paw. The Kid plays furiously, really cooking.

Missy suddenly calms and tosses her head.

MISSY
C'mon, Hank. Help me get these chickens and we'll run away together. Just the two of us.

HANK
Not on your life. I'm a cowdog. And I intend to stay one.

Hank advances. The accordion MUSIC swirls around the shack. The chickens, except for Kid, are terrified.
MISSY
You wouldn't hurt little old me, would you?

HANK
Depends.

MISSY
On what?

HANK
You wouldn't hurt those chickens, would you?

MISSY
Hank, I'm a coyote. We take food wherever we can get it. This plan may not be going just exactly like I wanted, but with father gone, it's my only chance...

HANK
Oh, I see. You both set me up. Figured I'd play the sap. But it's not gonna go down like that, beautiful.

MISSY
Like what?

HANK
Like with me taking all the heat for you and Scraunch's killing. There are a few things you should know about that fleabag, precious.

MISSY
I don't want to hear it! Not from you. Oh, I almost trusted you once. I was even ready to cut you in on the deal, Hank. It would have been fun watching you and Scraunch at each other's throats for a long, long time.
HANK
But Missy, what you saw...

MISSY
Stop! I don't want to hear it. All I care about now, Hank, is walking out of here with all the fresh meat I can grab. It wouldn't be so bad if you just, kind of, looked the other way, would it?

She inches toward the chickens.

HANK
Not on your life, Missy.

Missy lunges for the chickens, trying to snatch and run in one motion.

The Kid stashes the accordion, and with lighting speed, grabs Missy by the paw. He flings her up in the air and then over on her back. Classic jujitsu throw. She hits the wood floor with a WHUMP.

All the chickens are shocked. Hank's jaw drops. Kid picks his accordion up and plays MUSIC with all the fury he can muster.

Missy lies on the floor, barely conscious. She regains her senses just as Hank walks to stand over her.

She flies past Hank, out the door. Hank shakes his head, then follows at top speed.

EXT. CHICKEN HOUSE - NIGHT

In the yard, the fight rages. Beulah and Drover are clearly overmatched. Scraunch has piled up some chickens and is ready to run for the fence with Missy.

Hank flies out of the shack and leaps for Scraunch. Beulah, Drover, Rip, and Snort are already tearing and clawing at each other.
On her way to the fence, Missy suddenly stops. She drops three chickens from her mouth. Her mouth hangs open.

MISSY'S POV

This side of the fence, Chief Gut limps through the fireflies toward the fracas. He is beaten up considerably, but his eyes shine with a wolfish intensity.

BACK TO SCENE

The fight rages. Gut walks right past awestruck Missy to the oblivious battle. He sits. Throwing his head back, he HOWLS, a bone-shivering, crazy howl.

The fight stops. Everyone stares at Gut. His howl degenerates into a COUGH. No more strength. He looks up, straight at Scraunch.

CHIEF GUT

I was right. Once you thought you had the old man out of the way, you went off stealing, first thing. You never will change, Scraunch. And you had to drag everyone else down here with you.

MISSY

What?

CHIEF GUT

Yes, it's true. This coyote attacked me and left me for dead. You thought I was dead, didn't you, Scraunch?

Missy, standing, buckles a little.

SCRAUNCH

Everyone knows it was this dog who tried to kill you. You must be older than I thought.

HANK

You'd like us to think that!
CHIEF GUT
I thought it was you, Hank. When
I got jumped from behind, it
looked like you, smelled like you,
even fought like you. But I had
a little talk with someone you
might know, Scraunch. A little
hog, with horns.

Scraunch starts to twitch. He checks the exits.

CHIEF GUT
Maybe I was wrong. You can change,
Scraunch. That's the problem. This
little hog, he told me many things
about how a coyote can change, with
a little help.

MISSY
No!

Missy starts to stagger. She appears on the verge of
passing out.

CHIEF GUT
Well, you've done it now, Scraunch.
Led them all right into the humans'
den. Rip! Snort! Missy! Run! You
are not safe here! This yellow-
bellied cur is not fit to be a
coyote! He is sealing your doom
as sure as we all stand here!

HANK
Hmmm, this looks like a little
family squabble here, maybe you'd
like to continue this back in the
canyons...

Missy looks up. Her eyes blaze. She backs away from
the group, looking at the piles of chicken, torn
fur, clouds of dust and fireflies.

MISSY
Family! Hah! He's not my brother!
He never was my brother!
Hank shoots a glance at Beulah. Missy starts wandering through the yard.

MISSY
(continuing)
I'd never claim slime like that as my kin! You!

She spins to face Scraunch, wavering a little.

MISSY
(continuing)
You made me pretend to be your sister, nearly killed my father, turned my whole world upside down, just to get me out here... to do this?! Oh, that's great!

HANK
You know Scraunch, I think you owe her...

MISSY
Oh no, I owe him!

Missy leaps for Scraunch, fangs first. She has little strength left and Scraunch throws her off. Rip jumps for Beulah. Snort dives on Drover. Hank and Chief Gut look at each other. Gut shrugs, then heads for the fence.

Hank watches Gut leave. He looks at the fight.

Scraunch begins to paw at the dirt. Two bones lie in front of him. Hank looks around, then BARKS. A five-alarmer.

Hank leaps for Scraunch, still barking. Beulah and Drover join in, YELPING while they fight.

Suddenly, a BLAST echoes through the yard. A shotgun.

The coyotes look up, amazed. Rip and Snort begin to run. Hank turns from the fight.
HANK'S POV

Slim runs through the ranch toward the chicken house. He wears a t-shirt, boxer shorts, and cowboy boots. He fires his shotgun again.

BACK TO SCENE

Hank leaps at Scraunch fangs first, trying to get his last licks in. Scraunch pulls away, shoots Hank a dirty look and then runs for the hole in the fence. Missy chases after him. Hank and Beulah bring up the rear, BARKING.

EXT. CHICKEN HOUSE FENCE - NIGHT

Another BLAST. Rip and Snort are through the fence. Scraunch shoves the limping Gut out of the way before they reach the fence. The pellets whizz past his head.

The old man struggles to get up. Missy pushes him up with her nose and helps him through the fence. She races for Scraunch. Gut limps ahead.

Hank and Beulah reach the fence. They look into the distance.

HANK AND BEULAH'S POV

The other coyotes are long gone. Gut limps bravely ahead through the fireflies. He is still close and barely moving.

BACK TO SCENE

Beulah starts to wriggle under the fence. Hank puts a paw in her way.

HANK
No, sweetheart. Let him go.

Beulah looks up, puzzled.

HANK
That's a great old creature. Even if he is a coyote.
BEULAH
Do you think they'll be back?

HANK
Naw. With the old man and that
girl dead set against him,
Scraunch may not last the day.
I would give you some good odds
he won't live to try another
magic trick. Not around here
anyway.

Hank narrows his eyes and looks into the distance at
Scraunch and the others, running for the canyons.

BEULAH
Well, we did it. Thanks to
everybody. Mostly you, Hank. You
picked just the right time to
start barking.

HANK
Yup. That dang human of mine even
picked the right time to show up,
for once...

Hank starts to inspect himself for cuts and bruises.
There are several on his body.

HANK
(continuing)
...although if he'd been just a
few minutes earlier, I wouldn't
have this hitch in my git-along.

BEULAH
Hank, Slim is your owner! He
saved your tail. You all should
be friends now.

HANK
Oh, all right. It was a team
effort, I'd say. Why shoot, even
little Drover...Hey?! Drover?

The dogs turn and rush toward the house.
EXT. CHICKEN HOUSE - NIGHT

Drover lies still on the ground outside the house.

HANK
Drover! No!

The dogs reach their fallen comrade just as Slim stumbles up. He reaches down and pets Hank, but Hank is too busy sniffing his friend to notice.

Both dogs look worried as Slim picks up Drover in his arms and carries him to the house. The dogs watch him go.

BEULAH
Not Drover! He tried so hard!

HANK AND BEULAH'S POV

Drover, in Slim's arms, opens an eye and winks. He is "dogging it." He settles his head down comfortably and sighs.

BACK TO SCENE

HANK
Aww, he's all right. The little faker. He'll get a soft bed indoors and all the leftovers he can eat and he knows it.

BEULAH
Well, I hope he enjoys it.

HANK
Oh he will. Until they figure out nothing's wrong with him... Or until he pees on the carpet. Whichever comes first.

Hank and Beulah LAUGH. They look at each other in the moonlight. They walk in the direction of the house.
Kid Quail holds court with all the other chicks in the yard under the trees. They treat him like a hero. The chicks push seed in his direction. Kid winks at Hank. Hank winks back. Kid Quail shoulders his accordion again and plays a WALTZ.

BEULAH
Well, what about you? I'm glad you're back.

HANK
Boy, I'm glad to be back. Those coyotes are sure a rough bunch.

BEULAH
Not so rough that they rubbed off on you, I hope...

HANK
Shucks, no. It was good to walk around awhile and see things from their side, actually.

BEULAH
Oh, did the big fearless detective maybe learn a thing or two?

She looks at him and looks down at the ground, shyly.

HANK
Well, maybe. For one, I guess if there weren't coyotes, there'd be no need for cowdogs. And there definitely is a time and a place to bark.

BEULAH
That's true. What else?

HANK
Well, you know, Beulah, I missed you.

BEULAH
Really?
She looks up into his eyes. He grins. The MUSIC gets louder.

HANK
Oh yes. Really... Say, can I waltz you home?

BEULAH
Certainly.

HANK
Yup. Being a cowdog does have its advantages. Boy let me tell you though, it's rough out there in coyote country. Those dogs live like animals! You would not believe some of what I...

The two dogs waltz away into the pasture under the moonlight.

FADE OUT:
APPENDIX A

SOURCE
The Adventures of Hank the Cowdog is the first in a long series of books written by Mr. John R. Erickson. The basic story, in which a faithful cowdog hunts chicken killing coyotes on a ranch, is essentially the same as my screenplay version. Episodes and characters have been changed in the screenplay to best translate the story into the medium of film. My efforts to make that an interesting translation are tied to what I saw in the book upon first reading it. I wanted to attempt this adaptation for several reasons. Most generally, factors of the story itself, its unique niche in the marketplace of ideas, and the possibilities I saw for adaptation make it an excellent choice for this type of project.

Story

Hank as a main character in the book is very strong. Likable and funny, he tells the story in first person with a dog's perspective on the world, an inflated ego, and a peculiarly regional means of expression. A unique, strong main character with a sense of humor and who overcomes obstacles is as essential for a successful book as a screenplay and, in this case, as easy to identify. As a character, Hank also undergoes a personal change in the short novel. While this trait was more difficult to portray in a
screenplay and threatened to swamp early drafts, it also showed Hank to have some depth. These two facts about the story were primary in making the story potentially adaptable.

The other major characters were also sufficiently unique while simultaneously formulaic to attempt adaptation. The author of the book makes it clear who the heroes and villains are and provides a nemesis, sidekick, and love interest in the mix. These roles are filled in film with the same regularity that they are in fiction.

The setting of the book, an isolated West Texas ranch, also contributed to the book's narrative strengths relevant to translation into another medium. Because much filmed storytelling appeals by providing an entertaining escape from the present world into an unknown realm, the easy pace and uncomplicated existence often associated with the rural setting was also appealing.

Marketplace

One of the primary advantages of adapting a novel into a screenplay instead of writing an original script is the fact that certain books already exist on the bookshelves, as products that are known to consumers of entertainment. Hank is no exception, and
the book's position in the market had definite advantages for application to a project of this scope. The book, although self-published through Maverick Press, has sold well enough to inspire about twenty sequels, audiocassette versions, and five translations into Spanish. It is frequently shelved in the Young Adult sections in bookstores, important because of the fact that films are attended with more frequency by teenagers than by any other age group. Hank the Cowdog memorabilia also has been marketed successfully. The purpose of this project was not to run immediately to Walt Disney with the property, but the size, scope and perspective of the book within the marketplace made it an interesting choice.

Possibilities

The elements present in the original narrative led me to see this project as an animated action/adventure that leaned heavily on the generic conventions of the detective film or film noir. This film genre had its roots in pulp detective fiction, has incorporated literary conventions into its particular filmic code, and has traits recognizable to most audiences. The animal cast of characters encouraged the choice of animation, along with some of the humor of the source. Playing with and utilizing
these conventions in the form of a cartoon provided me with insight into the process of adaptation and a better understanding of the conventions in each medium. With the presence of factors that would help make this story familiar to an audience, the challenge of turning this story into a unique screenplay resulted in understanding and knowledge that developing an original idea would not have provided.
APPENDIX B

MATERIALS
Aside from the source novel, other materials were especially helpful in guiding me through the creation of this screenplay. Watching other films relevant to the story I attempted to tell and reading books connected to the setting and subject were of primary importance. This section describes my strategy in confronting different resources and offers a complete list of the materials I used for guidance, knowledge, and inspiration.

Films

Working from the premise that manipulating time, space and characters in my narrative could be more easily undertaken by seeing how other successful films accomplished similar goals, I tried to watch as many films as possible during the process of writing and re-writing the story. To take advantage of generic codes and conventions, it is necessary to be familiar with them. An audience expects a film to behave like a film, and by watching other films with my own screenplay in the front of my mind, I found that many narrative problems solved themselves.

Most importantly, I found that while I could make conscious decisions about what to watch and hope that some of the successful parts lent themselves to the writing of this screenplay, I could not control how
certain films affected my conception and execution of the script. For example, I watched many Disney animated features early in the process specifically for their characteristic tight story structure, simple characterization, and effective construction of a consistent narrative world. These films ultimately had less effect on my screenplay than the many classic Warner Brothers animated shorts I watched primarily for comedy purposes later. There is a definite screwball-type animated zaniness in the script that owes a lot to these Warner shorts. Why would one take hold and not the other? Surely personal preference played a role, as did the tone of the source novel.

Either way, watching other films helped me solve some of the problems I perceived with the screenplay and prodded me to think about the story in new ways. The films I watched are grouped below loosely by genre. Thinking in generic terms was the easiest way I found of breaking the script down into something manageable.

Film Noir/Detective

The Maltese Falcon
The Big Sleep
Out of the Past
Murder, My Sweet
Dead End Kids
Wolfen
The Wicker Man

Animation
The Great Mouse Detective
The Rescuers
Aladdin
Rover Dangerfield
The Brave Little Toaster
Once Upon a Forest
All Dogs Go to Heaven
Gay Purr-ee
Collected Warner Brothers’ Shorts
The Lion King

Action/Adventure
Mean Streets
The Unforgiven
The Killer
Hard to Kill

Comedy
Pee-Wee's Big Adventure
Groundhog Day
Road to Morocco

Books
To stimulate myself to think about other basic
building blocks of the narrative, I also read. Generally these books concerned topics ancillary to the actual narrative. Most did offer more information about the setting and animals involved. They are categorized according to relationship with the story.

Folklore and Facts
- James Herriot's Dog Stories. James Herriot
- The Hidden Life of Dogs. Elizabeth Thomas
- The Voice of the Coyote. J. Frank Dobie

Writing the Script
- Screenplay. Syd Field
- The Art of Adaptation. Linda Seger
- Making a Good Script Great. Linda Seger

Detective Stories
- Three Complete Novels. Kinky Friedman
- The Big Sleep. Raymond Chandler
- Red Harvest. Dashiell Hammett
- Skinwalkers. Tony Hillerman

Other Hank the Cowdog Novels
- The Case of the Halloween Ghost. John Erickson
- The Case of the Midnight Rustler. John Erickson
APPENDIX C

METHOD
Developing a routine to create adapted scenes, analyze what I had written, and rewrite the screenplay was of primary importance. I had never written a full-length feature screenplay before I attempted to adapt The Adventures of Hank the Cowdog. The task, I discovered, involved a process of breaking down what I had read in the novel and reshaping that material as my own idea of the story, a large mental object, into smaller parts that I could manipulate more easily. This made rewrites and changes less painful, faster and also forced me to change my approach to working as the elements I attempted to focus on in the story evolved. These notes on the drafts detail my strategies for improving the screenplay over time.

Draft 1: Feb 1 - May 1

Reading the book, developing the plot, taking it through synopsis and outline stages, and writing straight to the word processor in thirty page segments produced a rambling, dialogue-filled draft that transferred most of the main line of action from the novel. I concentrated on re-working scenes almost directly from the book, using as much dialogue and action from the source as possible. Most of the actual adaptation of the source was conducted during this draft. Original dialogue was written to move the story
along, and was designed to be consistent with the book's characters. My goals were to keep the narrative simple, discover characters' voices through dialogue, arrange definite action points in the story, provide clear motivations for the characters, and construct scenes with beginnings, middles and ends. Most of this, along with notes on anything else, was typed straight into the word processor in thirty-page segments. I encountered problems with trying to follow the book too closely and getting lost when I tried to add whole new sequences or scenes. This draft ran 105 pages.

Draft 2: Apr. 1 - May 15

Still writing in comparatively large thirty-page segments and concentrating on changing the story by creating, adding, and deleting whole sequences, the second draft of the script saw the main line of action (Hank goes undercover with the coyotes) remain constant. I had become familiar enough with the novel at this point that I consulted it less in the process. This draft aimed for building the obstacles confronting the hero, cutting exposition or condensing dialogue into action, and integrating some of the continuity suggestions from a screenwriting workshop. Due to working on such large sequences, many scenes
draft ran 113 pages.

Draft 4: June 15 - July 1

The method for rewriting did not change much for this draft, my focus for creating new scenes and changing others did, shifting from comedy to escalating the action to ridiculous heights at the end of the script, rearranging scenes for suspense and continuity, and exploiting opportunities for character complexity. Working on subplots and making sure the mystery of the main line of action (Hank finding the killer) was completely clear led to considering the script again in sequences and longer arcs. Unfortunately, the main line of action has been added to so much at this point, since I have long ago transcended the narrative of the source novel, that the story needed about twenty pages cut. This version runs 120 pages.

Draft 5: July 1- July 13

The necessary cuts in this draft were arrived at primarily through rearranging the sequences. This rearrangement also aimed at making Hank's relationship with his nemesis clearer. The other primary objective for this draft was to reconcile the elements of mystery in the narrative (Hank putting together a series of clues to solve the case) with the flashback
mode of storytelling common to the detective film genre. Cutting the third act drastically made this reconciliation more successful, though still far from perfect in terms of maintaining a consistent narrative perspective. The cuts in length I made were offset by adjusting the margins for thesis format. The draft ran 123 pages.

Conclusion

Having to constantly adjust how I wrote this script to correspond to how I think about the story left me with some lessons on the process of writing, whether adaptation or original. The ideas I have are linked to the technology I use. Editing, cutting, rearranging, brainstorming, visualizing, and writing are all affected by the tools you use to do them, whether they are the computer screen, blank paper and pen, a videotape, or a hard copy of the script. All have strengths and weaknesses for the different mental tasks that go into writing a screenplay. And generally, I think I was a more successful writer once I realized even notes, scribbles, and "small" ideas were writing, that all writing can be changed, that the best writing requires changes, and that almost every possible idea was worth exploring. The working method I developed attempts to take advantage of these
facts and it is one of the most valuable lessons of this project.