

# Wínyan Núpa

## DEADLANDS BESTIARY



### Statistics

AGL d8, SMT d8, SPR d10, STR d10, VIG d8, PAR 8, TGH 6\*, Wounds: 3/I. Skills: Fighting d10, Intimidation d12, Notice d8. Attack: Bone Knife x2, DAM 1d4+d10 STR. Special Abilities: Bone Knives, Compounding Toughness\*, Demonic Immunity, Gorgon Glance.

### Background

A wínyan núpa is a legendary Sioux monster, a cannibalistic ogress with a second face on the back of her head. By exposing this second face, a wínyan núpa inflicts terror in her victims, often paralyzing them indefinitely.

### Origin

In the world of *Deadlands 1876*, the wínyan núpa have their origins in an ancient Mesoamerican sorceress who entered Sioux mythology shortly after the Lakota expanded across the Plains. Capable of prolonging her life by transferring her spirit into the body of a younger woman, this sorceress eventually gained the name Wínyan Núpa, or “Double Woman.” Confusingly, this name is also used to describe her “spawn,” a race of cannibalistic servants created by the sorceress to carry out her will.

In order to create one of these servants, Wínyan Núpa must find a woman who has caused the death of her own child, whether through infanticide, abortion, malfeasance, or neglect. The sorceress then lures this woman into a pact, usually by offering her some form of redemption; but occasionally she’ll resort to coercion. Once Wínyan Núpa has acquired her target’s “consent,” she marks this unfortunate creature with a medicine symbol drawn into the back of her head using an ointment made from Wínyan Núpa’s blood. The sorceress completes the transformation by driving a bone needle into her own flesh. Upon activation, the woman loses her identity and becomes transformed into a “wínyan núpa,” forced to serve the sorceress for the rest of her life.

### Description

Appearing as an Indian woman of child-bearing age, a wínyan núpa is difficult to detect from an ordinary human being. Of course, she always keeps the back of her head covered, usually by a curtain of black hair, but sometimes using a scarf or headdress. Her fingernails are generally longer than normal, and her teeth may be a bit sharper; but neither of these traits are

exaggerated enough to serve as telltale signs. Her true nature is discovered only when she reveals the back of her head. This “second face” may be beautiful or monstrous; it may wear the seductive smile of a young maiden, the shriveled visage of an old crone, or may simply be a jagged gash of teeth beneath a pair of malevolent eyes. Gazing upon this second face strikes terror into the hearts of mortals, and may paralyze them indefinitely. Once her second face is revealed, the wínyan núpa drops all pretense of humanity and becomes the horrible ogress of legend. She may possess inhuman strength, and even tear the bones from her own body to use as a weapon—bones she’ll replace with bones stolen from her slain victims!

Some legends describe the wínyan núpa befriending pregnant widows or desperate young mothers, grooming these heartbroken women by poisoning them with malice and doubt. Other legends speak of a wínyan núpa seducing a foolish man, trapping him in her lair and slowly devouring his flesh as her paralyzed lover looks on in horror. The mere presence of a wínyan núpa in the region may upset young children, who often experience restlessness, bad dreams, and night terrors. One of the more colorful accounts of the wínyan núpa is found in the diary of Anne Wainwright, a missionary connected with the Spotted Tail Agency. Although she does not name the monster of the child’s dream, it is clear that someone was telling ghost stories around the campfire!

I write this down because I remain disturbed. The Reverend believes that once I translate my unease into words, my soul will be unburdened and I may again find rest. Yet the child’s cry rings in my ears, hours later, even though I see her sleeping peacefully as the dawn approaches.

When the child started from her nightmare, she was in great need of comfort. Her dream was fantastic; the product of an active imagination I liken more native to a Coleridge or Shelley than a girl of eleven years. Expecting her to describe dreams of her father, I was surprised to discover the subject of her terror was not absent parents, but the Indian maiden to whom we had been introduced the night previous. Fixed on the maiden’s luxurious black hair, the child had requested a keepsake lock; a curious request which was promptly honored by our new friends, much to their amusement.

In the girl’s dream, the maiden had approached our circle of firelight, but seemed animated by some external agency of locomotion; the girl likened her motions to the ‘herky-jerky dance’ of marionettes she had seen in Omaha City. As the maiden was made visible by the fire, she placed her fingertips against her breast and pushed inwards, forcing her hands into her own ribcage. She must have possessed Herculean strength, as this delicate maiden snapped off a pair of her own ribs, tearing them from her chest and clutching them in her blood-soaked hands in the manner of daggers.

And yet this ghastly display was not the cause of the child’s outcry; but only prelude to the most outré event of all. With her bony claws held aloft to strike—‘like a cat,’ in the words of the child—the maiden’s body twisted around. With the back of her head now facing the child, the curtain of hair parted to reveal a second face! No mere deformity was this—the child claimed it was even more beautiful than her actual face. Although the woman’s ‘second’ mouth was closed, the child heard a high-pitched laughter, a blood-curdling sound that seemed to emanate from behind the maiden as she twitched her way forward. As the monster finally opened her terrible new mouth, the child let loose the reins of terror she’d been clutching in her sleep, voicing the full-throated shriek that roused the camp. When I asked the child why she screamed then—was the Indian maiden going to devour her? Did that horrible second mouth call her name?—she shook her head. Calmly she spoke, as reasonable as any adult, and relied, ‘No, Mrs. Wainwright. I screamed because I could see that her head was empty, and I saw that her front mouth was laughing.’

—Anne Wainwright, from *A Frontier of Their Own: Women in the American West*, 2002.

## Nomenclature

Often just spelled as “winyan nupa,” the monster’s name roughly translates as “Double Woman.” The winyan nupa is also known as the “anuk ité” or “anung ité,” meaning “Face on Both Sides” or simply “Two-Face.” Among the Cheyenne she’s known as the “Héstova’kéhe.”

## Special Abilities

- **Bone Knives:** Upon launching into an attack, a winyan nupa may reach into her own body and break off her rib bones to use as knives. These improvised weapons do the traditional 1d4+STR damage, but are generally used as a prelude to Gorgon Glance. If the winyan nupa can Shake her target, it makes him incapable of avoiding her Gorgon Glance, which is delivered on the following attack. If the monster survives the attack, she’ll often replace her broken bones with those taken from her victim, which she happily consumes.
- **Cumulative Toughness:** When working in concert with other winyan nupa, an individual winyan nupa gains +1 Toughness for each one of her nearby sisters up to a maximum of +6 for TGH 12. As her sisters are slain, the Cumulative Toughness drops accordingly.
- **Demonic Immunity:** Winyan nupa cannot be Shaken, and are immune to Fear, Intimidation, and all poisons and disease.
- **Gorgon Glance:** If a victim makes eye contact with the “second face” of a winyan nupa, he must roll Vigor vs. TN-10. A critical failure immediately slays the onlooker. A normal failure places the onlooker in a state of indefinite paralysis, curable only by the death of the winyan nupa or the use of Greater Healing. A success results in an immediate Shaken, while a raise survives the glance unscathed. A critical success renders the glance of that particular winyan nupa ineffective, and gives the onlooker a permanent +2 on future rolls against more of her kind. Unlike the glance of a traditional gorgon, the gaze of the winyan nupa may not be reflected back to damage the creature herself.

## Variations

Most legends suggest there is only one Winyan Nupa, while others speak of an entire race of double-faced women. A few traditions claim there are male versions as well. The two-faced ogress is also related to “Sharp-Elbows,” a male cannibal of the Winnebago tribes who murders people with bone spikes protruding from his elbows.

## Sources & Notes

The winyan nupa has its origins in the legends of the Plains Indians, but two-faced monsters and extreme examples of “craniopagus parasiticus” are fairly common throughout folklore: the Futakuchi-onna of Japanese legend, the Edward Mordake hoax, and even Professor Quirrel and Claire Densmore from modern literature. And then there’s Kuato from *Total Recall*—Yeesh. I’m indebted to the [Two-Face entry](#) on the ever-reliable Native-Languages.org site.

## Image Credits

The banner image incorporates a vintage photograph of an Apache girl. While I certainly realize that the winyan nupa is a Plains legend, the girl’s demeanor and expression struck me, so I

decided to use the photograph anyway. Considering the long history of the sorceress responsible for spawning the these two-faced cannibals, it's certainly feasible in *Deadlands 1876* to find wínyan núpa of all tribes, ranging from the Mayan jungles to the Canadian plains. By adapting this legendary being into game terms, I mean no disrespect for the folklore of the Lakota. Indeed, I remain constantly in awe at Native American legends, which have produced so many diabolical and colorful monsters!

---

**Author:** A. Buell Ruch

**Last Modified:** 2018 June 28

**Email:** quail (at) shipwrecklibrary (dot) com

**Online Version:** <http://shipwrecklibrary.com/deadlands/winyan-nupa>