

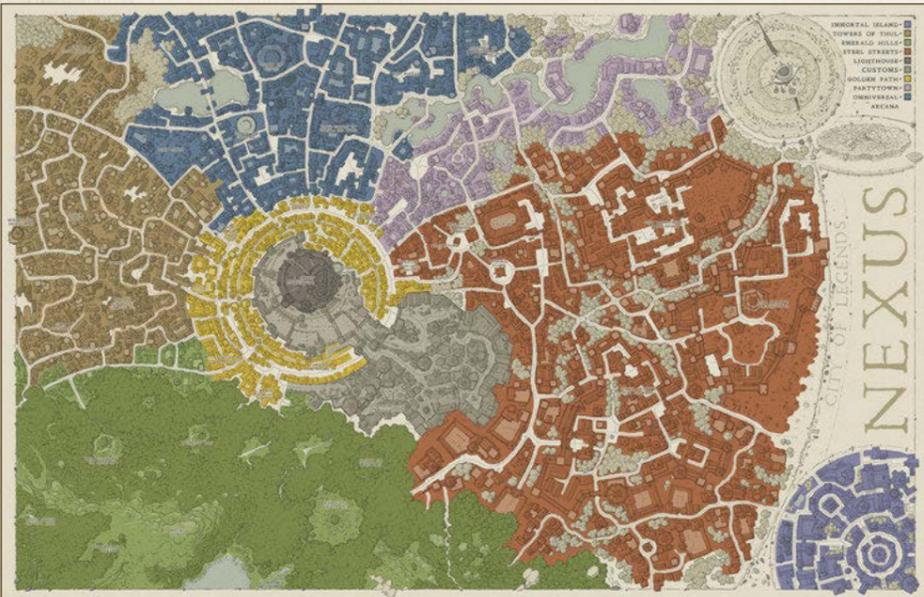
# Cosmic Chronicle

VOL. No. 3

COSMIC CHRONICLE

JULY 2022

## STORM GIANT KING SUES MONASTIC TRADITION: SAYS, “5 YEARS LATER, MY HEAD STILL HURTS.”



Nexus - City of Legends

### Evolved Encounters: Environment and Monster Synergy

By Jayce Jones

Even without monsters and villains, the world is a dangerous place. Mystical forces and mother nature know no allegiance, creating hostile environments that test the mettle of seasoned adventurers. Nexus is no stranger to these perils. The Towers of Thul is one giant workplace safety violation, the Hive hangs precariously over an all-consuming void, and the Emerald Wilds? Well, let's just say the average citizen requires more than a sturdy hat to weather its storms. But wait,

it gets worse. Some monsters are perfectly adapted to survive, even thrive, in places heroes dare not tread. When exploring a dangerous location, one should always be mindful of the locals. Should you draw swords against such a foe, expect devious strategies that make the most of its hazardous home.

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### Legendary Wizard Subclass: School of Cerebromancy

By Jayce Jones

Wizards care far too much about brains. Whether it's expanding their own intelligence or fiddling with the minds of others, their obsession knows no bounds. No further proof is needed than the School of Cerebromancy. This author recently interviewed several practitioners, each of which was more...we'll say "cerebral" than the last. Don't let their endless pontificating fool you—these mages will turn your mind inside out faster than you can say "cerebellum."

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Cerebromancer by Jason Strutz

### The Mysterious, Nonsensical Stunned Condition: Critiques and Fixes

By Jayce Jones

Nexus is home to monks from a dozen worlds, each more extraordinary than the last. These awesome warriors stagger us with their martial process and mystify scholars with their mastery of ki. It is this mighty force that gives the monk their strength, performing impossible feats that leave us in awe. However, one such display is so baffling, even this learned author cannot begin to understand it. With a single blow, a monk can stun nearly any foe, reducing them to an incoherent wreck. What is astounding is this technique affects nearly everything. From mighty dragon to humble violet fungus, all are

equal before the mighty "Stunning Strike," as they call it. What is happening here?! How can such a blow work on creatures such as a gelatinous cube, which lacks any discernable anatomy? How about the artificial golem, whose existence is equal parts magical and mechanical? They too are laid low by this fearsome martial art. No monk has been able to adequately explain this mystery, but—rest assured, dear reader—we will get to the bottom of it!

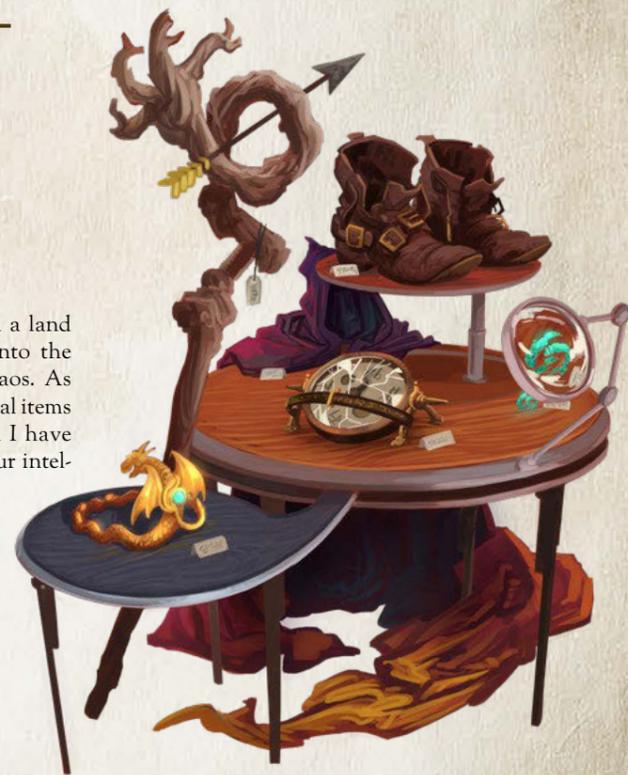
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### Arcane Items of the Aberrant Congregation

By Galea Nyx

The Aberrant Congregation hails from a land replete with chaotic energies leaking into the material plane from the Elemental Chaos. As such, their realm is home to many unusual items of arcane significance, several of which I have had the opportunity to study, all for your intellectual edification, my dear reader!

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Magical Items by Jason Strutz

### The Outcast Domain

By Galea Nyx

Having had the opportunity to interact with a variety of the so-called congregants of the Aberrant Congregation, I can say with some certainty that they are a miscellaneous collection of outcasts and eccentrics. And of those I met, none were more eccentric than its Senior Congregant, a cleric who worships outcasts, appropriately enough. Having spoken to him, I can now provide a general overview of the tenets of his unusual faith.

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### The Aberrant Congregation

By Galea Nyx

Hail and well met, dear reader! Once again, I come to you with dispatches of discovery, reports of research, and summaries of my scrutiny into the new and notable in our fair city. I write today with a fascinating account of a new faction that has arrived here in Nexus: the Aberrant Congregation.

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# The Mysterious, Nonsensical Stunned Condition: Critiques and Fixes

By Jayce Jones

**C**onditions in 5th Edition are an excellent suite of mechanics by which characters can affect monsters, and vice versa. There are fifteen in total: from simple effects such as the prone and restrained conditions to dire situations such as the paralyzed and petrified conditions. While these effects are powerful, many monsters possess defenses against them, the most common of which are condition immunities. This prevents characters from defeating all enemies with a single condition they like to inflict while adding variety to the foes they face. However, one condition stands in defiance of convention, existing in a bizarre design space within 5E. Over time, the strange influence of this condition has harmed the gameplay experience thanks to its inconsistency and redundancy. Let us count the ways and find out why the stunned condition is a menace at the game table and should be stricken from play—or, at the very least, revised.

## Redundant is Redundant is Redundant

Four conditions in 5E start off their list of effects with, “the creature is incapacitated.” This doesn’t even count the incapacitated condition itself, which prevents a creature from taking actions (including bonus actions, reactions, legendary actions, and lair actions). These four conditions are paralyzed, petrified, stunned, and unconscious. This redundancy is already strange, but let’s try a thought experiment. Quick! Off the top of your head without looking anything up, try to explain the difference between these four conditions. What are their mechanical distinctions? I’m a veteran 5E designer and even I am not 100 percent certain. If I have to look these up, you better believe your table will too.

Is this redundancy really necessary? Looking at the stunned condition, we see every single one of its effects are shared between these other conditions. In fact, there is only *one* difference between stunned and paralyzed: the ability to score an automatic critical hit on a paralyzed target from an attack made within 5 feet of said target. While this is not a minor difference, it shows there is a lot of mechanical overlap. This flies in the face of 5E’s design principles, which aspire to give uniqueness and distinction to its mechanics. Having an effect reference another effect, which in turn references *another* effect, is a very 3.5 thing to do, forcing a new player to turn to three

different references to find out what just one condition does. This begs consolidation and mechanical change. Adjusting the stunned condition would allow for some unique flair and prevent it from bumping shoulders with other conditions. A good alternative we have explored is the following change.

### Revised Stunned Condition

- On each of its turns, the stunned creature can take its action or bonus action, but not both.
- The stunned creature’s speed is halved.
- The stunned creature cannot take reactions.
- The stunned creature can only make a single attack on each of its turns.

This new model makes the condition more unique while still providing powerful benefits. There are additional perks we have yet to discuss, so bear with us as we justify this nerf and its implications.

## Where Is the Stunned Condition Immunity?!

Name one creature immune to the stunned condition! Ten bucks says you couldn’t. If you turn to page 292 of your *PHB*, you will see a lore illustration of what the stunned condition looks like: an ogre who has clearly been bonked in the head and is now stunned. Makes sense to me. Head gets smacked or mind gets rocked, creature gets dizzy for a time. Only that is not what is typically happening when we think of stunning a creature. Pour over the *MM*, and you will discover the overwhelming majority of creatures are not immune to the stunned condition. Looking at the illustration, I have to wonder why. Why can a gelatinous cube—which has no head and no brain to knock about—be stunned and knocked unconscious? How on earth can one stun a lich, but not a demilich?! The latter is just a floating head (and can *still* be knocked unconscious)! One would think that makes it more “stuntable!”

What is weirder is that so many creatures are immune to the paralyzed condition. What makes a golem immune to paralysis but not to being stunned? This is unclear to me, and clarity matters. Players may get understandably confused when the monk stuns the golem,

but the *hold monster* spell fails spectacularly like my latest attempt at a soufflé. My initial impression was that stunned was contingent on a creature having some kind of mind that could be bamboozled. If we take a look at the hydra from the MM on page 190, we see this logic in play. Thanks to its Multiple Heads feature, the hydra has advantage on saving throws against being stunned! But looking over the rest of the book's creatures, it becomes less obvious as to what stunned actually is supposed to be. So what is going on?

My theory is that because monks are the stunning champions of 5E, WotC decided most monsters should be susceptible. Stunning Strike is by far the monk's most powerful tool for this reason. Not only does it work on nearly anything, a monk can force a creature to attempt a Constitution saving throw against being stunned four times in a single turn. That is a discussion for another time, but that fact alone makes monks one of the most powerful classes in the game. (For those itching to push back on that statement, don't worry, I'll explain my reasonings at another time and we can argue about it then!) Back to the matter at hand—we see a similar strategy with radiant damage. Even celestials only have resistance to radiant damage, which was likely done because that damage type is a paladin's bread and butter. However, resistance is still something, and it's completely bizarre how inconsistently immunity to the stunned condition is applied. For the sake of lore consistency and in the name of reducing the oppressiveness of monks, we propose the following homebrew change to make the stunned condition function more like its peers.

### Condition Immunity Parameters for the Stunned Condition

A creature should add the stunned (and sometimes unconscious) condition to its condition immunities if it meets one or more of the following criteria:

- A nonexistent brain or lack of cranial anatomy (such as a gelatinous cube or golem)
- Multiple heads (such as a hydra)
- A highly magical mind that transcends "traditional" consciousness (such as an elder brain)
- An incorporeal or similarly non-physical form (such as a ghost)

Looking back at our revised stunned condition, we can see something more in line with what bonking someone on the head actually does. If you have ever been concussed, you know (if you managed to not black out) that you suffer severe disorientation as a result. You aren't incapacitated, but clearly you aren't fully functioning either. We can still treat stunned as both a lore-accurate and mechanically distinct tool that doesn't oppressively negate monsters who aren't immune to it—which is almost all of them.

## A Near-exclusive Player Tool

Effects that produce the stunned condition are rare, especially among monsters. As 5E has expanded past its core rules, we have seen more effects that can cause the stunned condition, mostly focused in spellcasting, with psionic-themed spells such as *psychic scream*. However, it is still quite rare. No monster with a spellcasting feature uses such a spell, and only a handful can produce the condition by other means. This leaves the stunned condition firmly in the players' toolbox, which feels extremely weird. Typically, it is the monsters doing things the characters cannot, not the other way around.

The consequences for being stunned are also more severe for monsters. Losing the ability to take any actions, including lair and legendary actions, is devastating. Legendary resistance can protect against most applications of the condition for a time, but there is a notable issue in this area. Stunning Strike can apply multiple instances of the condition in a single turn, burning through an entire pool of legendary resistance with a few unlucky roles. Other applications are often contingent on an Intelligence saving throw. A large portion of monsters are either not proficient in this saving throw, have low Intelligence scores, or both, making such effects extremely potent. Other effects that incapacitate are typically on a Wisdom or Constitution saving throw, which are far more common and robust among monster statistics. For this reason, when given the choice between an effect that stuns or any other form of incapacitation, a player should almost always choose the stunning effect. This is not a good dynamic. Technically, the paralyzed, petrified, and unconscious conditions are more powerful on paper, but the game's meta has not shaken out to favor them. Returning to our revised stunned condition, I feel that effect is far more reasonable, given the vulnerability of monsters to the condition and their lack of defenses against it, especially when it's players who are handing it out most of the time.

## I'm Sorry, Monk Players

Nerfing the stunned condition is tough, because it's really the only thing monks have going for them throughout tier 1 and tier 2 play. However, the effect is too oppressive, especially on Stunning Strike. If you or your DM follows our suggestion for adjusting the stunned condition, monks will suffer tremendously. As mentioned previously, I feel the class is very difficult to play, but it's not underpowered. It is misunderstood and underappreciated, leaving many people to believe it a weak class. If this is you or your players, be sure to give monks some extra love as compensation for changing their most powerful feature. Our aim in suggesting these changes isn't to punish monk players, but to make the condition function properly and comfortably within the 5th Edition system.

# The History of the 2CGaming

The history of 2CGaming is a long and interesting one. It began in the early 1990s when a group of friends decided to start a gaming community. They met regularly to play board games and role-playing games. Over time, the community grew and they started to organize events and tournaments. In the late 1990s, they decided to start a website to share their experiences and provide a place for other gamers to connect. The website was initially a simple forum, but it quickly became one of the most popular gaming websites on the internet. In 2000, they launched 2CGaming.com, which has since become a leading source of gaming news, reviews, and community support. Today, 2CGaming.com has a large and active community of gamers from all over the world. The website continues to evolve and expand its offerings, providing a wealth of resources for gamers of all levels. The history of 2CGaming is a testament to the power of community and the enduring appeal of gaming.

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