

HARDWARE STORE

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SIGHTS

A display window filled with seasonal or themed displays such as gardening (seed packets, seed starter kits, soil, gardening gloves, a trowel, a watering can) or painting and décor (paint swatches, a paint tray and roller, wall decals and crown molding samples, a painted child's chair or table), narrow rows with high shelving filled with items for the home, cans of spray paint, caulking and other sealants, rolls of tape, poisons and traps for local pests, small plastic boxes (of washers, nuts, bolts, screws and fasteners), kitchen gadgets and supplies, camping products (plastic dishware, hot dog sticks, foil containers, grills, bug spray and sunscreen, propane canisters, flashlights, tarps), bags of home and gardening supplies (lawn seed, fertilizer, potting soil, and road salt) stacked near the entrance, coils of garden hose, spools of rope and twine, a selection of sprayers and sprinklers, a bin full of different sized dowel rods, a tool section with common house tools (drill bits, screwdriver and socket sets, sandpaper, hammers, levels), car accessories (cleaning products, lubricants, oils, fluids, air fresheners), a back door or hallway (leading to a break room, restroom, storage room, an office), a crowded counter area with a key tree and key cutting machine, a cash register and other odds and ends for sale (mini tape measures, bins of super glue, key chain flashlights, lighters), a selection of batteries, a rack of propane tanks outside, bundles of firewood

SOUNDS

The chime of the bell on the front door as a customer enters or exits, the friendly greeting of the employee at the cash register, the shrill grind of metal being shaped into a key, an employee blowing on the key to remove the metal filings, the ding of the cash drawer opening, beeps from barcodes being scanned, the shake of kernels in a seed packet, the metal clink and scrape of a customer tossing handfuls of bulk nails into a bag, a box cutter slicing through cardboard, the crinkle of items being loaded into a plastic bag

SMELLS

Soil and fertilizer, metal, chemicals from pest repellent canisters, citronella candles and mosquito coils, rubber, cut wood, pine-scented cleaning supplies

TASTES

Some settings have no specific tastes associated with them beyond what the character might bring into the scene (chewing gum, mints, lipstick, cigarettes, etc.). For scenes like these, where specific tastes are sparse, it would be best to stick to descriptors from the other four senses.

TEXTURES AND SENSATIONS

The plastic handle of a carrying basket digging into the crook of one's arm, the bumps and clefts of gardening gloves, a container of grease or oil that has spilled, sawdust underfoot from wood that has been cut

POSSIBLE SOURCES OF CONFLICT

Lifting a bag of soil or fertilizer and having it tear open

Shoplifting

A customer miscalculating the distance when backing up his truck and hitting the storefront

Customers wanting to return used items

A customer buying a combination of items that causes concern for the employees

Dropping a heavy tool on one's foot

Reaching for an item on a high shelf and collapsing the entire shelving unit

PEOPLE COMMONLY FOUND HERE

Customers, delivery people, employees, the storeowner

RELATED SETTINGS THAT MAY TIE IN WITH THIS ONE

Rural Volume: Tool shed (88), workshop (102)

Urban Volume: Parking lot (102), small town street (120)

SETTING NOTES AND TIPS

Chain hardware centers are much larger than smaller, independent stores and carry a greater selection of goods. In a smaller store setting, customers are usually local and loyal, meaning they would be known to the owners, and they might hang around longer to visit while shopping.

If your character needs to pick up items for committing a crime (such as chemicals that can be mixed to create an explosion), it would be in his best interest to spread out purchases between several locations or go to a big, anonymous store. However, playing to the opposite scenario, it might be comical for your character to have innocent intentions, but because of his purchases, be singled out and have to talk his way out of the situation.

SETTING DESCRIPTION EXAMPLE

I asked the matronly redhead at the checkout for directions, and she motioned to the aisle on the far side of the paint counter. My cart rolled over the cement floor, one loose wheel rattling and twisting as if it couldn't decide which way to go. The display was right where she'd said, and one of the better ones I'd seen, almost as if the person who had built it had me in mind. A thrill loosened itself across my skin as I touched each rope sample, feeling the different textures, gauging the quality. The lengths provided enough slack to tie a knot, enough to tell me what I needed to know. I gave the blue nylon a tug, admiring its strength. Perfection. The color didn't matter, of course. Usually women cared about such things, but not with this. When the rope came out, they understood it had only a single job to do, and they weren't too concerned with how it looked after that.

Techniques and Devices Used: Multisensory descriptions

Resulting Effects: Characterization, foreshadowing