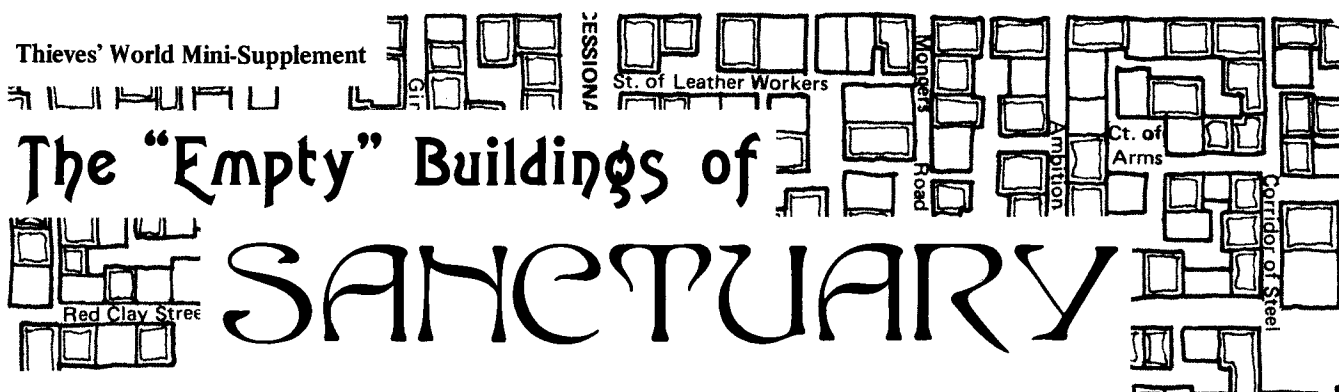




by Anders Swenson

When I recently bought a copy of the *Thieves' World* role-playing module, published by Chaosium, I quickly proceeded to key the hundreds of buildings in the town of Sanctuary by using the appropriate tables. I noticed that the largest single category of building among the wide variety of types is the empty, unoccupied structure. In this article an explanation is put forward for this unusual condition.

The first clue to the mystery came from a statement that the buildings in the Maze might not all be the empty shells as indicated, but rather that they were merely "officially" empty, and might actually be in use. This must also be the case with empty buildings in other parts of town.

The most usual reason for a building to be vacant is that it is physically unsafe. This condition could arise from fire, earthquake, explosion, settling foundations, or severe dry rot. The termite has also been known to

be a factor in this sort of condition. In our world building inspectors seal up the doors of buildings that are about to collapse. In Sanctuary, I imagine that it would take the loss of a few walls and floors, and maybe the roof to cause this condition. After that the structure would have to be rebuilt from the foundations up.

The next most likely reason for a building to be empty is that it is simply between occupants. Either the building is a residence whose family is out of town, or it is changing owners and perhaps in escrow. Possibly the last tenants left without notice. Usually in this case the vacancy is temporary, and often there is a watchman on duty.

Many of the seemingly empty structures are probably being used by businesses in other locations. Maybe they are using the place for storage; or conducting quazi-legal business with a few bribes for the census takers. Watchmen would be guarding the premises in both cases.

Some "empty" buildings probably look empty on the outside, but have surprise occupants on the inside, probably behind boarded-up windows. These could be fugitives, either from the Rankan government, criminals like Jubal, or the S'danzo seers. Also the building may be a storage house for stolen goods or contraband. The building may actually house a bootleg still, or a Krrf factory. A gang may have appropriated the building to make a hideout. Finally, the empty building may contain an armory for purposes ranging from piracy or banditry, to the overthrow of the Rankan Empire itself. These last activities would occur in buildings which are considered unfit for habitation, or which somehow have been overlooked by their proper owners, or are secretly owned by a rich member of the sanctuary underworld.

A small table is provided below to find the possible use of the "officially" empty buildings:

EMPTY BUILDINGS TABLE

Area of Town – Roll D100 for each building.

Reason	Jewelers'	Processional	Westside	Red Lanterns	Bazaar	Downtown
Uninhabitable	01-29	01-29	01-19	01-09	01-49*	01-59
Storage/Factories	30-79	30-69	20-59	10-59	50-69	60-69
Really Empty	80-89	70-89	60-69	60-65	70-79	70-74
Occupied by Illegal Activities:						
Fugitives	90	90-91	70-79	66-69	nil	75-79
Stolen Goods	91	92-96	80-85	70-75	80-84	80-84
Bootleggers	92-96	97-98	86-89	76-89	85-95	85-89
Gang Hideout	97-99	99	90-95	90-97	96-99	90-94
Secret Armory	00	00	96-00	98-00	00	95-00

* In my campaign, most of the tents in the Bazaar are semi permanent structures, because there would be too much of a traffic jam in the morning if everyone had to set up every day. A booth could be collapsed or burnt down in place. □

