

## HISTORY

The Ghost of Ashenwood Road is a relatively new creature, having moved into the local area only a few months ago. Sean Denton, a traveling merchant, first noted the ghost's appearance. Sadly, most of the town assumed Sean was doing little more than spinning a tall tale for ale. A week following Denton's sighting, several other caravans noted glowing balls of light and unnaturally heavy mists gathering in the area. Travel on the road slowed, but none who took the road reported any trouble – just a potent sense of unease.

Later, when the Ashenwood Bandits begin to disappear, most of the locals assumed this ghost was a vengeful spirit, possibly even a former victim. Some suggested calling in the local clerics, but with none but the bandits harmed, the town's elders saw little reason to challenge the spirit. At least now, even if strange, the woods were safe from the elusive gang.

After running off or killing the local bandits, things quieted. A few weeks later, things in the area worsened. The former bandits returned, this time as rotting, shambling things animated by foul magic. They renewed their attacks, dragging their victims screaming into the night.

Fearing the plague might spread to their small town, the elders called on any who might end this curse. While several local clerics responded and braved the dreaded mists, none returned. Still, the ghost haunts the road.

## RUMORS

- "Sean Denton orchestrated this whole event! He's a lonely old merchant and wants the attention ...not to mention the free drinks!"
- "Azzilyn the Red wasn't a necromancer. He was an alchemist who specialized in animating constructs. Everyone knows that!"
- "Azzilyn the Red was a crazy old kook! He probably killed the Ashenwood Bandits, animated them in his tower, and they escaped, killing him in the process!"
- "The town elders have been looking to increase trade to the town. What better than a ghost, eh? They're probably in cahoots with Azzilyn."
- "Azzilyn the Red kept a whole host of animated servants in his tower. Only the gods know what must have become of them after he died."
- "Ol' Azzilyn was a powerful necromancer. He probably faked his death and then moved on, leaving a few of his old students for us to contend with."



## SKILL CHECKS

- A DC 20 Diplomacy or Knowledge (local) skill check reveals that the Ghost of Ashenwood first appeared several days after Azzilyn the Red was found murdered in his tower. Although the man was believed to be a necromancer, he had never taken any actions against the town or its citizens.
- A DC 15 Diplomacy or Knowledge (local) skill check reveals that Azzilyn the Red had once been robbed by the Ashenwood Bandits. He had little love for them.
- A DC 10 Diplomacy or Knowledge (local) skill check reveals that Sean Denton has been telling this story at several of the local inns, trading them for drinks. Many believe he's involved somehow.
- A DC 11 Knowledge (religion) skill check reveals the undead plaguing Ashenwood Road are zombies.
- A DC 23 Knowledge (arcana) skill check reveals the zombies attacking travelers were animated with the *animate dead*, lesser spell.



PRESENTS

# THE GHOST OF ASHENWOOD ROAD

WRITTEN BY JAYE SONIA

## WHAT'S REALLY GOING ON

While most folks believe the Ghost of Ashenwood Road to be a poltergeist or similar spirit, the creature that haunts Ashenwood Road is anything but.

Before he was murdered by a rival, Azzilyn the Red spent several years trying to perfect a formula he developed for a unique golem. After repeated failures, he turned to one of the darkest arts – necromancy. He began to capture the spirits of the newly departed, using them to power his creations. While most of his experiments met with failure, one did not. Animated by the spirit of an angry youth (who was killed by the Ashenwood Bandits), this construct not only responded well – it rose as a truly sentient creature. Azzilyn named it Amortis.

Azzilyn kept Amortis in his tower's library, where it spent its days and nights studying the various languages Azzilyn required of it. In the process, it began studying magic, as well. Eventually, Azzilyn discovered its interest and took it as an apprentice.

While Azzilyn was interested in necromancy, his animated apprentice had an unnatural appetite for it. Azzilyn provided his construct numerous experiments to sate its interest while he lived, but after he died, the construct grew bored and eventually moved on to bigger prey. Acting on half-remembered memories and strange nightmares, the construct sought vengeance on those who wronged it in its former life. Soon after, it began its experiments.

Amortis has since set up shop deep in the Ashenwood, occupying the now vacant cabin the bandits once used. It has a small lab there, as well as a modest library. It spends most of its days studying, reading, or experimenting. It keeps a single animated zombie in the cabin, which it uses to keep its winding strong.

Several other zombies patrol the woods, mindlessly seeking out meals. They have left the remains of several kills (a half-eaten deer here, a mauled traveler there) throughout the forest.

## PLOT HOOKS

- While traveling between two major cities, the PCs discover several mauled bodies along an old road. When they inquire in the nearby town, they learn that the old road is haunted.
- The PCs are approached by a cleric representing a church dedicated to slaying the undead. She tells them a spirit of uncommon ability has slain several of their inquisitors and threatens to spread its malign influence if left unchecked. She requires guards willing to accompany her as she lays this vile thing to rest.
- Several books on the magical arts, each stamped with Azzilyn the Red's personal sigil, have turned up in shops around the city the PCs are currently in. One of the books contains a rare spell that a local wizard has been seeking out. After deducing that Azzilyn may have access to similar spells, he hires the PCs to seek him out and offer several expensive scrolls in trade. When the PCs arrive, however, they discover Azzilyn is gone, as is his library.
- While enjoying a quiet meal in a local inn, a traveling merchant offers to trade the PCs an interesting story for a pitcher of stout ale. He then tells them about the Ghost of Ashenwood, claiming that the ghost has fabled treasures locked deep away in its rotting lair.

### CREDITS

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# AMORTIS, THE GHOST OF ASHENWOOD ROAD

NE medium awakened clockwork

CR 8, XP 4800

Class/Level necromancer 6

**Init** +7; **Senses** Perception +5; Passive Perception 15; darkvision 60 ft.; low-light vision.; **Speed** 30 ft.

## ABILITIES

**STR** 19 (+4)      **INT** 18 (+4)      **WIS** 14 (+2)  
**DEX** 16 (+3)      **CON** —      **CHA** 6 (-2)

## DEFENSE

**HP** 62 (6d6 + 31); fast healing 2

**AC** 17, **touch** 15, **flat-footed** 12 (Dex +3, dodge +2, natural +2)

**Fort** +2, **Ref** +7, **Will** +7

**Immune** construct traits

**Weakness** vulnerable to electricity

## OFFENSE

**Melee** +10 silver mwk dagger (1d4+3/19-20) or +6 mwk quarterstaff (1d6+4/x2)

**Ranged** +9 silver mwk dagger or net +8 (entangle)

**Base Atk** +5; **CMB** +9; **CMD** 24

**Special Attacks** grave touch (7/day); turn undead (7/day) (DC 11)

**Necromancer Spells Prepared** (CL 6<sup>th</sup>; concentration +12; melee touch +9; ranged touch +8)

3<sup>rd</sup> – *animate dead, lesser, displacement* (DC 17), *magic missile (sickening)* (DC 17), *vision of hell* (DC 17)

2<sup>nd</sup> – *dust of twilight* (DC 16), *spectral hand, blindness/deafness* (DC 17), *glitterdust* (DC 16), *ghostly disguise* (DC 16), *defensive shock* (DC 16)

1<sup>st</sup> – *magic missile, shield, cause fear* (DC 16) (x2), *chill touch* (DC 16), *ray of sickening* (DC 16)

0 – *haunted fey aspect* (DC 14), *disrupt undead, touch of fatigue* (DC 15), *sotto voice* (DC 15)

**Opposition Schools** Enchantment, Transmutation

**Combat Resources** *amulet of spell cunning* (1/day), *potion of barkskin* +4, *oil of levitate*, *rune of lightning* (1/day), *wand of obscuring mist* (21 charges)

## SKILLS

Acrobatics +3, Appraise +8, Climb +5, Disable Device +8, Disguise +4, Escape Artist +3, Fly +8, Heal +2, Knowledge (arcana) +12, Knowledge (dungeoneering) +8, Knowledge (engineering) +8, Knowledge (geography) +8, Knowledge (history) +8, Knowledge (local) +8, Knowledge (nature) +8, Knowledge (nobility) +8, Knowledge (planes) +11, Knowledge (religion) +11, Linguistics +13, Perception +5, Ride +3, Sense Motive +2, Spellcraft +15, Stealth +3, Survival +2, Swim +4

## FEATS, TRAITS & SPECIAL QUALITIES

Augmented Disguise, Desperate Focus, Improved Initiative, Lightning Reflexes, Sickening Spell, Skill Focus (disable device), Spell Focus (necromancy), Spell Mastery, Spell Specialization (*animate dead, lesser*)

**SQ** repair clockwork, swift reactions, winding

## LANGUAGES

Celestial, Common, Dark Folk, Draconic, Gnoll, Gnome, Infernal, Orc, Shadowtongue, Undercommon.

## EQUIPMENT

*Amulet of spell cunning* (1 1<sup>st</sup> & 1 2<sup>nd</sup>), *headband of vast intelligence*, +2 (spellcraft), mwk quarterstaff, *oil of levitate* (x2), *potion of barkskin* +4, scholar's outfit, mwk silver dagger, spell component pouch, travelling spellbook, *wand of mirror image* (32 charges), 158 gp (gear weight: 19 lbs)

## APPEARANCE, MOTIVATIONS, AND SECRETS

The Ghost of Ashenwood Road appears to be a pastiche of discarded clockwork pieces and parts. It is part scarecrow and part misshapen automaton, its features shaped to look like a very thin man, made from coppery metal.

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