Blackfoot origin stories mention a gift of hairlock shirts by Naatosi, the Sun, to a man known as Paya’kskii or Poia (Scarface). Paya’kskii saved Naatosi’s son, Morning Star, from an attack by giant cranes, and, in gratitude, Naatosi gave Paya’kskii powerful gifts. These included the Sun Dance and hairlock shirts. Crane tracks are sometimes painted on men’s leggings, such as those collected by Hopkins and Simpson along with the shirts, to commemorate Paya’kskii’s victory over the cranes. Many versions of this story have been translated into English and published, though none of these are as detailed as the versions told by Blackfoot people in ceremonial contexts.

This version of the story was recorded by David C. Duvall, son of a Blackfeet mother, Yellow Bird (Louise Big Plume), and a French Canadian father, Charles Duvall, who recorded many Blackfoot stories during the early twentieth century (Kehoe [1995] 2007, xiv–xvii). Duvall worked closely with Clark Wissler, a curator at the American Museum of Natural History in New York, to collect stories and
objects from Blackfoot people, who were experiencing great changes in their lives as a result of the imposition of the reservation system and other forms of colonial control. Many of these stories were subsequently published by Wissler, with Duvall credited as co-author, in *Mythology of the Blackfoot Indians*, a book that is still in print (Wissler and Duvall [1908] 2007).

The story was told by Three Bears, a noted Blackfeet warrior and ceremonial leader, to Duvall, who translated it into English from the original Blackfoot. Duvall spoke Blackfoot fluently, and Wissler specifically asked him to keep as closely as possible to the original meaning in his notes. Sending Duvall an example of one story they had recorded together, Wissler instructed: “I should like if you would make such changes in it as may be necessary so as to make it as much like the real story as possible. Of course in rewriting this I have put in our own style, but should like your own copy to be written as nearly in the Indian style as possible” (Wissler to Duvall, 27 January 1906, quoted in Kehoe [1995] 2007, xvii). Duvall’s version reflects some of the rhythm of formal Blackfoot oral discourse for storytelling, such as the repeated use of “Now” to begin sentences—probably a translation of the Blackfoot *kii*, “Now then . . .” At the same time, some of the language he uses (for example, the English term “chum,” to describe a close friend) is decidedly contemporary.

We have selected this version of the story in conjunction with Blackfoot colleagues for its detailed description of the shirt and leggings, decorated with hairlocks and quillwork, given to Paya’kskii (here referred to as Scarface). The circumstances of this gift serve to underscore the meaning of hairlock shirts within Blackfoot culture, as powerful sacred items that originated from a relationship with the Above People, or *Sspommitapiksi*. The original handwritten transcription, dated 17 December 1910, is housed in the archives of the American Museum of Natural History (The Papers of David Charles Duvall, 1877–1911, American Museum of Natural History, Division of Anthropology Archives, cat. no. D883), and a scan of the original document is available at http://www.albertaonrecord.ca/iw-glen-636. The first part of the story (pages 162 to 173 in the original) explains how hairlock shirts came to human beings. We have transcribed and very lightly edited Duvall’s handwritten notes.

1 We are grateful to Allan Pard for commenting on Duvall’s use of language. Pard notes that Duvall was told a condensed version of the story and that the ending of the story as Duvall gives it—with retribution against the woman with whom the story begins—is not traditional.

2 Betty Bastien (2004), a Piikani scholar, offers an especially nuanced discussion of such relationships, as well as Blackfoot concepts of sacredness and Blackfoot ways of knowing.
Scarface

Narrated by Three Bears

Once there was a poor young man, he had a chum. Now in the camps there was a very fine girl, the daughter of a chief, with whom all the young men were in love. Now the poor young man was in love with her also, but he had an ugly scar on his cheek. One day he asked his chum to go over and ask the girl to marry him.

The chum went and told the girl what Scarface had said. The girl said that she would marry him whenever that ugly scar disappeared. Now this chum returned and told Scarface what the girl had said. This hurt Scarface’s feelings very much, and he decided to go away to seek someone who could aid him in removing the scar. He travelled for many days and nights, but every place he went to, no one seemed to have the power to remove the scar.

At last he came to where a number of spiders were and explained to them what he was travelling for. The Spiders advised him to go to the Sun, and that they would help him to get there. As the Sun lived high up in another land, the Spiders could get him up there by their webs, one of the Spiders said to Scarface, shut your eyes and do not look until I say so. Scarface did as he was told and when he looked he was in a different land. Now the Spider pointed out a lake to him: “You see that lake, you dig a hole in the ground near it, and at night you stay in the hole, and at day time lay in the lake, for the Sun gets very hot and might burn you up. The Sun’s home is just a little beyond the lake, and his boy comes and plays around this lake in the day time, and I shall wait here for you and when you get ready to go back down, come back to me and I’ll take you back down.”

Scarface did as the Spider told him. One day Morning Star came along and saw Scarface. The young man asked Scarface where he was a going, and he said, “I am going to the Sun.” The young man then asked Scarface to follow him. The two young men went to the Sun’s lodge. The Sun was away but the old woman was home. Then Morning Star addressed his mother, saying, “I have brought a strange young man here. I wish him for a companion.” “No,” said his mother. “He might get killed by the cranes, same as all others that come here, and your father might not like for him to stay here.” But Morning Star said, “Mother, take pity on him, and let him come in and stay with us for I get very lonesome and
wish to have his company.” Then the old woman told Morning Star to bring the young man in.

Now when the Sun came to his lodge, he stood outside and said, “What is it that smells so bad?” Now the woman was the moon, and [she] said to the Sun, “Morning Star has a chum.” Then Sun said, “Make a smudge and take him out and wash him and give him some of Morning Star’s clothes to wear.” The moon took Scarface out and gave him a bath and dressed him up with some of Morning Star’s old clothes and made a smudge with juniper, in which Scarface stood all over until the smoke reached all through his clothes. Then he went in the Sun’s lodge. Now the Sun knew that this was a poor unfortunate boy and took pity on him. Now Sun addressed his son: “Do you wish this young man for a companion?” Then Morning Star replied, “I would like him very much, as I get very lonesome when travelling around alone.” Sun asked Scarface, “What did you come here for?” Scarface told him all about what the woman had said about the scar on his cheek. Then the Sun said to him, “Since my son likes you and wants you to stay, you may do so. But you must not go in that direction,” said Sun, pointing toward the west.

Now often the two young men travelled around. Scarface said to Morning Star, “There is a lake, let us go over there and get some feathers.” “No,” said Morning Star, “Father forbade us to go in that direction.” But Scarface insisted on going, then Morning Star consented. Just as they got to the lake, Morning Star said, “Look out Scarface, they are after us,” and at the same time ran away as fast as he could. Now Scarface did not run but picked up a club and [when] the first crane came near him, he killed it, and the second crane came, and just about the time he was to peck at Scarface, he killed this crane. Now these cranes were very dangerous and had killed many people, but as Scarface had secured some power while on his way to the Sun, it became easy for him to overpower the cranes.

Scarface took hold of the two cranes and went to the Sun’s lodge. When he got there, Morning Star was there ahead of him. Now the Moon was very much astonished when she saw the cranes, and asked Scarface, how he killed them. He replied, Oh, it was easily done I killed them with a club. Now when the Sun got home and heard of this he was well pleased with what the young man did for the young Scarface showed great courage in killing these dangerous cranes. Now had not Scarface killed these birds or cranes, they would always kill people,
but when he overpowered them, they feared people, and have been so ever since. Now the Sun, and Moon, and Scarface, and Morning Star, all went outside and had a scalp dance, and the Moon and Sun sang songs of cheers or praise for the benefit of Scarface. Now the Sun said to Scarface, “When your people kill their enemies, they must scalp them and have scalp dances same as we are doing now, and when any one is counting coups, someone must sing the song of praise and cheer for him while he is telling of the war deeds.” And it has been so ever since, when a man is telling of his war deeds, some old man or sometimes it is an old woman, who sings the song of praise for the speaker, and repeats his name several times during her singing.

Now the Sun, was so pleased with Scarface, he said to Morning Star and Scarface, make four sweathouses and have them all in a row with the doors facing towards the East, and when the sweathouses were finished, the Sun, Morning Star and Scarface, all three went in one of them, while the Moon stayed outside, to tend to the door of the sweathouse. After Sun had worked over Scarface, some, he had the Moon open the door way and all three went out into the next sweat house, and when the Moon opened the sweathouse again, the Sun asked the Moon which was her son and she pointed to Morning Star. Then they went into the third sweathouse, and in this one, the Sun had the two men exchange seats, and then asked Moon to look in and point to her son. When Moon looked in, she noticed that the scar on the young man’s face had disappeared but knew her son and pointed to him. Then the three went into the fourth sweathouse and the Sun had the two men change seats, and when the Moon looked in, she pointed to Scarface, saying “This is Morning Star.” And Sun said, “You have mistook him for Morning Star, the other is our son,” and ever since Scarface has went by the name, Mistaken Morning Star.

After this was done, the Sun gave Scarface a buckskin suit decorated with quills of porcupine. On the breast of the shirt was a plate of quills worked in and a plate of the same on the back of shirt, now these plates on the shirt represented the Sun, strips of the quills were worked in, up and down the outside seams of leggings and some on the sleeves, the strips of quillwork being about three to four inches wide. The sleeves and legging were fringed with hair locks, the hair locks representing the scalps of the cranes Scarface killed. . . . Sun also told Scarface,
“As I have given you these clothes and other things, when you go back down to your people, and wish to give me something, you must make a sweathouse first and make your sacrifices or offerings to me at this place and I will hear your prayers and take them.” . . .

Now Scarface decided to go back down to his people and went back to where the Spider was still waiting for him. The Spider told him to shut his eyes and not look until he told him to. Scarface shut his eyes and the Spider let him down by his web, and when the Spider told him to look, he saw that he was down in the land he started from.