The Absent-Minded Indian¹,²,³
Unknown Narrator

Hé'tóhe na'estse máto hovál'ehe ta'se tsééemahéhéne'enátan'itomo vá'néhohta'heonótse vo'estane tsé'éveo'ôsetanóse hева tsésta'éveo'ôsenéta'hévo'o'etaese na'estse ma'háhkése táháohé évaveto. Nánéxhéne'enövo òhméseenste è'ôhkéhestohe. Vétanovéo'hé'è éhvo'estanéheve.
Néhe'xóvéva è'ôhkeoséévéhoháaméoto'eo'o tsééshéhataa'ëhahese. Móst'o'séméoaséeto'eohtséhevhóhe tsé'o'ôkhéso'îhoxo'mevóse tséhéóhe m'éave'ho'ëno vó'âchëo'hé'è.
Ta'mëo'ëxanene'o'o, náhtsenëxhého'ëoha'ovo'o mo'ëhno'hàème, éxhetósesto he'ôho tséâ'enose.
Mó'osááneotá'méoto'ëotséhehe tsést'o'séèëëvo'neotsetse. Móstáho'o'ehotsè'tovëhevo'hehestotsëhoh te'shëhntëtsëse. Na'estse móhnàahà'enõèhevo'he. Mó'osáásanëxevonëhùnëñòn'tòhe. Móstoaosááneasëhoëmôhevo'he tséhestôxetsëse hestotsëhó. Èxaeno'tëskëhxónehehëseosto na'estse.
Tsëstaëstëtëšëhóvo'ôóoa'ovóse èstasenòhtsënoohë'tovóseto néhe né = tsétáhoëse. Èhvóhpe'xoënésesto. Táháohé tséstamë'ëxëse tsësta'ôma'o'o'tse éssáàvéomóhësesto. Néhe'se mo'asëtá'hasó'ôhelëhe nonõ'hónò'è háá'ëse èstáhešënòhtsë'sóvoësësto. Néhe'se nonõ'hónò'è móstanë'ësênè'sëveoehtsëhehe. Néhe'se tséhne'ësëmëëhëñtësëse èëse'hóho èhnhënetameotsësëdstëse. Néhe'se móhñèshëöhôhta'ovo'hamënéhe.
Èstáho'o'ovo'hamësëstse hevenòtse tséxhò'tatsë. He'ôho tséà'enose ënòsema è'amòóësësësto. Móhnënhnohtsëvøoamaëhevo'he. Èstáho'ëtáhoëotsë'tovóseto.
Èxaeno'ëkhëhvàne'e'ë na'estse mo'ëhno'ha. Ta'se ëxamae'ëstëshëhévoëotsë véóhpë'xoënéhe, éxhetósesto.
Naa névàèsò né = tsétáhoëto? ëxetaesësto.
Èstamônhëhéne'enànnëse. né = tsëno'këhovàñéhehëtsëse móstáhoëhënotòhe. Ëtstësësnànhëtsëhëta'ëotsësëstse. Tséhëöhëhe hemë'kòne he'ama tséhëóhe nèhmàsóoomëstse! Ëxhetósesto hëstë'sëmë. Henâ'hànëhe në = ma'háhkëse tséhësëo'ôsetànsë.
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 Lame 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.
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.'

‘He lived at Tongue River.’

‘At that time, the older people used to get up very early.’
‘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).’

‘Get ready early, I'm going after the horses’, he reportedly told his wife.‘

‘He must have gotten up early, when it was almost daylight.’

‘He came to where his horses were standing.’

‘He caught one’.
(11) mő'osāanetáxevonēhnēhnotóhe
mő-h-osāane-táxevonēhnē-he-not-ó-he
INF-PST-commence-get.on-Q'-FTA-OBV-Q'
'He got on it'.

(12) mó-s-ta-osāane-asē-hoem-ō-he-vō-he
mó-s-ta-osāane-asē-hoem-ō-he-vō-he
INF-PST-DIR-begin-start-count-DIR-Q'-3.PL-Q'
'He started counting how many of his animals there were.'

tse-hestōxe-tsē-se
hestotseho

tse-hestōxe-tsē-s
hestotseho

CNJ-be.so.many-CNJ_-3.PL-CNJ

(13) éxaenotsēshōvānēchēsesto
é-xae-no't-sēshē-hovānēchē-sest-o
3-simply-also-now-gone-RPT-OBV one
'One (of them) was simply gone'

sr«gdrsn'sr',
gdrsnsrd

CNJ-PST-away-PRF-now-round.up-OBV-CNJ.3

éstasenōhtsēoohē'tovōsesto
nēhe né=tsētāhoese.

ē-h-ta-ase-nōhtsēoohē'tov-ō-sest-o
nēhe né=tsē-tāhoε-s.

3-PST-TRL-start-look.for.AN-DIR-RPT-OBV it
it=CNJ-ride-CNJ.3

'He started counting how many of his animals there were.'

(14) tsēstaešētšēkōvo'ooohavōsē

tsē-h-ta-ēše-tšēkōvo'oohav-ō-s
3-PST-light.color-face-RPT-OBV
'It was grayfaced.'

(15) tsēstamē'a'xeśe
tsē-ka-ame'a'xe-s
3-PST-DIR-TRL-start-ride.horse-Q

'He got on it'.

(16) tāhāōhe
tāhāōhe
then

3-PST-NEG-see-DIR-NEG-RPT-OBV

'He started loping his horse.'

(17) nēhe'se
nēhe'se
then

INF-PST-start-ride.horse-Q'-Q'

'He started loping his horse.'
(18) nonō’hónó’e háá’ěše éstáhešenोňtsě’ovóúe
nonō’hónó’e háá’ěše é-h-ta-heše-nońhtsę’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’se nonō’hónó’e móstáněšenō’něševohtsēhēhe
néhe’se nonō’hónó’e mó-h-ta-něše-nō’-něševohtsē-hé-he
then bit.by.bit INF-PST-TRL-keep.on-also-go.fast-Q’Q’
‘Then, more and more he was galloping his horse.’

(20) néhe’se tséhne’ešemé’ènhetsése éšše’h-óho
néhe’se tsé-h-ne’-éše-mé’èh-ne-tsé-s éšše’h-óho
then CNJ-PST-CIS-PRF-appear-walk-CNJJ-CNJJ.3 sun-OBV
éhńehnetameotseséstse.
é-h-néhnetame-otse-sést-e.
3-PST-discouraged-become-RPT-EP
‘Then, after the sun had come up, he gave up.

(21) néhe’se mōhńęšεhōohta’ovo’hamńęhēhe
néhe’se mó-h-něšę-hńııht-a’ovo’-hamę-he-he
then INF-PST-continue-home-drive.livestock-Q’Q’
‘Then he drove his horses home.’

(22) é-s-tā-ho’-a’ovo’-hame-séstse
é-h-ta-ho’-a’ovo’-hame-sést-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-CNJJ
‘He drove his animals to where his tepee was.’

(23)13 he’óho tséá’chenose anóśema è’amóécouteesesto
he’óh-o tsé-a’en-o-s anósé-ma é-h-amóécoute-sest-o
woman-OBV CNJ-own-DIR-CNJJ.3 outside-LOC 3-PST-stand.there-RPT-OBV
‘His wife was standing outside.’

(24) mó-h-nēn-nōhtse-vōom-ae-he-vō-he
mó-h-nēn-nōhtse-vōom-ae-he-vō-he
INF-PST-CIS-look.for-see.AN-INV-Q’Q’-3.PL-Q’
‘She was looking for him.’
(25) éstáho'etáhoeotsé'tovósesto.
3-PST-TRL-arrive-EP-ride.AN-DIR-RPT-OBV ‘He rode up to her.’

(26)14 é-xae-no'ké-hovánee'e  na'ëstse  mo'éhno'ha
    é-xae-no'ké-hovánee'e  na'ëstse  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  néváeso  né=tsé-táhoeto?  éxhetaesesto.
3-PST-TRL-newly-know.INAN-RPT.INAN ‘He came to his senses.’

(28) éstamónéhéne'enánóse
3-PST-TRL-newly-know.INAN-RPT.INAN
‘He was riding the one that was missing.’

(29) né=tséno'kéhovánehésesé
3-PST-TRL-now-down-position.HEAD-RPT-EP
‘He lowered his head down.’
(31)  tséhéôhe  he-mé'kó-ne  he'ama
here  3.POSS-head-?  up
    tséhéôhe  néh-másô-oom-ê-stse!
    here  CIS-in.a.burst-hit-2:1-IMP
    hêstse'emo.
    é-h-het-ô-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'ha-hkêse  tsé-heše-ô'ôsetânô-se.
that.INAN.SG  it=old-DIM  CNJ-how-wrongly.think-CNJ.3

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

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 Naévâhóo’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).”

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.”

The abbreviation key is located in a separate file.

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

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’késo ‘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 Ohmisis or some may even prefer to underdifferentiate the first syllable and spell the word as Omissis. 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’, Notaméohmésehese, 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 Heévâhêtaneo'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 = Notaméohmésehese”

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.

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.

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’emó ‘his woman' for 'his wife' has fallen into disuse. A neutral substitute for both terms has been tsévástoomose 'his/her spouse', literally, ‘the one he/she sits with’.”

1 Wife, he’óho tséá’énose, is literally ‘woman that he owns’.
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.

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'kēhováneehésesto.”

The verb ‘stand there’ may be stative. The Cheyenne dictionary says, in the entry for ‘amóeóó’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.”

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

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.”