

The Absent-Minded Indian^{1,2,3}

Unknown Narrator

Hé'tóhe na'èstse máto hová'éhe ta'se tséémaehéne'enátanó'tomo vá'néhóhta'heonótse vo'èstane tsé'éveó'òsetanòse heva tséstaéveó'òsenétáhévo'eetaese na'èstse ma'háhkése táháóhe évaveto. Nánèxhéne'enövo òhméseestse é'òhkèhestohe. Vétanovéo'hé'e éhvo'èstanéheve.

Nèhe'xóvéva é'òhkeosée'évèhoháeméoto'eo'o tsééshátaa'éhahese. Móstoséméaséto'eohtsèhevóhe tsé'òhkésó'hoxomevòse tséhéóhe méave'ho'eno vó'aehéo'hé'e.

Ta'méo'èxaneneo'o, náhtsenèxhého'eoha'ovoo'o mo'éhno'háme, éxhetósesto he'óho tséá'enose.

Mó'osáaneotá'méoto'éotséhéhe tsésto'seéshévó'neotsetse. Móstáho'eohtsé'tovòhevóhe hestotseho tséhnéetsése. Na'èstse móhnháa'enòhevóhe. Mó'osáanetáxevonèhnèhnotóhe. Móstaosáaneasèhoemòhevóhe tséhestòxetsése hestotseho. Éxaeno'tshèhováneehésesto na'èstse.

Tséstaeéshèshéhóvo'ooha'ovòse éstasenòhtséoo'hé'tovósesto néhe né = tsétáhoese. Éhvóhpe'xoénèsesto. Táháóhe tséstamé'a'xèse tsésta'óma'o'etse éssáavóomóhesesto. Nèhe'she mó'asetá'hasó'hehéhe nonó'hónó'e háá'éshè éstáhešenòhtsé'ovósesto. Nèhe'she nonó'hónó'e móstanèšenó'nèsheveohtséhéhe. Nèhe'she tséhne'éshémé'èhnetsése éshé'hóho éhnhènetameotseséstse. Nèhe'she móhnhèshéhóhta'ovo'haméhéhe.

Éstáho'a'ovo'hameséstse hevenótse tséxho'tatse. He'óho tséá'enose anósema é'amóeósesesto. Móhnhèhnohtsevóomaehevóhe. Éstáho'etáhoeotsé'tovósesto.

Éxaeno'kéhováne'e na'èstse mo'éhno'ha. Ta'se éxamae'éstshévoeotse vóhpe'xoénéhe, éxhetósesto.

Naa néváeso né = tsétáhoeto? éxhetaesesto.

Éstamónèhéne'enánòse. né = tséno'kéhováneehétsese móstáhoehénótóhe. Éstatshèshèánòhètséheta'éotseséstse. Tséhéóhe hemé'kóne he'ama tséhéóhe néhmásóomèstse! Éxhetósesto hestse'emo. Hená'hanehe né = ma'háhkése tséhešéó'òsetanòse.

English Translation:

This is just one more of those regular stories that you want to know. Long ago, one old man who was not very observant did something stupid. I knew him; his name was Eater. He lived at Tongue River.

At that time, the older people would get up very early. They would go after rations very early in the morning here at the agency in Lama Deer.

“Get ready early, I'm going after the horses”, he told his wife.

He must have gotten up early, just before daylight. He came to where his horses were standing. He caught one. He got on it. He started counting how many of his animals there were. One was simply gone.

After he rounded them up, he started looking for it (the missing horse) – the one that he was riding. It was grayfaced. There, when he came over the hill where it had been obscured, he didn't see it. Then he started loping his horse. On and on, quite a ways he went looking for it. Then more and more he was galloping his horse. Then, after the sun had come up, he gave up. He drove his horses home.

He drove his animals to where his tepee was. His wife was standing outside. She was looking for him. He rode up to her.

“One horse is just missing. It's just like Grayface vanished” he told her.

“And who is this one you're riding?” she said to him.

He came to his senses. He was riding the one that was missing. He lowered his head down. Here on the top of his head (he indicated), "here, hit me hard!" he told his wife. That's the way that old man was not observant.

Morphological Glossing:⁴

- (1) *Hé'tóhe na'éstse máto hová'éhe ta'se*
 Hé'tóhe na'éstse máto hová'éhe ta'se
 this.INAN one also something HEDGE
tséémaehéne'enátanó'tomo vá'néhóhta'heonótse
 tsé-ée-mae-héne'ená-tanó-'t-omo vá'nè-hóhta'heon-ot
 CNJ-around-all-know-want-TI-CNJ.2 just-story-PL.INAN
vo'èstane tsé'éveó'òsetanóse heva
 vo'èstane tsé-h-éve-ó'òsetanó-s heva
 person CNJ-PST-about-think.wrongly- CNJ.3 HEDGE
tséstaéveó'òsenétáhévo'eetaese
 tsé-h-ta-éva-'o'òse-nétáhev-'o'eetahe-s
 CNJ-PST-TRL-around-mistake-different-do.something-CNJ.3
na'éstse ma'háhkése táháóhe évaveto
 na'éstse ma'há-hkése táháóhe évaveto
 one old-DIM there.DIS back.then

‘This is just one more of those regular stories that you want to know. Long ago, one old man who was not very observant did something stupid.’

- (2)⁵ *nánèxhéne'enövo*
 ná-nèh-héne'enöv-o
 1-CIS-know.AN-DIR
 ‘I knew him.’
- (3)⁶ *òhméseestse é'òhkéhestohe*
 òh-mésehe-t é-h-ohke-hestohe
 CNJ-eat-3.SG 3-PST-HAB-be.called
 ‘He was called Eater.’
- (4) *vétanovéo'hé'e éhvo'èstanéheve*
 vétanové-o'hé'e é-h-vo'èstanéheve
 toung-e-river 3-PST-live
 ‘He lived at Tongue River.’
- (5)⁷ *nèhe'xóvéva é'òhkeosée'évèhoháeméoto'eo'o*
 nèhe-'xóvé-va é-h-òhke-osée-'évè-ho-háe-méo-to'e-o'o
 that-time-OBL 3-PST-HAB-very-about-REDUP-very-morning-get.up-3.PL.AN
tsééséhátaa'éhahese
 tsé-ésè-hátaa'éhahe-s
 CNJ-PRF-old-CNJ.3
 ‘At that time, the older people used to get up very early.’

- (6)⁸ *mósto'seméaséto'eohtséhevóhe*
 mó-h-to'se-méo-asé-to'e-ohtsè-he-vó-he
 INF-PST-going.to-morning-start-get.up-PCS-Q[?]-3.PL-Q[?]
tsé'òhkésó'hoxomevóse *tséhéóhe*
 tsé-h-òhkè-só'hoxom-e-vò-s tséhéóhe
 CNJ-PST-HAB-get.rations-PSV-3.PL-CNJ.3 here
méave'ho'eno *vó'achéó'hé'e*
 méa-ve'ho'e-no vó'aché-o'hé'e
 give-whiteman-place antelope-river
 'They must have gotten up very early in the morning to go after rations here at the agency
 (lit. Whiteman giving place) in Lame Deer (lit. Antelope Creek).'

- (7)⁹ *ta'méo'éxaneneo'o,* *náhtsenéxhého'eoha'ovoo'o*
 ta'-méo-'éxanene-o'o, nà-h-tse-néh-hé-ho'eoha'o-vo-o'o
 INT-morning-prepare-DEL.IMP 1-PST-CAT-CIS-PURP-go.after-3.PL-OBV
mo'éhno'háme, *éxhetósesto*
 mo'éhno'hám-é, é-h-het-ó-sest-o
 horse-PL 3-PST-tell.AN-DIR-RPT-OBV
he'óho *tséá'enose*
 he'ó-ho tsé-á'en-o-s
 woman-OBV CNJ-own.AN-DIR-CNJ.3

“Get ready early, I'm going after the horses”, he reportedly told his wife¹⁰.

- (8) *mó'osáaneotá'méoto'éotséhéhe*
 mó-h-osáane-otá'-méo-to'é-otsè-hé-he
 INF-PST-begin-EMPH-morning-get.up-RES.PCS-Q[?]-Q[?]
tséstó'seéševó'neotsetse
 tsé-h-to'se-éše-vó'ne-otse-tse
 CNJ-PST-going.to.be-day-light-RES.PCS-CNJ_⊥
 'He must have gotten up early, when it was almost daylight.'

- (9) *móstáho'eohtsé'tovóhevóhe* *hestotseho*
 mó-h-tá-ho'e-ohtsé-'tovò-he-vó-he he-stotse-ho
 INF-PST-away-come-PCS-TA-Q[?]-OBV-Q[?] 3.POSS-pet.of-OBV
tséhnéetsése
 tsé-h-née-tsé-s
 CNJ-PST-stand.up-CNJ_⊥-CNJ.3
 'He came to where his horses_⊥ were standing.'

- (10) *na'èstse* *móhnáha'enóhevóhe*
 na'èstse mó-h-náha'en-ò-he-vó-he
 One INF-PST-catch-DIR-Q[?]-OBV-Q[?]
 'He caught one'.

- (11)¹¹ *mó'osáanetáxevonéhnéhnótóhe*
 mó-h-osáane-táxevonéhné-he-not-ó-he
 INF-PST-commence-get.on-Q[?]-FTA-OBV-Q[?]
 'He got on it.'
- (12) *mó-s-ta-osáane-asé-hoem-ó-he-vó-he*
 mó-s-ta-osáane-asé-hoem-ò-he-vó-he
 INF-PST-DIR-begin-start-count-DIR-Q[?]-3.PL- Q[?]
tsé-hestóxe-tsé-se *hestotseho*
 tsé-hestóxe-tsè-s hestotseho
 CNJ-be.so.many-CNJ_⊥-CNJ.3 3.POSS-pet.of.x-OBV
 'He started counting how many of his animals there were.'
- (13)¹² *éxaeno'tšéhováneehésesto* *na'èstse*
 é-xae-no'-tšèšè-hováneehé-sest-o na'èstse
 3-simply-also-now-gone-RPT-OBV one
 'One (of them) was simply gone'
- (14) *tséstaéšetšèšéhóvo'ooha'ovóse*
 tsé-h-ta-éše-tšèšè-hóvo'ooha'ov-ò-s
 CNJ-PST-away-PRF-now-round.up-OBV-CNJ.3
éstasenóhtséoohé'tovósesto *néhe* *né=tsétáhoe.*
 é-h-ta-ase-nóhtséoohé'tov-ó-sest-o néhe né=tsé-táhoe-s.
 3-PST-TRL-start-look.for.AN-DIR-RPT-OBV it it=CNJ-ride-CNJ.3
 'After he rounded them up, he started looking for it [the missing horse] -- the one that he was riding.'
- (15) *éhvóhpe'xoénèsesto*
 é-h-vóhpe-'xo-énè-sesto
 3-PST-light.color-face-RPT-OBV
 'It was grayfaced.'
- (16) *táháóhe* *tséstamé'a'xése* *tsésta'óma'o'etse*
 táháohe tsé-h-ta-mé'a'xè-s tsé-h-ta'óma'o'e-tse
 there.DIS CNJ-PST-TRL-appear.quickly-CNJ.3 CNJ-PST-obscure-CNJ
éssáavóomóhesesto.
 é-h-sáa-vóom-ó-he-sest-o.
 3-PST-NEG-see-DIR-NEG-RPT-OBV
 'There when he came over the hill where it had been obscured, he didn't see the horse.'
- (17) *néhe'še* *mó'asetáhasó'hehéhe*
 néhe'še mó-h-ase-táhasó'he-hé-he
 then INF-PST-start-ride.horse-Q[?]-Q[?]
 'Then, he started loping his horse.'

- (18) *nonó'hónó'e háá'ěše éstáhešenòhtsé'ovósesto.*
 nonó'hónó'e háá'ěše é-h-ta-heše-nòhtsé'ov-ó-sest-o.
 bit.by.bit far 3-PST-TRL-how-look.for.AN-DIR-RPT-OBV
 'On and on, quite a ways he went looking for it.'
- (19) *néhe'she nonó'hónó'e móstaněšenó'něševeohtséhéhe*
 néhe'she nonó'hónó'e mó-h-ta-něše-nó'-něševeohtsè-hé-he
 then bit.by.bit INF-PST-TRL-keep.on-also-go.fast-Q²-Q²
 'Then, more and more he was galloping his horse.'
- (20) *néhe'she tséhne'ěšemé'ěhnetsése éše'h-óho*
 néhe'she tsé-h-ne'-ěše-mé'ěh-ne-tsè-s éše'h-óho
 then CNJ-PST-CIS-PRF-appear-walk-CNJ₁-CNJ.3 sun-OBV
ěhněhnetameotseséstse.
 é-h-něhnetame-otse-sèst-e.
 3-PST-discouraged-become-RPT-EP
 'Then, after the sun had come up, he gave up.'
- (21) *néhe'she móhněšéhóohta'ovo'haméhéhe*
 néhe'she mó-h-něšé-hóoht-a'ovo'-hamè-he-he
 then INF-PST-continue-home-drive.livestock- Q²-Q²
 'Then he drove his horses home.'
- (22) *é-s-tá-ho'-a'ovo'-hame-séstse*
 é-h-tá-ho'-a'ovo'-hame-sèst-e
 3-PST-DIR-arrive-home-drive.livestock-RPT-EP
he-venòtse tsé-x-ho'ta-tse.
 he-venòtse tsé-h-ho'ta-tse.
 3.POSS-tepee CNJ-PST-be.at-CNJ₁
 'He drove his animals to where his tepee was.'
- (23)¹³ *he'óho tséá'enose anósema é'amóeóesesesto*
 he'óh-o tsé-á'en-o-s anóse-ma é-h-amóeóese-sest-o
 woman-OBV CNJ-own-DIR-CNJ.3 outside-LOC 3-PST-stand.there-RPT-OBV
 'His wife was standing outside.'
- (24) *mó-h-něh-nòhtse-vóom-ae-he-vó-he*
 mó-h-něh-nòhtse-vóom-ae-he-vó-he
 INF-PST-CIS-look.for-see.AN-INV-Q²-3.PL-Q²
 'She was looking for him.'

(25) *éstáho'etáhoeotsé'tovósesto.*
 é-h-tà-ho'e-táhoeotsé'tov-ó-sest-o.
 3- PST-TRL-arrive-EP-ride.AN-DIR-RPT-OBV
 'He rode up to her.'

(26)¹⁴ *é-xae-no'kè-hovánee'e na'éstse mo'éhno'ha*
 é-xae-no'kè-hovánee'e na'éstse mo'éhno'ha
 3-simply-one-gone one horse
ta'se éhxamae'éstséhévoeotse vóhpe'xoénéhe,
 ta'se é-h-xamae-'-éstséhévoeotse vóhpe-'xoéné-he,
 like 3-PST-simply-EP-sink light.color-face-AGT
éxhetósesto
 é-x-het-ó-sest-o
 3-PST-say.to.AN-DIR-RPT-OBV

“One horse is just missing. It's just like Grayface vanished” he told her.’

(27) *naa néváéso né=tsé-táhoeto? éxhetaesesto.*
 naa néváéso néhe=tsé-táhoe-to? é-h-het-ae-sest-o.
 and who it=CNJ-ride-CNJ.2 3-PST-say.to.s.o.-INV-RPT-OBV

“And who is this one you're riding?” she said to him.’

(28) *éstamónéhéne'enánóse*
 é-s-ta-mónè-héne'ená-nóse
 3-PST-TRL-newly-know.INAN-RPT.INAN
 'He came to his senses.'

(29) *né=tséno'kèhováneehétsese móstáhoehénotóhe*
 néhe=tsé-no'kè-hováneeh-étse-s mó-h-táhoe-hé-no-t-ó-he
 it=CNJ-one-gone- CNJ.OBV-CNJ.3 INF-PST-ride-Q²-TA-EP-DIR-Q²
 'He was riding the one that was missing.'

(30) *éstatsěšeánòhetséheta'éotsestse.*
 é-h-ta-těše-ánòhe-tséheta'éotse-sest-e.
 3-PST-TRL-now-down-position.head-RPT-EP
 'He lowered his head down.'

- (31) *tséhéóhe* *he-mé'kó-ne* *he'ama*
 tséhéóhe he-mé'kó-ne he'ama
 here 3.POSS-head-? up
- tséhéóhe* *néh-másó-oom-é-stse!*
 tséhéóhe néh-másó-oom-é-stse!
 here CIS-in.a.burst-hit-2:1-IMP
- éxhetósesto* *hestsé'emo.*
 é-h-het-ó-sest-o he-stse'em-o.
 3-PST-say.to.AN-DIR-RPT-OBV 3.POSS-woman-OBV
- ‘Here on his head on the top (he indicated), "Here, hit me hard!" he told his wife.’

- (32) *hená'hanehe* *né=ma'há-hkése* *tsé-heše-ó'òsetänó-se.*
 hená'hanehe néhe=ma'há-hkése tsé-heše-ó'òsetänó-s
 that.INAN.SG it=old-DIM CNJ-how-wrongly.think-CNJ.3
- ‘That's the way that old man was not observant.’

Abbreviations

-	morpheme boundary
=	clitic boundary
.	meaning part boundary, e.g.: walk.to
1	First Person
2	Second Person
2:1	Second Person acting on First Person
3	Third Person
<i>ahte</i>	reflexive/reciprocal verbal affix
AN	Animate
AGT	Agentive suffix, like ‘-er’ in English
CAT	Cataphoric preverb
CIS	Cislocative
CNJ	Conjunct
DEL.IMP	Delayed Imperative
DIR	Direct Voice ¹⁵
DIS	Distal
DIM	Diminutive
EMPH	emphatically, very much
EP	Epenthetic sound
FIA	Final Intransitive Animate
FTI	Final Transitive Inanimate
HAB	Habitual
HEDGE	Hedge/discourse filler, e.g. ‘like’ or ‘uh’ in English
IMP	Imperative
INAN	Inanimate
INF	Inferential/Dubitative Evidential
INT	Intensifier
INV	Inverse voice ¹⁶
IRR	Irrealis
IT	Iterative
OBL	Oblique
OBV	Obviative
PCS	Process
POSS	Possessive
PRF	Perfective
PST	Distant past (recent past/present is not marked)
PURP	Purposive
RCP	Reciprocal
RFL	Reflexive
RPT	Reportative Evidential
RES.PCS	Process, with focus on the result state
SUB	subjunctive
TRL	Translocative

¹ This text has been reformatted, more loosely translated, and morphologically glossed by Sarah Murray with the help of Wayne Leman and Dr. Richard Littlebear. I am very grateful to Wayne Leman for his help in glossing some particularly tricky sentences, and general assistance in becoming familiar with the Cheyenne language. Support for this work was provided by a Phillips fund grant from the American Philosophical Society.

² From the notes on Wayne Leman's Website (= WLW): "This text was first recorded and transcribed by Kenneth Croft, 1948, under a grant from the American Philosophical Society. We retranscribed and retranslated the text in September 1986. This text was first published in Náévâhóo'ôhtséme / We are going back home: Cheyenne history and stories told by James Shoulderblade and others, edited by Wayne Leman. Memoir 4. Winnipeg: Algonquian and Iroquoian Linguistics. Copyright 1987. Croft's title of this section of his fieldnotes was "Absent-Minded Indians" (see fn. 5, below). Croft did not note the name of the Cheyenne narrator, but it would appear to be a Montana Cheyenne, quite possibly John Standsintimber who enjoyed telling such stories, as can be seen from accounts which appear in *Stands In Timber and Liberty* (1967)."

³ WLW: "In Croft's fieldnotes the transcription continues from this point with an account of another episode of absentmindedness, and with no indication of a major break. This next episode is about when a man called Squint Eye got irritated because he kept finding a gate open. (He, of course, was the one who kept leaving the gate open.) Following that text is yet another episode, again with no major break indicated, about forgetfulness on the part of Squint Eye. Croft was able to collect many interesting texts, many are humorous, others are of historical importance. His entire collection deserves to be retranscribed and made available to the public."

⁴ The abbreviation key is located in a separate file.

⁵ The morpheme DIR here is a directional; it can be used to mean 'hither' or 'toward', or 'here' in 'He came here'.

⁶ CHEYENNE DICTIONARY: "Ôhméseestse is the name of a Northern Cheyenne person, and can be a tribal label. Literally, it means 'eater'. The word-initial oh- is a conjunct prefix; it is commonly used on proper names and on other conjunct verbs referring to action which takes place habitually; when the prefix is used on conjunct participles, the participle acts much like a regular noun; note that some of the following entries, for example, ôhmésêhé'késó 'young Northern Cheyenne girl', even inflect like nouns (in this case, taking the noun diminutive suffix /-só/), not as the usual conjunct participles, which take conjunct (of the participle subclass) inflection. see discussion under -méseestse. Variant: [Notaméohméseestse](#). Plural: Ôhmésêhese. Some popular spellings for the pl. have been Ohmeses or Ohmis or some may even prefer to underdifferentiate the first syllable and spell the word as Omisis. Each of these spellings does not allow one to tell that the first /s/ of the word is aspirated (because the root for 'eat' actually contains three phonemic syllables, -mésehe), but the popular spellings are acceptable for most non-technical writing and have the advantage of being easier to typeset and easier for the person who is not well-versed in the modern linguistic means of expressing aspirated ("complex") syllables of Cheyenne, an important part of the sound system of the language, but a feature which is so different from English literacy which most readers of Cheyenne are more familiar with. A common folk etymology given is that this historical Cheyenne band was called "Eaters" because they had plenty to eat, especially of buffalo. It may be that this etymology arose especially after half of the Cheyenne people took up residence in Oklahoma and they looked upon Cheyennes to the north as having access to the buffalo, which they, in the south, did not have. The plural of this term, often with the addition of the preverb for 'north', Notaméohmésêhese, is the term used when a distinction is desired to refer those Cheyennes who preferred the northern part of the Plains area where the Cheyenne bands roamed; the group usually contrasted when such a distinction is made are the Heévâhetaneo'o, which is now used for Cheyennes who live in Oklahoma. This term seems to be used mostly by Cheyennes in Oklahoma for their fellow tribes people in Montana. See: [Ôhmésêhéno; -mésehe; oh-](#). AlternatePlural = Notaméohmésêhese"

⁷ The suffix -va, glossed -OBL, may be the -OBV allomorph used with nouns; they are homophonous. This sentence could also be glossed as 'they would...', as in the introduction.

⁸ The suffix -he appears in questions, negation, and these 'dubitative' or 'inferential' constructions. I need to come up with an appropriate gloss. Leman glosses them as -NEG in his stories, but the meaning here is not 'negation' as normally construed. Possibly a modal - possibly not containing the actual world.

⁹ WLW: "Literally, 'the woman (obv.) that he owns', which used to be a common way to designate a wife. It is not used as commonly today, perhaps due to its paternalistic connotation. Similarly, the common term hestse'ëmo 'his woman' for 'his wife' has fallen into disuse. A neutral substitute for both terms has been tsévêstoemose 'his/her spouse', literally, 'the one he/she sits with.'"

¹⁰ Wife, *he'ôho tséá'enose*, is literally 'woman that he owns'.

¹¹ The meaning of this preverb ‘commence’ varies contextually: it can mean so; commence; accordingly; or begin. I think in this case it is noting the elaborating relationship of getting on the horse to catching it; “accordingly” might be appropriate.

¹² WLW: “The narrator occasionally palatalizes Cheyenne k before e, a mark of an old style of male speech. Today a few male speakers pronounce palatalized forms, and then not always consistently. Others pronounce this word in the unpalatalized form, éxaeno'kêhováneehésesto.”

¹³ The verb ‘stand there’ may be stative. The Cheyenne dictionary says, in the entry for ‘amóéóó’e’: “One difference between this verb and -néé’e is that this verb indicates standing for a period of time. -néé’e has no implication of time, either a short amount of time or a longer period of time.”

¹⁴ WLW: “Literally, ‘it’s just as if Grayface vanished’ is ‘It’s just like it went under water, Grayface’.”

¹⁵ 1st or 2nd person subject acting on 3rd person object in the conjunct order

¹⁶ Cheyenne Dictionary: “Inverse voice means that a third person subject is “acting upon” a first or second person, or that an obviated third person is acting upon a proximate third person.”