

DARK ATTRACTION MANAGEMENT, MARKETING & PROMOTIONAL TIPS

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FOREWARD

Being creative in and of itself is sometimes a curse. Creative types are not known for their business skills. The dark attraction is a business.

Since my first dark attraction in 1979, I have noticed that some annual attractions wait till the last minute to begin planning and construction. In 1995, I witnessed a group throwing together a haunted hay ride. It grossed about \$50,000 of which they retained only \$2,000. I would call that poor planning.

The best event I ever planned consisted of two haunted houses, a haunted hayride, a carnival, craft booths, two stages with live entertainment, contests and food. This event had all the makings for a great annual event. Egos, politics and mismanagement destroyed the event after its second year.

Politics, clubs, citizens groups and/or religion can destroy the best laid plans. Haunted houses tend to polarize people. A municipality that welcomes you with open arms will turn on you the moment there is a shift in the political climate. Politicians are not the only ones in need of a cause. Haunted houses also make nice safe subjects for someone to jump on their soap box and show just how righteous they are. In short, haunted houses are an easy target.

Organize first. Promote and market second. Always get everything in writing. This is, of course, totally worthless unless the time and money are available to take a case to court. If successful, be prepared to be stabbed in the back and then told to enjoy it. As in any business venture, the risks are great; however, the rewards are many.

I accept questions November through June each year via e-mail from anyone owning this book. July through September from registered owners of "How to Build a Portable Modular Dark Attraction" only. October, don't bug me.

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LOCATION

Where to place the attraction is the most important decision to be made. The ability to maintain the same location for several years is as important as the location itself. If purchase of the property is not possible and terms are favorable, consider a long lease. Operating the attraction only one month a year, October, has advantages and disadvantages. The advantage is no long term financial obligation. The disadvantage is no long term location guarantee.

The best locations are usually in incorporated areas. Most cities have adopted the national fire code for dark attractions. In addition to this special code, all regular building codes must be met. Meeting the code minimum is not enough. My attraction is fully sprinkled and has two 75 foot fire hoses which are not required by code. I am protecting my investment as well as my customers. Always plan for the worst case scenario; i.e., the closest fire units can not reach the site before the building burns to the ground because they are engaged in a multi-alarm fire and the next closest fire unit is twenty minutes away. A dark attraction contains many flammable items, fuel for a fire. The sprinkler system may slow the fire down and save customers lives, but it may not put out the fire and save the attraction.

Parking is an important consideration. When considering a site, visit it during the day, evenings and weekends. The dark attraction entertainment business thrives evenings, weekends and holidays. Generally, it will not be competing with regular businesses. Sharing a parking lot with a movie theater; however, would be disastrous. Look for other types of businesses in the area that may attract the same crowd during the same time periods. As long as parking is not shared, they can be an asset to the operation and vice versa.

Accessibility to major roads is last. Locating on a major road is a plus. It will also cost more in rent, make the location more attractive to other businesses and heavily impact lease negotiation and future lease renewal. Unless you own the property or can sign a long term lease, stay just off the main drag. Being close to a major intersection, off ramp or well known landmark is the next best thing. Directions to the attraction should be simple and easy for anyone to understand. The best location would be a nice warehouse in an industrial district, fully sprinkled, off the beaten path, with no evening competition for parking

With time, almost any location can become profitable. Limitations are parking, crowd control and money. Successful locations have been established in small towns and on farms well off the beaten path. The one thing all of these distant locations have in common is that they are less than one hour from a major population center.

A critical factor in choosing a permanent location is overhead costs. Monthly bills include: rent, telephone, electricity, gas; water, advertising, maintenance, improvements and labor. As it only generates income one month of the year, a permanent location is expensive. Other revenue sources must be found.

SERVICE MARK

Got a great name you want to protect? Get a service mark. A service mark will protect your name and costs less than a trademark. Think of a trademark for national use and a service mark for use in your state. Another difference is that a trademark usually denotes a product and a service mark denotes a service, haunted attractions are considered a service. The filing fee will cost about \$245. For more information, call the Trademark Assistance Center at 703-308-9000 or write to: 2900 Crystal Dr. Rm. 4b10, Arlington, VA., 22202-3513.

OTHER INCOME SOURCES

What you need is another source of income to operate your facility year round. Paintball has proven to be a good one. Other sources include: mountain climbing, rental as a party facility, children's birthday parties, murder mystery theater, live action role playing, off season tours of your workshop, opening on holidays or special weekends and Christmas.

That's right, Christmas. Halloween is second to Christmas in potential revenues. Build Santa's workshop complete with elves, Santa and a photo opportunity. Sell Christmas trees in the parking lot. Build a barrel train out of 55 gallon drums, add two wheels per barrel and tow with a four wheel ATV. Let the barrel train travel through the tree lot and into Santa's Workshop. Add a large model train layout to Santa's Workshop. Most communities have train clubs. Make a deal with one or more for space in exchange for them operating the trains during the season. Offer yard art and tree decorations. Sell anything to take advantage of Christmas. The event has to open on Thanksgiving weekend and run through December 31st. Change the facade and promote like crazy.

CROSS PROMOTION

Become friends with all the businesses that cater to the public within several blocks of the location. Meet with and get to know the owners and managers of businesses that will complement one another. Place posters, flyers and discount tickets at these locations. Host brainstorming sessions for ways to cross promote and co-op advertising.

If close cooperation is not possible, ask to give the waitresses and waiters of local restaurants discount coupons to give to their customers. Look for pizza and fast food places that cater to families and children. Food delivery drivers are the easiest to work with. Drivers make their money on tips, the more they can offer their customers, the better the tip. All food establishments are candidates for flyers and posters. In exchange for posters, flyers and customer discount coupons in a business, give the manager free passes for all of his employees.

Some examples of good businesses to target are: movie theaters, bowling alleys, video rental outlets, miniature golf or party places, video arcades, skating rinks, go-cart raceways and indoor playgrounds.

Posters, flyers and coupons will make it easier for new customers to find the location because area businesses and fueling places can direct lost potential customers there. These businesses will benefit and, though seasonal, the attraction will bring many potential customers into contact with other area businesses. It is a win-win situation.

Clearly, it is difficult to separate location, promotion and marketing. The attraction will impact the city, the county, local businesses, religion and politics

OTHER PROMOTIONAL IDEAS

- Promote daytime tours for daycare centers. Daycare centers are always looking for something for the children to do that involves getting them out of the daycare building. To promote the event, provide flyers the children can take home to their parents. The tour should be lights on and use no actors. Include demonstrations on masks, make-up and how to scare people. Explain exactly how and what happens to customers when the event is open. After all the children have toured the house, give each one a treat bag. Take pictures of the event to post on the house bulletin board and take one Polaroid picture of the group for the teacher to take back and place on the bulletin board of the daycare center. The charge for the tour is \$2.00 per child. For \$5.00, I add a Polaroid photo with one of our creatures.
- Check with the local fire station, police department and youth centers to see how to be of assistance. These organizations will know of young people who could use some help. I have several shelters and organizations that bring groups to castle dragon each year. I provide this service for free. Interfacing with the community is very important. Not only is it the right thing to do, but it is an insurance policy for the day the political climate will change and the operation becomes the target of a politician in need of a flag to wave.
- Many elementary schools have Halloween carnivals. Two ways to tie into these are: 1) provide free passes to be given away as prizes in various contests and 2) provide some actors as entertainment. We have people puppet characters that we use to hand out flyers and discount coupons.
- A nearby elementary school PTA can also benefit. Offer the facility for a fund raiser Halloween event on a Saturday afternoon. Charge customers about \$2.00 per person and split the gross proceeds with the PTA. Staff the house with a few of the best actors and the rest with PTA volunteers. Ask to be included in the PTA/school's newsletter. Give treat bags to all the children. (all treat bags should contain at least one hard candy, plastic toy and discount coupons.)
- Lease the facility to charities for fund raiser dinner parties. Do this early in the month on evenings when the event is closed. The charity provides the food, house staff cleans up. The charity staff arrive first and set up the banquet. As the guests arrive, they go through the house where a small house staff will combine with a few charity members to scare the guests. I charge a flat rate of \$200. Higher or lower rates could apply based on the situation..
- Another idea is to give a charity tickets or discount coupons to give away to its members. In exchange, they promote the attraction in newsletters, and place posters and flyers in their businesses.
- Twilight hour. Movie theaters do it. I normally open at 7 p.m. from 6 to 7 p.m., I charge half price. Normally, business during this time is minimal. With a well designed house, twilight hour can be staffed with three to four actors who leapfrog ahead of the customers. This could be promoted as a less scary family hour for all ages.
- I build only handicapped accessible facilities. We offer special free tours to the handicapped. Some of the handicapped population even comes through when we are open. I do not charge for the handicapped person but do, sometimes, charge for their escort.

CORPORATE SPONSORSHIP

Getting good corporate sponsors is not easy. Keeping them is even more difficult. Once the door is open, others are sure to try to attract the same corporations. Sponsors can provide much needed start-up capital for a profit or non-profit operation. Contact potential sponsors at

least 18 months in advance. Their promotional funds are limited and you will want to place yourself at the head of the list.

It may be difficult to get sponsors the first year. Invite potential sponsors to the event anyway. Prepare a creative promotional plan and present it in an organized and professional manner:

- 1) produce the best event possible.
- 2) approach sponsors well in advance.
- 3) select sponsors with a common target market.
- 4) choose sponsors that will benefit from each other.
- 5) be professional.
- 6) maintain good communication with sponsors during the event.
- 7) present a complete follow-up report, warts and all.
- 8) introduce next season's proposal with the follow-up report.
- 9) keep a close eye on the competition.
- 10) stay in touch with sponsors throughout the year.

PHOTO OP

Polaroid photos are great. They work well with tours and they will work well in the attraction. Our photo op is with a life size alien from the movie of the same name. Most of the photo ops I have seen offer the customer's face a place in a scene. It may be a cut out, head on the shoulders or head through a hole in a table to appear on a creature's dinner plate.

Our photo op is in the entry area, so it doubles as crowd entertainment. It also serves as the consolation prize for those customers who turn chicken just before time to enter. The castle has a no refund policy. Instead we offer a photo op. The alien makes for great group photos, too.

MERCHANDISING

Retailing merchandise with the attraction's name and logo can be a money maker or loser. T-shirts, caps, mugs, costumes, masks, etc. Are expensive to purchase in quantity. Without a good inventory, sales will be poor. Refreshments and food are other high cost items. Even a pumpkin patch can cost. It is not just the cost of inventory, but labor and shrinkage (items with legs walking out the door) costs as well.

The first year or so, stay away from merchandising. Add a small store after building up a reputation. Add something new each year and build it the same way the attraction was built.

PROMOTIONAL MATERIALS

PRESS RELEASE

It is time to tell the press, the public, about the attraction. The press release is very important. Call all the media and get the name of the each person in charge of press releases for Halloween events. Send press releases, then follow up with a phone call. Some papers and radio stations have a Halloween event calendar or list. Make sure that the attraction is included in this calendar or list.

PRINT

Newspapers are big on community and charity events. Check with the city desk to find out who is in charge of these. Send a press release from you and the group you are working with on the event. Include names, contact numbers and describe the event. Invite the reporter and a photographer. Save all newspaper articles. Other printed media is out there: shoppers guides, magazines targeting select groups and more.

Conduct a contest in a local children's magazine for adults. Work a deal with the publisher or buy space for the October issue. Have children create an original picture of something scary or Halloween or fall oriented (turkey, pumpkin, scarecrow, etc.). They may bring their drawing to the dark attraction and receive half off admission for their family during twilight hour or lights on tour. Post the pictures in the lobby. Announce the winner(s) early Halloween night and have the winner present to receive the prize. My contests are by age groups and the prizes range in value from \$25 to \$100 for age groups 3-5 and 6-9. This idea can also be promoted in area public and private schools with the child receiving a ribbon and the school the money for educational items. With this gimmick, it is possible to place posters and flyers throughout an entire school or district.

THE B&W 8x10 GLOSSY

The subject is as important as the photographer. Most dark attractions are tempted to photograph their actors and creatures. The most successful horror movies show as little as possible of the horror creature in ad campaigns. Why? Because a creature in and of itself is not scary. A motion picture uses character development, music, plot, pacing, editing and shock to create the terror that the audience will eventually associate with the creature. Pick up a horror magazine, flip through the pages until you find a horror creature that you have never seen before. Now ask yourself, "is this frightening?"

If your answer is no, then you scored 100 on this major exam. Do the same again except this time, stop at a photo of a creature that you have seen in a movie. At this time you can add to the photo's image your memory of what this creature did in the movie. This is not to say that this photo has scared you. The creature now has depth and you remember the horrible things this creature did to people you had learned about and maybe began to care for in the movie.

Dark attraction photos need only show portions of the creature doing the scaring. Like an over the shoulder shot from the creature's point of view. We see part of an ear, some hair or lower down at the waist we see part of the creature's hand as it prepares to attack. What we see the most of is the customer reaction to the creature. This reaction now transmits the message of horror to the viewer of the photo.

Composing photographs is second only to lighting them properly. A professional photographer can do wonders and may be the best choice. Create three or four scenes, make sure the on camera talent can make big with the facial expressions and keep it simple. See also "B roll".

RADIO

Radio stations announce haunted house locations during the month of October on a regular basis. A radio advertising budget is fine but, if not available, work a deal for giving passes away on the radio. Last year we gave discounts out over the internet through a radio station. Many radio stations have selected charities that they work with. See about tying in with one of the station's charities for some fund raising and free air time. Give several of the DJs free tickets to come check out the attraction. They may talk about it on the air.

Radio stations like to give things away. Create a pizza party for twenty. The station promotes the giveaway, presents the prize and you provide the pizza, soft drinks and scares. Have the party one hour before opening or during the opening hour in front of the attraction. After the pizza, the guests enter the attraction. Make a deal with the winner and his/her date to be last into the attraction, but let them come in and scare their friends. Select a safe location like operating a puppet or banging on the wall. The word of mouth this will create is second to none.

TELEVISION

Television stations are producing more news programming than ever before. Call the assignment editor for news or the producer of the local talk show. They are desperate for material to fill the airtime. Morning local TV talk shows give the creator an opportunity to be seen and discuss the attraction. Produce a "B" roll to voice over live (the station may come out and shoot it for you). As gel type make-up removes easily with water, use it on one of the show's hosts to demonstrate monster effects for the TV audience. If a host is not willing, use a child or one of the actors. Never try to scare the hosts or the TV audience, keep it all tongue in cheek. Remember to entertain, be fun and do not take yourself seriously. Talk about the attraction's concept, what makes it different and all the community organizations that you are working with. Your time will be limited.

The evening newscasts will also be interested. A "B roll" is useful to large stations who may not have the time to come out to your attraction. The "B roll" footage may encourage them to come out and do the story anyway.

Television provides another opportunity in some markets. Check out the TV guide and scan local station listings for late night horror movies. Some stations use hosts and produce segments to act as bumpers between commercial breaks. Elvira is one such person. See what it might take to use this local production to your advantage. At the very least you should be able to give away tickets.

"B ROLL"

A "B-roll" is footage produced with a non-specific background sound track designed to be voiced over. For a dark attraction, show as little as possible of the creatures doing the scaring (part of a hand, back of a head, limb, etc.). Do not show the entire costumed character doing the scaring. Do not be gross. A scared customer should be in every shot, screaming, entering cautiously or running for his life. As background, include the best sets and props in these shots. Camera shots from the customer's point of view will establish the scene. At the point where something scary comes into the camera's view, cut to the customer reacting, screaming, or running. The background sound track will contain attraction music, sound effects and customer's voices. Produce several shorts using different customers and actors for each one. Do not exceed 30 seconds for any short. Include plenty of generic B-roll footage of customer's point of view walking through the attraction and legs and feet walking or running. The station will be able to cut together the walking and the shorts to tell the story they wish to tell. Include an in-sequence description of the shorts with the package. Produce B-rolls on betacam, $\frac{3}{4}$ " or film. A high 8 camera can be used as source, but post production must use a better format. For low cost production, consult an area junior college or high school with a TV production department.

POSTER

K.I.S.S. Keep It Simple Stupid. A full color poster with pictures and details is nice, and expensive. An 11x17 poster with black ink on a bold pumpkin orange paper is cheaper. Cheaper is not always better, but it does mean more posters can be printed and seen in more locations. The poster should feature:

- 1) the name of the dark attraction prominently displayed.
- 2) a graphic (drawing of the front of the attraction or the main theme) should begin in an upper corner and build to fill the working space. Be creative. A good artist can produce excellent results, such as a group of panicked people running out of the attraction.
- 3) use prominently placed sponsor and charity logos.
- 4) display a telephone number for more information.
- 5) a simple map to the location with the top as north and indicating as many major streets and highways as necessary.

6) list hours, special tours and prices, the regular price and dates open. Make sure it is easy to read, draws attention from at least 20 feet away and does not offend parents.

COUPONS

Discount and coupons for free tickets are redeemed at the box office for admission tickets. The coupon should reflect the logo and graphics of the poster and plainly indicate the discount offered, the expiration date and hours that it is valid. The reverse side should have a map to the attraction and mention the sponsors or charity. Use the same bold pumpkin orange paper and produce six to eight coupons per page. When producing the computer layout of an eight coupon page; lay out 6 discount coupons, one free coupon and one free VIP coupon. The VIP coupon is good anytime. The back is the same for all coupons. The VIP coupons are for media and special representatives of the sponsors or charity.

Coupon identification is helpful. It is your coupon, but where did the customer get it? You could ask the customer and keep a log or you could mark the coupons. Use a rubber stamp to place a mark on the back of the coupon. Stamp in a different place for each business. Example: in the upper left hand corner for the movie theater, upper right hand corner for the pizza place, etc. Run out of places to stamp? Change the stamp. Keep a record of which stamp and location goes with which business. Use this information to track customers and build a future marketing plan.

If your creations are any good, a following will develop from year to year. The same customers will come back to see what new horrors have been added. A mailing list of customers who visit the attraction will help this annual repeat business along and create new business opportunities. A mailing list coupon should be included as a part of the promotional material. At the attraction, at least three opportunities must be presented for customers to add their names to the mailing list:

- 1) at least one mailing list coupon with all ticket sales.
- 2) a wall display poster with coupons, pen and coupon drop off box in the entry area.
- 3) at the customer exit point include a final opportunity identical to the one in the entry area.

NEWSLETTERS

I have seen newsletters offered by other attractions. Most provide general news about the attraction, nothing more. In order to develop a good mailing list, you must give your customer a reason to be on your mailing list.

If you have a permanent location, you can offer discounts on other events, party invitations, tours of work in progress, seminars and more. If the location is temporary or seasonal, you can invite newsletter customers to a special sneak preview at a special price or for free. Make a party of it.

The newsletter will be expensive. It must look sharp, be informative and have something of value contained in it. Cut a deal with a nearby food business to include a special discount food coupon in the newsletter in exchange for free meals to be given away by the newsletter. As your circulation grows, you can charge for advertising space. Obtain a bulk mail and imprint permit from the post office to keep costs down. This will save up to 45% on the cost of postage and save you from having to place stamps on the newsletters. Newsletters may also be distributed through local comic, game, nostalgia and related stores. Artists and crafts people may be a source of ideas and revenues. A good comic artist could provide cartoons related to your business or attraction for publication in the newsletter.

FLYER

The flyer should use the same logo and graphics as the poster and contain more details about the attraction. As an example, the UFO lab at Roswell (described later): a mock history about how an alien space ship crash landed in the desert and the survivors were brought to the lab. A few weeks later, another space ship attacked the base, trying to rescue their comrades. The ship was disabled and crashed into the lab. The aliens evacuated their ship and attacked the lab. The battle rages on. Make it fun and real. Use names and official sounding jargon. Invite the reader to participate in an investigation of the incident and come to their own conclusions.

The flyer should expand promotion of the sponsors or charity. Add details on tours, other features, special prices and a bio on the creator of the event.

JOINT MARKET PROMOTION

The Dallas - Fort Worth marketplace has the highest concentration of Halloween events and haunted houses in the USA, or so I have been told. We are extremely spread out and service our little areas nicely. There are those die hard haunted house aficionados who travel all over from one event to another. All this said and done, no one has been able to bring the attractions together in a single publication. This may be due in part to the local papers printing a complete guide for us. However, no one seems to be completely happy with it.

A haunted house guide should feature a map with detailed directions on how to reach each event, a description of each attraction, its hours of operation, a contact telephone number, pricing plus any special information. Photos might be included. The participating attractions would share printing costs and provide these guides to all their customers. Eventually, sponsors or advertisers may be found for the guide and it could pay for itself or make money for the attractions.

One of the services we provide is a free posting of the complete listing of all haunted attractions for our customers. We also will post posters and hand out coupons from other attractions. It is this spirit of cooperation that will make the dark attraction business more respectable.

OPENING PARTY

This works well with a direct mailing to special people: the newsletter list, the press and members of any charity involved with the event. Keep it simple, more like an open house. Let people wander around. This style of event is designed to show off the art and style of the attraction.

Another way to conduct the party is to be fully operational. As the guests arrive, they walk through the attraction just like regular customers so that you can scare the be gee gees out of them. Guests arriving after an announced time will participate in the party only.

Use ghoulish things to serve food. A human skull for the dip, utensils made from bones, blood red punch from a witch's cauldron, the main course from a coffin, and drinks from a heart pump are good examples.

CAST PARTY

It is traditional to throw a cast party after the production wraps. In the dark attraction business, when October 31st arrives everyone has had enough and can't wait to leave. Rather than on the 31st, have the cast party near the end on a night you close early, or perhaps an hour or two before opening on a Saturday or Sunday.

ADVERTISING

Of course money is nice. Not all of us have the luxury of an advertising budget. This book is directed to those on a shoe string budget. Our attraction uses posters, coupons, public service messages (PSA's) and word of mouth. For those with money, I offer the following.

TELEVISION

Television ads are expensive and will only work for a permanent location. The same applies for TV ads as for the "B-roll" footage. Show people being scared, not the people doing the scaring. Spots should be purchased on a Run Of Schedule (ROS) evenings and weekends. This means that the station can place your spots anywhere they decide to. These spots are the cheapest. Some TV stations will make the spot for free if you spend enough money on air time.

RADIO

Radio spots are more effective than television and become more powerful if you do a giveaway (like the pizza party). Radio remotes can be good but add greatly to the cost. Selecting a radio station can be difficult. You must decide your target audience. Do not let the radio station decide for you.

Audience information is important. It all comes back to the audience you are looking for: family, teenager or young adult. Do you like rock & roll, country, oldies or a mix?

There are two schools of thought on the actual radio spot. School one says produce a highly polished commercial spot. School two says give an information sheet to the DJ and let him have fun. The advantage to school one is that you know exactly what is being said over the airwaves. That is also the disadvantage. School two relies on the talent of DJ during the time the spot airs. A talented DJ can add more fun and flavor to the spot, especially if you treat him like royalty when he visits the attraction. There is also a greater chance of additional air time because the DJ has a more direct connection to the attraction. The success of the ad-lib spot relies entirely on the talent of the DJ. Listen to the DJ on the air, if his talent level does nothing for you, select another station or go with the highly polished spot.

NEWSPAPER AND PRINT

Print advertising must have a coupon. Period. You may try several different approaches to print. Discount coupons are best. Use "buy one get one free", not "50% off". The word free is very powerful. The ad should contain the graphic design, a map and a telephone number for additional information as well as listing prices, hours of operation, and dates and hours the coupon is valid.

Coupons are the only way to judge the effectiveness of advertising. Make the coupon good for only one week. Make the coupon a little different for each publication so that you can determine the best printed media to advertise in. You can do this by printing the initials of the publication in fine print in one corner of the coupon.

Use this information to determine which publications are the most cost effective. These publications will be the ones to receive increased advertising dollars next year. Drop the publications with poor performance records.

BILLBOARD

One of the most effective forms of advertising is a billboard(s) near the freeway exit to your attraction. The poster graphic is now larger than life and the attraction's location easier to find.

Save money and hire an artist to pre-paint panels. Purchase these panels from the billboard company if possible. Arranging for billboard space must be done well in advance. It is best to start contacting billboard companies 12 to 18 months before opening. Purchasing billboard space for one month is not cheap. If you are a year round event or conduct a variety of business at the same location year round you will save with an annual contract.

MEDIA EVENT

If dollar bills are bulging from your pockets, then the media event will certainly cure the problem. Use this to help launch a multi-media advertising campaign. Send little coffins containing the invitations as press kits by a courier service (first broker a discount). Contact agents for horror actors and scream queens. Find the ones you can afford and include their bios and photos in the press kit. The TV station coffins should contain your "B roll" on broadcast beta. The other press kit coffins should contain a produced video short on VHS promoting the attraction.

The night of the event must have searchlights. Hire your own video crew to record the event and have the stars arrive in separate limos. As guests arrive, they tour the attraction as customers. A cutoff time for touring the attraction is recommended. For the squeamish, offer an escorted lights on tour less actors after the cutoff.

Set the banquet as mentioned in opening night party. Have autograph tables for the stars and sell Polaroid's with the stars for a dollar. If you still have money in your pockets, give the photos away. Allow the scream queens and horror actors to promote and sell their products. Invite local fantasy artists, gamers, sci-fi clubs and roll playing clubs. Include make-up demonstrations, a continuous playing of a behind the scenes video of building the attraction (I said this was not cheap). And hold a real press conference (keep it brief).

The press conference is risky. Be prepared to answer the hard questions. Not, is the scream queen real or plastic?, But rather, are you a follower of Satan?, Is this good for the kids?, Did you have a normal childhood?, Is this a cult thing?, Etc. Find a friend in the press and get an idea of the questions that may be asked. Do not dodge any questions. Answer them all and quickly, none of this "I'll get back to you." If you cannot handle the press and questions, then do not do a press conference. The advantage of the press conference is additional coverage in local TV news casts and newspapers.

OTHER FORMS OF ADVERTISING

Some form of advertising can be found almost anyplace an eye can fall: restrooms, airports, busses, taxis, trucks with moving signs, malls, movie theater screens, convention or tourist guides, and many more. Once you go into business, many more forms of advertising will be brought to your attention via sales representatives. Just remember, if it sounds too good to be true, it is. Sales reps only make money when they sell something.

MANAGEMENT

In our operation: I am the creator, the ***** owns the attraction and there is a manager who runs the operation. Many of us wear more than one hat. I assist in talent direction, staff members often double as actors, and technicians who maintain equipment and fluid levels scare customers from the central corridor by banging on the walls or operating effects.

STAFF

Staff members have the greatest responsibilities. Each staff member must make important decisions, perform minor repairs, act in any of the scenes, assume technical duties, sell tickets, act as security and handle customers. They must be well versed in emergency evacuation procedures.

The key staff member is the manager. Staff positions include but are not limited to: talent director, head cashier, lead technician, pyrotechnician, and security. Other staff positions may be: lead actor in a scene, make-up, wardrobe, or props. There must be one staff member available at all times for emergencies.

The manager trains all staff positions, oversees the entire operation and should have an assistant manager to allow him to leave the operation to visit other attractions or take a night off. This is often an additional duty for one of the regular staff positions or a staff position all to itself.

A swing crew is necessary for the busiest nights. The swing crew consists of the talent director and the best actors. The crew may have three or four members. Their job is to relieve everyone in a scene for a ten minute break. If the scene has only two actors, the remaining swing crew can relieve actors or staff in single positions. Every member of the swing crew must be able to do all jobs. They do not have to be experts at special effects, just know how to safely operate them. They do not have to be great cashiers, just good enough to do well for ten minutes. When the line is a block long and things are getting crazy outside, people must be available for any situation. The swing crew can be pulled to provide additional security or entertainment for the crowd or to add a second cashier. The presence of more staff outside enhances security and helps calm a rowdy crowd.

On really slow evenings, staff requirements will be minimal. When using the 60 degree design method, the central corridor allows actors and staff to leapfrog in front of customers. With proper rotation, the customers will never know what is going on. On slow days, one person will wear many hats. On busy days one person wears one hat.

ACTORS

Some actors believe that they know much more than you and will tell you so. They may be good, but send them on their way. Unless you have control, you are in trouble. A good actor will listen, make suggestions and then do as you say. You are in charge. You will learn with experience whether your decisions are right or wrong. In the haunted house business, most decisions with actors come down to how to safely scare the customer. Allow the actors variations and the ability for some improvisation within a scene or event. Once a scene has been set and the attraction is operating, do not let an actor change places. Do let the actors trade out night to night but not during the night.

Hire good actors, train them well, and pay good wages.. Feel free to modify this information to meet your particular needs.

The actor's first responsibility is safety. The customer's safety first, staff safety second. Remember, as actors, they know where they are in the building. The customers are lost, confused and completely disoriented. Customer safety includes but is not limited to the following:

- 1) do not get close to the customer.
- 2) do not block the customer's exit path from the room, event or the building.
- 3) do not touch the customer.
- 4) know when to stop scaring a customer, either because they are too scared or not going to be scared.
- 5) recognize when a customer is in real trouble, either medical emergency or panic attack. Does he need medical help, a Band-Aid, a drink of water or a place to rest.
- 6) know when to stop acting, remove your mask or break character and help a customer out of the building or up off the floor.
- 7) report any unusual or rough behavior of a customer immediately.
- 8) know when to stop acting, confront a customer for touching an actor or being rowdy.
- 9) never argue with a customer; get help.

Actors have to have good personal hygiene. Some will be working very close together. We don't want to be breathing nasty breath on our customers, that's gross. Any odors to be created will be created by the fog machines.

I prefer to hire actors with character faces and use very little make-up to bring out the best or worst in their features.

All females in an enticing role should wear full or partial nude body suits. Customers will not notice them and the actresses will appreciate them. Transitions around the neck and wrists will help blend the suit. Some typical transitions are a scarf or choker for the neck and bracelets, a watch or manacles for the wrists. Nothing will be revealed, but this allows the actress freedom of movement with confidence that she is not exposing herself. It also provides a tease without embarrassing families. If you stand a chance to scare the macho male, it will be in a scene where beauty distracts and the beast scares.

Most of the haunted attractions I have attended treat females like males. Put a costume and a mask on them and tell the tiny thing to go scare people. What am I missing here? That is not to say they can not scare customers, it's just that they can only scare the easy ones.

I do not place masks on females in the castle. Females cast in scenes wear full length dresses, the nude body suit and a touch of make-up. The dress is either white or black. .

MASKS

The castle has many masks on dummies, but few on actors. I use masks on two actors in the cemetery and one actor in one scene in the castle.

Masks are an easy, cheap way to create terror using a poor actor. This makes for easy recruiting and is easy on the creator. The actor can hide behind the mask and do things he would or could not normally do. This is both good and bad. Good, because you now have a cheap source of talent. Bad, because some of these actors can get carried away. They forget themselves and may hurt themselves, other actors or a customer. Look for actors who can scare without a mask and have enough confidence in their ability to bare their face to the public. You can place a mask on this actor to match your theme. An actor who can work with or without a mask is more reliable than one who has to have a mask.

The customer cannot see facial expression or the eyes of the actor wearing a poorly fitting mask and initially reacts to the mask, not to the unknown entity behind it. Keep doing this to the customer through the entire attraction and the customer will be unimpressed.

The UFO alien scenario I have used as an example is perfect. It allows for the masked aliens to co-exist with the unmasked military and doctors of the attraction. We have masks and faces. Use the best character faced actors for face duty. The faces reinforce good masks. Simple facial make-up should include at least a cut, scar, gouged out eye, burn or hanging flesh. Dried blood and dirt smeared on face and hands and some torn clothes complete the image. Use only one or two effects per face.

What is a good mask? It should fit snug to tight on the actor's face and allow the customer to see the eyes. Good eye contact is a must and one of the best scare tactics. In an early, well illuminated scene, add special contact lenses to the character and you will build fear in the customer. Every time the customer sees another creature he will imagine the creature eyes seen earlier. Even though the only creature(s) with contacts were in an early scene, the customer will believe all of them to be the same.

Purchase cheap masks and improve them. Cut the mask up the back and remove enough latex so that when the mask is pulled tight it fits snug on the face. Glue or sew Velcro strips to either side of the mask so that it can be adjusted to fit different size heads. Add hair or a wig to the head with glue to hide the seam. Personalize each mask with additional latex to change the shape of the nose, add scars, cuts, gun shot wounds, make a face seem fatter or add facial hair. Now, like humans, each mask becomes an individual creature.

Don't get wrapped up in expensive, time consuming make-up. It has its place, but not in the attraction. A good way to further set the stage for the example would be to have an army MP chase an alien in great make-up through the crowd in front of the attraction. Do this about 4 times per hour or as the crowd warrants. It could be serious or comic relief. The alien could confront the MP as the MP's gun jams. The alien should hide behind a customer or two. Select a brave macho type with a date, hide behind the macho male, give all the customers time to see the make-up, the facial expressions, the eyes, etc. Then, when the customers see the aliens inside, the mask will reinforce the vision already seen and the customer will believe that all the aliens' faces are real, not masks.

WARDROBE

Wardrobe is very important. The greater the detail, the more your efforts will be appreciated. If on a tight budget, wardrobe is an item that can be done inexpensively. All the aliens wear black with different color sashes around their waist to denote rank. All the military personnel wear fatigues. Each MP, officer, doctor, nurse and alien should be a little different with major distinctions between alien officers and alien enlisted. If wardrobe inside is inexpensive, at least dress up the staff in the entry area. Upgrade wardrobe as money becomes available.

Make the actors financially responsible for their wardrobe. The most trusted actors who work the most hours take their costumes home and bring them back each night. They keep the costumes clean and make minor repairs. If a wardrobe must be shared between two actors, ask them to work it out. Place a value on the wardrobe pieces. Deduct this amount from the first pay check and include the amount in the last pay check when the wardrobe is returned intact. You may even offer a cash bonus for the proper return of the wardrobe.

Masks, props and wardrobes have a tendency to disappear. By making the actors responsible for as many of these items as possible, you will save money in the long run. In time, you will build up an excellent inventory that will have a greater value than you realize. If you have a permanent location and are in an easy to secure building, lock wardrobe up each night. Have a check-in/out procedure or prepare to be missing items.

VOLUNTEERS

The word reminds me of "the good, the bad and the ugly." Good, because volunteers can save you money. Bad, because volunteers may or may not show up, work hard or stay till closing. Ugly has nothing to do with what they look like with or without a mask, but rather their lack of self-control or irresponsible behavior.

Communication is the main problem in any organization, but more so with volunteers. If the organization creating the event is the charity and has control of its members then volunteers usually work, listen and show up on time. When a for-profit business ties in with a charity for labor savings, the relationship itself can cause a problem, no matter how friendly it is.

One season we (a charity ourselves) worked with a local charity. Its members included politicians, the mayor, the police chief and more. It is a very respectable organization. The organizational and planning phase began in June for the October event. The financial arrangements were agreed upon, the actor rules were distributed to the new charity members and several organizational meetings for question and answers were held.

What is it they say? ..."the best laid plans of mice and men oft go astray." That is a serious understatement. It became apparent within a few days that a disaster was in the making. Everything that could go wrong did go wrong. People did not show up, were late and had to leave early even when they arrived late. Regular staff members continuously heard these phrases from the volunteers: "I don't work for you", "I'm not gettin' paid", or "I'm not going to do that".

We survived because the decision was made to augment the volunteers with a full-time paid staff in our planning stages and we began to over- schedule volunteers. At one point during the week we had more workers inside than total customers for the evening. That was the exception to the rule. On Halloween night we had no swing crew and several minor scare points were virtually unmanned. Breaks were few and far between and without the central corridor we would have had to close down for about a half hour on the busiest night. The volunteers cost us more money than they saved and tarnished our reputation.

Should I be foolish enough to try it again, the only things I would change are the communication link with the charity volunteers and to add a written agreement to be signed by each volunteer. When a charity assigns a member to act as chairperson for a committee, it is that person in whom you are placing all your confidence, not the charity. If that person is a flake, you are screwed. A member of your organization must be a member of the committee and preferably be in charge of the committee. Spell out exactly what is expected of them and the penalties to the charity for non-compliance (if they are late, leave early, or disregard instructions, it costs their

charity money) in the volunteer agreement. Make each volunteer sign a copy of the agreement and have parents co-sign if the volunteer is a minor.

Volunteers can be an asset and save money. Volunteers not part of your organization must be controlled and kept on a very short leash. Use a serious choke chain.

POLICE

We hire a local police officer on really big nights. I have had nights when three officers were barely enough. The best thing about a police officer is his radio. A call saying "officer needs assistance" brings several police cars. In the event a customer gets sick or injured, this radio will bring medical assistance much faster than a 911 call. I say medical assistance because municipalities respond to an emergency call with one or more police cars, an ambulance and a fire truck.

Since 1979 I have had one such call. Three teenage boys were celebrating a birthday. Two friends kicked, shoved and pushed the third boy into the walls. The birthday boy was finally injured by his friends when they rammed him into a wall. The manager knew something was wrong because we had internal security following the group with a two-way radio once the actions came to our attention. Our security could not get to the boys in time because other customers were between them. Our manager and the police officer were waiting at the end when they exited. The manager asked if the boy was all right and he said he was. The group was kept under observation for a few minutes and it was determined that the boy was not all right. The officer called for assistance. He also took statements from customers who witnessed the event. Our second officer came from behind the attraction and aided the boy till he was taken to the hospital via ambulance. He was placed under observation for injury to the head and released the next day. This could have been a very nasty law suit. They could have claimed the injury was caused by the attraction and we would have had to settle the claim. This one incident could have cost much more than we have spent on police officers since 1979. Police officers cost around \$100 per night. We spend over \$1,000 per season on police officers. It is worth every dollar.

SECURITY

Internal security is a must. We use two way radio headsets from radio shack. They are inexpensive and allow us to communicate easily. The cashier, technician, admissions actor, manager and designated security person inside the attraction all wear a headset. We use more, but these four are necessary. The security person is an extra actor in the first room of the attraction that uses actors to watch out for rowdy customers.

On slow nights, the cashier communicates that customers are on the way in and that the staff should get ready. On busy nights, the cashier's headset goes to the technician or pyrotechnician. Should a major breakdown occur, customer admissions can be halted and repairs made quickly. Security may be notified of potential trouble makers by the admissions person. Security has the option to stay as an actor or to follow a rowdy group through the attraction. Should the group get beyond security's ability to control or direct, he can call for assistance. Another way to gain control of rowdy customers is to be constantly in front of them and letting them pass you. This is possible in the 60 degree design attraction because of the central corridor and all the secret ways to get to it. This telegraphs a message to the rowdy customers that they are not in control, do not know where they are and have no idea how many other people may be watching them.

EMPLOYEE AND VOLUNTEER HOURS

Maintain a sign in/out log for all staff, actors, police, volunteers and employees. Place each person's name alphabetically on a daily list. The cashier logs the time they arrive and leave. The person signs the log with the cashier as witness. Keep accurate records for payment of wages and as verification of hours worked for the volunteers. The location for the police officer to sign in/out should have space for his badge number and amount paid. Police officers are paid nightly. They prefer cash.

TICKETS AND BOOKKEEPING

Before opening for business, the cashier writes down the beginning ticket number. When closing, the cashier writes down the next ticket to be sold. The difference between the two is the total number of people to enter the attraction. Multiply this number times the ticket price, less discount dollar coupons and free tickets equals gross daily income.

Do not purchase tickets locally. Someone may realize that they too can purchase your tickets and try and sell them to customers in the ticket line on busy nights. Printing a ticket of your own design and reflecting your graphics on card stock is a better solution. Purchase a sequential number stamp from an office supply and pre number all your tickets. Roll tickets can also be purchased from Halloween suppliers like Morris costume. These tickets are harder for someone local to find and use.

In all matters of bookkeeping and wages, a CPA should be consulted. The CPA may even set up a complete accounting system and wage earner system. Telling potential charities about your CPA and bookkeeping system will add credibility to your operation and make filing government forms easier.

ENTERTAIN

My first haunting experience came at age 16 when I turned the porch of our house into a prison and my living room into a most uninviting place for trick or treaters on Halloween. My

victims entered the porch, rang the door bell and the ramp they walked up rose behind them, locking them onto my porch. Simultaneously, the door to my house would open... You get the idea. It was not until years later that I decided to create a real haunting experience as a fund raiser for an acting school. Since 1979, I have produced one or more events per year.

I am a fan of Walt Disney. On trips to Disneyland and Disney world I have been entertained, amazed and dazzled. The Pirates of the Caribbean has been visited by more people than any other attraction to date. Attention to detail is second to none. I have seen this attraction four times, always leave with a sense of awe and still cannot wait to see it again.

Entertainment takes many forms. Most of the people I have met who build haunted houses only discuss the scaring of their customers. Don't get me wrong, I really enjoy scaring the bee gee gees out of people. But there is much more than scaring involved here.

Some haunted digs are known for blood and gore. Others are known for being terrible (as in a waste of money). Religion has gotten into the craze. The admission is free, the payback is two fold: 1) the scenes depict actual events, abortion, murder, sexual abuse, etc. And 2) the sermon at the end. The lines are usually very long, not because there are actually a lot of people, but rather because they take you through in small groups, take their time with each group and then take the group into a room for coffee and sermon.

I have been in several elaborate haunted houses, full of decoration and detail. The other customers and I usually see very little of the extensive work done by the creators. We are too busy being chased or scared by someone or something, usually from behind.

Verdun Manor is a richly detailed haunted mansion, complete with story line and original characters. Most scares come from within the scene or above, very few from behind. The crush of the crowd flowing through keeps the pace up and is the only limit to seeing all there is to see. As a fellow creator, I am entertained by the visuals that are added to each year. I have been a lights on guest and have paid many times to travel with the crowd.

If, as the creator, you spend time, effort and money on a scene, you must design time for the customers to see your work. This accomplishes two things: 1) the customer is entertained by your efforts and 2) the customer is distracted by your creations. The sets and set decoration add to the confusion. Giving the customer time to see your work does not mean slowing the customer down; however, it does mean improving the customer path through the scene. Make the path longer and wrap it around the scene instead of blasting through a small part of it. In our sample dark attraction I will take advantage of set design and path layout to give the customer more time to observe. Only the crush of the crowd will limit our customers time to see what there is to see.

THE TWO HAUNTED HOUSES

When I first started in this as a business in 1979, my main goal was to scare everyone out of their wits. As my house designs progressed, I added more exit doors along the customer path,

not for building or fire code, but for the chickens to get out of the way and let the braver souls move on.

I have been very successful at scaring most of my customers. All my exit doors get used, some to the point of being torn off their hinges. It is not possible to scare all the customers. My last true effort at this was in 1990. I built two totally different haunted houses within 100 yards of one another.

House number one was inside a mall with an exterior entrance. It was full of rich detail: it contained the bridge of the Enterprise from "Star Trek the Next Generation", Doctor Who's Tardis, an 800 square foot spider web with a giant 8' spider and more.

The shower scene from psycho was typical: a beautiful long haired girl (wearing a nude body suit) in a red fiberglass shower tub, soaked with blood and clinging to a blood-drenched, strategically placed shower curtain. The customers would pass by as she pleaded for help in a weak dying voice. The scare came from above and to the opposite side as a horrible bloody faced creature leaned out over the customers with a blood-soaked knife.

The crowd flow was no more than 200 people per hour, a nice rate that allowed customers to move at their own speed, not being pushed or shoved. Scare tactics were within the scene and not from behind. As a matter of fact, many groups were split in half as part of the group would move forward and the other part would retreat. This enhanced the terror. This was the smaller house, but took about the same amount of time to complete as the larger house. Not nearly as many people exited house number one early as house number two. House number one's problem was that the customers could see and did not want to move forward into the next scene. They could only guess as to what was to happen to them next.

House number two was outside in the parking lot. It was three times the size, little or no detail, dark as a pit inside and I thought, very scary. This house could easily handle 700 to 1000 people per hour. All the scares came from behind, there were very few scenes, few lights, fog and many surprises. The exits were busy.

We sold package tickets, one price for each house and a discount price for both houses. Fifty percent of our sales were for both houses. I would follow large groups from house to house and do an exit poll. The smaller house was the best. Customers appreciated the detail, the scare tactics and the variety. Another thing I noticed was that the ones not scared were entertained. They were amused, smiling, laughing... What?

I was, to say the very least, surprised. The giant spider web sequence was the grand finale. It was so scary that the majority of customers were trying to escape. A beautiful young girl was covered in blood and being mauled by a giant 8 foot spider. As customers tried to pass it on the left or right it would lurch toward them. Most customers would scream, stumble, retreat or fall into the scenery. But some customers were laughing or smiling. It seemed to me an inappropriate reaction. This shows you how much I had to learn, they were being entertained, and this knowledge I now pass on to you.

THE CUSTOMER

No matter who you are, you will never scare 100 percent of the customers. Even the goal of entertaining all the customers will be most difficult to achieve.

The customer is very important. He has the money. Another aspect of the customer, usually overlooked by the creator, is his mouth. Not to say that it is unusual for a customer to have a mouth, but that every customer has a mouth. It is because the mouth is there that the creator needs to give every mouth something good to say about the attraction. Word of mouth is the best form of advertising. Satisfied customers create more dollars in your pocket.

The creator of the event has imagination. The customers each have their imagination. They are one in the same. I.e.: a person's imagination is his own. It is developed over time. Many factors affect the development of one's imagination. These factors should be recognized and taken advantage of. Before we begin to design our attraction let us meet a sampling of our potential audience.

Groups. Safety in numbers does not work in a haunted dark attraction. It is the opposite. The larger the group, the greater the possibility that one will be terrified. This one person will be the group's domino. As this person falls, so do the weaker members of the group. Don't get me wrong, there is always the brave one. The one that cannot be scared. We must entertain this one. As the brave one's friends begin to tremble, the brave one will be entertained a little. He will even scare his own friends. Which customers do you wish to attract?

Age. Nightmares are a product of youth. Most adults do not have nightmares. Young people deal abstractly with daily problems of life through nightmares. The more traumatic the problem, the more terrifying the nightmare. As we age, we tend to lose the ability to deal with problems in this way. We are now supposed to be able to handle things like an adult. Part of age is maturity. I have seen some adults behave like children. Even when we stop trying to scare them and tell them it is all pretend, they still scream in fear. On the other hand, an occasional six year old will tell my actors that they are cool, good costume, neat room or good make-up. It is easier to scare youth than adults, I think.

Male vs Female. Males tend to be stronger and some take it as a challenge to be scared. It is the male's place to be brave, strong, courageous and the female's protector. You may very well scare the hell out of most males, some of whom will never admit it. Allow the male his false sense of security, do not concentrate or waste energy on attempting the impossible. As a male or group of males moves through a room or event in its macho fashion, it is your job to entertain and amuse them after it becomes obvious that they are in their macho mode. Jumping in their face and making threatening moves does nothing and may prompt one or more to lash out at the actors in false self defense mode.

Males with Females. Ah, the protector has something to protect or, as in most cases, something to be totally cool about. Yes, the macho male will pooh pooh your efforts to scare him as he bravely escorts his distressed damsel through your digs. He may even tell his date to stop acting like a child since none of this is real. He may even enjoy the terror your house is inflicting on his charge. Either way, she is being scared and he is being entertained. We are not here to discuss the psychological implications.

Females. In groups, I call them screamers. A group can be as few as two but I have heard two sound like twenty. Incredible fun to scare. Allows actors to be very subtle. Doesn't take much to chase them out the door.

Families. Usually father, often mother, sometimes both, and their pack of young ones. Young ones can be older teenagers that are afraid of their shadow down to a six year old that fears nothing. In general, families are as easy as a pack of females. Dad will egg them on, mom will try to shelter and some will exit quickly.

Teenagers (12-17) are usually associated with haunted houses, as it is the in thing for them to do. Teenage boys are out to be macho and show their friends how cool and brave they can be ... "can't scare me". When with a date, they tend to be either the protector or the giver of the sacrificial lamb by pushing their date into harm's way whenever possible. They may just stroll through, being macho, acting uninterested, cool and brave as their date screams. Ah, screamers. Teenage boy athletes are another problem altogether. As a group traveling in your house, they

can do considerable damage, confront actors and open exit doors. They can act very stupid (as if what I have already said about them shows any signs of intelligence), pretending that they have no idea that what they are doing is wrong.

Teenage girls have lungs to die for. I mean, as a creator in his house, the sounds do much for the ego and set the stage for the customers yet to enter.

Young Adults (18-25) enjoy haunted houses and are not much different from teenagers, except for the drug or alcohol aspect. Although teenage customers are occasionally bombed, young adults are more likely to be under the influence. This group can be much more violent than teenage athletes. They can be just as violent with or without dates.

Families. Mom. Dad. The kids. Not many problems and a higher percentage of early exits.

SO, WHAT TYPE OF CUSTOMER DO YOU WANT?

CONTROL THE CUSTOMER

The easy part is creating a theme, drawing walls and making things up. Execution of the project is difficult. Taking advantage of all the senses adds another level of difficulty.

Customer manipulation is actually what we are doing. From the time the customer enters the attraction until he exits, he is ours. Remember the old black & white TV show, "The Outer Limits"? They "took control" of our TV set. Not actually, but many people who watched the show did so by giving up control, so to speak. We take control from most customers through confusion and disorientation. These are the ones we scare the easiest. Those who do not give up control are the ones we must entertain.

Control starts with the senses: sight, sound, touch, smell and taste. Taste is the only sense that escapes me at the moment. I'm working on it and open for suggestions.

Sight. The human eye's contrast ratio is 1,000,000 to 1. That is to say that the iris in the eye can adjust from the darkness of a closet to the brightest sunlight, and do it fairly quickly. The time it takes to adjust is the best scare time. The customer can just barely see, but not enough to make out what is going on. We accomplish this by manipulating light levels and the color of the light. Dark shades give the customer a false sense of security. Their irises open wide to take in the available light. Switch to a slow pulsing strobe as the customer enters the scene, then plunge him into total darkness. Never go dark to darker, always bright to darker. The slow strobe strains the eye with blinding flashes of light in total darkness. The light may be a pale color or pure white. Include white or lightly colored objects in the area of the customer path that will reflect light into the customer's eyes. The horror awaits in the shadows. Fast pulsing strobes are for other effects.

Use color to create light pools for the actors to move in and out of. The faces of actors with pale or white make-up will change with the light.

Sound. There is more to sound than meets the ear. Sound vibrations can also be felt. Volume is not the answer to horror, audio frequency and speaker placement are the answers.

When selecting music, remember that using music licensed by BMI or ASCAP requires payment of royalty fees. Have a keyboard artist create original scores that match the theme.

Switch back and forth between frequencies from room to room. For house sound, the sound heard the most, use a general track with a beat and some variations along the mid frequencies. For room sound, select the extreme, either high (tweeters) or low (sub-woofers). Some rooms could take advantage of both with the high from one direction and the low from another. Experiment with sound. Several hundred watts of sub-woofer sound aimed down a dark customer path can cause more fear than the best costumed actor on the planet.

Touch. A dark attraction where the customer must walk through darkened passageways is perfect for the use of touch. Customers must use their hands to feel along dark corridors and as reference to maintain balance when scared. The 60 degree design system uses wafer board for the main wall unit. Wafer has a rough wood texture to it. Other materials offer additional textures. Plaster is cold and smooth. Burlap is flexible and coarse. Latex rubber is smooth and offers resistance. Plastic drain tubes have ridges and motion. The items available are too numerous to mention. Use your imagination and a trip to the flea market, dumpster or alley to create more ways to present texture as a form of horror to the customer.

Smell. Creates incredible depth to a scene. When the customer walks into the autopsy room, they smell death. To create odors, I use scented fog. Do not purchase scented fog juice. Instead, purchase water based flavors from the grocery store. I use one pint of vanilla to five gallons of fog juice in our cemetery. It smells like cotton candy, and while the customer is noticing the smell (the distraction) we scare his pants off. Some really gross aromas can be obtained by mixing different food flavors in fog juice. Experiment.

METHODS OF SCARING

Anticipation. Many dark attractions I have visited do not make use of anticipation. Big mistake. It is bad enough that they missed providing the entertainment value. They also took away the customer's imagination. The terrors lurking in each customer's mind are far greater than anything you or I can ever create.

Anticipation is that time period I give between events or an actual room where nothing happens. Use darkness or great set design or decoration along with lighting, sound, touch and smell. Give the customer time to worry, to be afraid, to wonder about what is, where is and when is, to slow down and stop running from the last room, catch their breath and realize that nothing is happening, right now. They may even develop a false sense of security, begin to think that nothing is going to happen and that they just wasted their money. Actually nothing happening at all is a great distraction.

Distraction. The customer distraction can be the first movement, sound or light change in a scene or dark passageway. None of these have to be big. A shadow across the glass of a closed door, a light going on or off or a body part moving will do. The customer's senses are keen. He is straining all of them to detect what is next. Filling this need will momentarily distract the him. The scare has to come as soon as the customer's attention has been completely diverted. He will realize quickly that this is not the scare and will begin to ignore the distraction. Doing nothing is also good, although you cannot continue to do nothing. As the customer enters the room, do nothing. Maybe an actor is sitting at a table smiling at him. He distracts the customer by looking above his head and just behind, as if someone else was there. The customer will look, as he looks, the actor jumps up and slaps the table with a board or something. The actor is both the distraction and the scare.

Movement as the prime distraction. An actor playing the part of a dummy can appear to make a mistake and be seen to move slightly. The customer will detect the movement and think that this mistake has given away the scare to come. At this time, the real scare from another actor or dummy or from something out of sight delivers the scare.

The same can be said for any object or set piece: a shadow moves across a partially glassed door, a door knob rattles, there is a blast of air or the customer detects the tips of shoes just visible beneath the edge of a curtain. The scare comes opposite from the shoes as the customer either moves to push on the curtain, makes a statement about the actor behind the curtain or moves away from the curtain and into the scare.

Sound as an alternate distraction. Pre-recorded sound effects randomly playing in dark passageways activates the customers imagination. An actor can make sounds or create sound with an object.

The key to sounds in proximity to the customer is where and when. In the dark, soft sounds are most disconcerting. I have personally sent, on more than one occasion, a six foot six inch athlete (and others of less stature) to his knees on many occasions by simply saying "Hi." I have said "Boo" and other words as well. It is the where and when, not the word. Just before the customer's eyes adjust from light to dark between scenes, from above and slightly behind, and as close as possible to the customers ear as I can safely be are the best conditions. A haunted house is noisy and a soft voice in his ear is the last thing the customer will expect. This effect is so potent and terrifying that I have had to limit its use to a variation I call the final event. This lessens its impact as the customer can (and often does) run out the exit.

Light changing from bright to dark works to set up a scare. The greater the difference between bright and dark, the longer it takes for the customer's eyes to adjust. Take advantage of a greater time period with anticipation before the scare.

Fast pulsing strobes create an eerie effect for customers to walk through. Use them as the distraction in a room painted with black and white squares. Cut one or two holes in black squares and have actors appear in the squares as the customers move through the room.

Imagination. The periods of anticipation in the dark should include random sound effects or actors banging, scraping or sliding along the wall when part of the hallway follows along the central corridor. I used the sound of a chain saw on tape for several years. There were 7 seconds recorded on a 20 second loop tape. Customers would exit the attraction and wonder where the chain saw was. We would tell them we did not have one. Some customers afraid of chain saws would exit as soon as possible after the first sound blast.

Other random sounds in the dark help stir the customer's imagination. Develop more anticipation. Use hanging things, like thread, fishing line, soft cloth or fabric, tubes, etc. Add to the effect by causing distractions. No actor should ever touch a customer. However, we can have other objects touch the customer. With these passive objects and random sounds, we can create terrors in the dark and allow the customer to fill in the blanks.

Fear. As human beings, we fear many different things. Some are afraid of heights, closed in spaces, animals, various objects and more. As a child growing up in Dallas, I would often visit the State Fair of Texas. The haunted house was awesome. Actually, I believe almost anybody would be nervous around any other unknown body in the dark.

Heights. Build a suspension bridge with steady hand rails about 12 inches above the floor over a fog void. Pull things up out of the void suddenly with black string as the customers try to make it to the other side.

Closed in spaces. Make the customers duck, get down low or crawl. Have many disgusting feeling things dangling as they try to move through the space and exit.

Animals. A rat suddenly darting out at your feet can be frightening. A large rat with glowing red eyes, more so. A second rat just above and to the opposite side of the first will create terror. Timing is everything.

One of my most successful rooms is centered around a large man. No mask. He just sits at a table with a very large, real looking butcher knife with blood, skin and hair dried on it. As the customers walk in he is smiling, nothing more. The exit door before this room has actually been ripped off its hinges. It is the most used exit door other than the final exit.

Selected objects. Blades of all sorts are the most effective in a dark attraction. We use knives, a pendulum blade 4 feet wide and 12 feet high as well as the old tried and true chainsaw. The pendulum blade swings slowly over the body of a beautiful girl, the blade almost touching, almost carving our beauty in half.

When we are frightened it is because we are afraid of some *thing*. A surprise by even a teddy bear can frighten us. We feel silly and become amused at ourselves and then entertained by our fear of a teddy bear.

I use the white dress routine in the cemetery; however, the faces aren't as pretty. This can be quite a shock as the male customer moves through the cemetery. He sees a beautiful white dress, and being programmed to believe it to be another beautiful girl, he is shocked as she turns to taunt him. In my ghost illusions, the females are beautiful. Of course they are dummies or videos, don't complain and can't be touched.

Macho male groups. Traveling haunted houses is a macho bonding ritual for groups of males. The weakest of the group will be ridiculed and the bravest, usually the leader, will become more macho. It is difficult to tell where the bravest and the most chicken member of a group will be. Theories vary from group to group. In general, the brave lead. The not so brave are in the middle or sometimes on the end.

One of the nice things macho customers will do for you is to use the name of the person that is screaming the most. Actors should pay attention and use the name. We have an edge in this with the headset communications. The admissions person can usually pick up on one or more names of a group entering and pass this information along to the actors inside the attraction. Now some poor screamer has more to worry about as the creatures inside hound him by name.

Crowd. The scare from behind technique is bad at best. It theoretically moves crowds through the attraction faster. Actually, it is easier to create and simpler for dumb actors to execute. It does little for crowd movement though and becomes very predictable. Any time spent on set decoration is wasted because the customer cannot see it to enjoy it. This mode of operation is one of the main reasons customers want to be in the middle of a group. The reality is that customer movement through the attraction is determined by the size of the crowd. A large crowd will create its own momentum and will move through at a faster pace because the crush of the crowd will force people to move.

The admissions person can regulate customer flow up to about 600 customers per hour. After that, the crowd takes over and the size of the line requires the customers to be admitted as fast as the person in front of them can move. The capacity of this haunt design can be up to 1,000 per hour, assuming no operational backups during this time period. At this point the customers are one solid line into and out of your attraction. As the line begins to decrease, the admissions person can then regain control and let customers into the attraction a group at a time.

The number of people per hour is important. Not only because of the dollars it represents, but also because of the dollars lost when customers are required to wait too long in line. The entertainment factor is just as important. Scaring customers who are moving through as a herd is very difficult. It is more important than ever to entertain with several different methods of scaring. As the herd moves through, rotate or alternate these methods so that the human crush will be kept guessing as to what will happen.

In my attractions, I can go up to 600 customers per hour get a good show. Above that, the customers themselves become part of the show. There is always someone in each moving segment that is scared of their own shadow and this individual will help entertain the customers as the actors struggle to survive.

There are many ways to scare. The in your face or scare from behind are easy and brainless. That is not to say we should do away with them, but rather add to the list of ways to scare and make the experience rewarding for our customers. Remember anticipation. The customer knows he is there to be scared. The question is when, how and by whom or what? All these things are under your control. Along with imagination comes the use of anticipation and distraction.

ROOM EVENT DESIGN TIPS

I like to watch action adventure movies. Being a TV and film editor gives me a slight advantage. The advantage is in the pacing. A good movie allows rest for the audience between action scenes. It would be difficult to have action scenes follow one after another. The viewer

would become exhausted or, in the event the scenes became less exciting, bored. The time between all the action cannot be boring. It must be entertaining in another fashion; funny, tragic or informative as part of the continuing character development crucial to a good movie.

We are developing the theme, not developing characters. A room (scene) can be informative and further develop the theme, thus making the attraction more believable. It is important that the customers lose touch with reality and we immerse them in the reality that we have created. Sounds from the outside world should be limited and none would be best. Any view of the outside world should be avoided until the customer exits.

As the attraction's director/creator, you are responsible for setting the pace of events that the customers are exposed to. Imagine your attraction as an action adventure horror movie. Decide what, when, where, who and how each room/event/scene plays out.

Each event will have a rating. Like a good movie there is always a good anti-climax. For sake of discussion let us rate things from 1-10. A 1 would be low production or horror value and a 10 would be the best you are capable of delivering right now.

Make a list of ten scenes/events/rooms. Describe each in detail. Determine the cast, wardrobe, lighting, sound, set decoration and projected expense in construction. When creating these ten, go all out, do not try and design them with any purpose in mind other than the scariest scene ever. They are all tens.

This exercise will stretch your imagination and provide ideas for future improvements. A ten scene attraction is nice, easy to manage and should not break you financially. Castle Dragon has twenty scenes or events, I never stop improving or changing the ones I have and continue to add new ones or remove scenes that didn't work the way I thought they would.

Draw 10 circles on a piece of paper in counter clockwise order till number ten and one meet. Each of your ten scenes should have a letter assigned to it. Select your absolute best scene and place its letter in the last circle. It is now number ten. The final event is not included in the scene count. The scare from the final event is enhanced by its being in sight of the customer exit.

Scene ten is a 10 rating. This is your greatest expense next to the facade and entry area. Scene number one should be your weakest scene, which you will make weaker by removing the actors and improving set decoration. Scene one now becomes informative and entertaining and/or disorienting.

Place your better scenes after scene four. Space the highly rated scenes between scenes with little or no scare value and great anticipation value. Refer to the X-Zone example in Theme, page 35. Having said all this, there are exceptions. Castle Dragon features a spider web as its grand finale. This is not my most expensive scene, it is possibly one of the cheapest scenes in the castle.

In 1992, I added skull cavern to the castle. This scene was and still is the most expensive I have ever created. It is four halls wide, 20 feet long and constructed to look like a cave with stalagmites and stalactites. I spent more than 300 man hours constructing the twenty units out of wood and hydrastone. A portable cave in white was born. After assembly, I fill in the cracks with plaster and it appears to be seamless. The cavern is illuminated with twelve slow pulsing strobes. The customers became disoriented and nauseous. For two years, this was my grand finale. It set the customers up for my final event. Skull cavern then spent two years in the middle of the castle. Next season it becomes room number one. I'm not sure what the message is; however, whatever works.

THE CREATIVE PROCESS

List all the things you like on a sheet of paper: sporting events, movies, TV shows, cars, camping, fishing, hunting, magazines, books, authors, artists, music, food, clothes, etc. Examine the items in each category and begin to arrange them in order of importance. Write a paragraph (at least) about each of the top three items in each category. Describe exactly why you like the

thing. What about it you like most and least. How does it effect you emotionally? Does it engage your brain? Is it something you like to do or would like to learn? Finally, can any part of it be used in your dark attraction? If so how?

ROOM EXAMPLES

You may really enjoy vanilla ice cream, but can you use it in your attraction? Before you answer consider this extreme example.

The theme for your attraction contains scenes from everyday life. You may call it "the twisted world". One such scene is a diner that customers walk through on the service side of the counter. The counter has several stools with customers in various states of decomposition. Objects on one side of the customer are gross and may even move. One of the customers has a bowl of vanilla ice cream with worms that wiggle and move. She eats one. As the customers are distracted by this, the kitchen door slams open and our creature cook delivers the scare. Imagination is great.

No matter how absurd something may sound, the only bad idea is the one that you do not consider. Try everything at least once. Decide if you should play the scene for laughs, scare or entertainment. How about all three?

This is an example is one of my best effects. Customers enter a room with a curved raised platform. On the wall behind the platform is a sign saying "creature on break". The customers read the sign as they walk through the scene. Of course they are disappointed and make some caustic remarks about wanting their money back. Suddenly the normal lighting in the room goes out and a fast pulsing strobe comes on as the wall with the sign begins to rotate and a very loud roar or a scream is heard. All the customers can see is the turning wall as it pulses towards them. When the wall makes it half way around, they see an actor in street clothes holding a hammer in one hand and kissing his thumb, the actor says "wow, that hurt" or something equally clever.

The customers experienced several emotions. First they were disappointed, then surprised, frightened, amused, but always entertained. Your attraction must offer a variety of presentations. This effect would not work on the busiest nights when customers are so closely packed that they appear as an endless stream during crankthrough, but then again, no room design could survive that. With the wall you can alternate events. During crankthrough, place a hideous creature on the back side of the wall. When one appears, the other disappears. Create your scenes out of the things you know best.

SKILLS & TALENTS

Take an inventory of your skills and talents. A skill is something you have learned and a talent is something you have developed. Wood working skills are a must and very easy to learn. Other basic skills that will make bringing your creation to life as a dark attraction are: electrical wiring; drafting, painting, splatter painting, lighting, sound systems and air systems.

Helpful talents are: sculpting, mold making, casting, detail paint, horror and sketch artist, scene design, latex, voice and music. Many more skills and talents can be used. Once the inventory has been completed, determine which skills you must learn and which talents you do not possess. You may have a friend who can fill in the gaps. Dedicate a place in your house, garage or apartment where you can spread out your ideas and work on your creations. As the project progresses, find more space, set construction priorities and build. The items that you will create

first are not the big bulky panels. Standard panels can be mass produced in an assembly line procedure, then mass painted with a spray rig. You will create detail and time consuming items. Control panels, set pieces, lab tables, etc. Take more time to build, paint and decorate. These units also cost more in money, planning, experimentation and labor.

Don't allow yourself to get painted into a corner. Begin planning and constructing your attraction at least one year before you plan on opening. This will allow time to research things you know little or nothing about and acquire skills you do not possess. We plan two years in advance, begin building new items to add to our attraction as soon as the season is over and learn any new skills we may need during the year before.

FLEXIBLE IDEAS

When I first began in the haunted house (back in the dark ages we did not call it a dark attraction) business in 1979, I, as the creator, allowed little if any input from other people. I cast my ideas in stone. As time went by, I realized that there was a remote possibility that someone other than myself might have a valid idea. This was not easy. Creative people are not known for their ability to accept change. By 1985 I was on my way to change. By 1990 I started casting my ideas in Jell-O. This may seem to be an unstable medium but it sure tasted good. Anyway, the idea is to be flexible during the planning stage, learn from your mistakes and listen to others.

Some of my best ideas came from customers. I would listen to them and watch as they made their way through the attraction. This is possible with a central corridor. My next great source of ideas came from my actors. After all, they had to work in the scenes that I created. Of course I visited other dark attractions and learned new ideas.

Many of the ideas from other attractions had to be changed. Back in 1990, I visited an attraction with an awesome cave. That same year I saw a similar use in another attraction. One attraction was in a permanent location and the other was to be torn down right after Halloween. neither of the caves was portable or removable. Both creative designers explained that it was not possible to make them portable and reusable. Ah, the gauntlet had been thrown and the seeds for skull cavern became firmly planted.

During the summer of 1991, I began the detail planning of skull cavern. During the summer of 1992 skull cavern came to life. In October 1992, it became a part of Castle Dragon and received rave reviews. The basic idea behind the units is included in "How to Build a Portable Modular Dark Attraction". It was not an easy task. The room is totally awesome and receives some of our best comments. The room is so strong that it contains no actors. The moral, if any, is not to let obstacles get in the way of your creativity. The main lesson here is to construct units in a modular form even for use in a permanent location. This allows for change of overall layout from year to year, the space to be used for other purposes during the off season and ease of adding to the units. Keep your designs modular and flexible. Some units are dedicated and have but one use, but as a module it can be added to, placed in a new location or changed in a minor way. And, heaven forbid, the possibility exists that you may lose your lease, or the high side, find a better lease and location.

ADDITIONAL SOURCES

It is helpful to check out the competition. The season before you open, visit all the local Halloween events. Visit early in the month, arrive before opening on slow nights and introduce yourself to the staff. Try to meet the creator. Explain that you are planning to open your own dark attraction and pick their brain. Most creators love to hear the sound of their own voices and may be hard to shut-up once started. Don't be afraid to ask for a behind the scenes tour. All they can say is no. If your ever around Castle Dragon in Dallas Texas...

Visit not only haunted houses or hay rides, but carnivals, festivals and fall craft fairs. You may discover many things you never thought about. Visit comic book conventions, fantasy fairs and science fiction conventions in your area during the year. Do not miss the National Halloween, Costume and Party Show produced by Transworld Exhibits in March of each year. For information call 847-446-8434 or fax 847-446-3523.

Reading material includes library resources about your theme and magazines like, Fangoria, sci-fi, realms of fantasy, to mention just a few.

If you have not done so already, a quick way to learn operations and meet people in the dark attraction business is to work for a one (for free if necessary). See what you like, do not like, can use, can not use, etc. Our castle has had visitors with camcorders, still cameras and note takers. I consider it flattery and the castle policy is to allow it on any slow night. Do not hesitate to ask for permission to record or take notes when you visit.

THEME

THE HEART OF A HAUNTED ATTRACTION IS ITS CREATOR AND NOT FAR BEHIND IS THE ATTRACTIONS THEME. A HAUNTED HOUSE FEATURING: A MOTION PICTURE CHARACTER; A VARIETY OF MOTION PICTURE CHARACTERS WITHIN SCENES FROM THEIR RESPECTIVE MOVIES; OR AN ORIGINAL CAST OF CHARACTERS AND SCENES. WHY

JUST A HAUNTED HOUSE ? GHOSTS, MONSTERS, ALIENS AND THINGS THAT GO BUMP IN THE NIGHT CAN LIVE MOST ANYWHERE. TUNNELS/CAVES, A HOSPITAL, FOREST, MILITARY BUNKER, NUCLEAR REACTOR, TIME MACHINE (past, present or future), MINE SHAFTS, GRAVEYARDS, JUNK YARD, BACKYARD, OUTER SPACE, ANOTHER PLANET, PARALLEL DIMENSION, HARDWARE STORE, RIVER/STREAM, BARN, ETC.

A MAJOR CONSIDERATION TO TAKE FIRST IS COST. IF IT IS NOT POSSIBLE FOR YOU TO BUILD THE DARK ATTRACTION OF YOUR DREAMS, THEN BUILD IT IN STAGES OVER SEVERAL YEARS. WE DID THIS. SINCE 1979 WE HAVE DEVELOPED OUR THEME. THIS IS ONLY POSSIBLE WITH LONG TERM PLANNING. THE FIRST YEAR YOU MAY NOT HAVE THE BUDGET FOR SEPARATE SOUND SYSTEMS FOR EACH ROOM/EVENT. INVEST IN A GOOD AMPLIFIER AND ENOUGH SPEAKERS TO COVER AS MUCH OF THE ATTRACTION AS POSSIBLE. THERE IS THE KEY. PLAN YOUR ATTRACTION AND PURCHASE THE KEY PIECES FIRST. YOU MUST HAVE THE PANELS, BUT THEY DO NOT ALL HAVE TO BE PAINTED WITH DETAIL. MAKE THEM ALL BLACK. PAINT DETAIL ON THE ONES THAT NEED DETAIL. DO NOT PAINT PANEL SIDES NOT SEEN BY THE PUBLIC.

THE PLACE NOT TO SCRIMP IS THE FACADE AND FIRST IMPRESSION DELIVERED TO CUSTOMERS THAT WALK UP OR ARE WAITING IN LINE. IF YOUR EXIT AND ENTRANCE ARE CLOSE TOGETHER (and this is recommended) YOU MUST ENTERTAIN/SCARE THE CUSTOMERS JUST BEFORE THEY EXIT. THIS IS YOUR BEST ADVERTISEMENT AND WILL ENTERTAIN THE CROWD AS THEY WAIT IN LINE.

INSTEAD OF HAUNTED HOUSE, GIVE IT A NAME LIKE HAUNTED MAJESTIC MANOR (MANOR INSTEAD OF HOUSE). PLANET OF LOST SOULS. UFO RESEARCH CENTER (WITH HALF A FLYING SAUCER STICKING OUT OF THE FRONT OF A MILITARY BUILDING). OUR THEME IS A HAUNTED CASTLE.

WHATEVER THE NAME, FOLLOW THROUGH WITH IT INSIDE AND IT BECOMES YOUR THEME. AS AN EXAMPLE LETS EXAMINE THE UFO ALIEN RESEARCH CENTER, IT WILL BE OUR THEME OF STUDY. THE NAME SHOULD BE SHORT. EXAMPLES: ALIEN LAB; HANGER 19; UFO LAB; ALIEN STORAGE; THE "X" ZONE; ETC.

THIS ATTRACTION WILL BE APPROXIMATELY 200 4x8' PANELS (38'x80"). IN ADDITION THERE ARE SET PIECES, EVENT DIVIDERS LIKE RAILS OR BARS, THE ENTRY AREA AND THE FACADE. SYSTEMS INCLUDE: SOUND; LIGHTING; FOG; ANY AIR DRIVEN EFFECTS. SAVE MONEY AND FIND A BUILDING WITH SMOKE DETECTORS, HORN STROBES, PULL STATIONS AND SPRINKLERS.

MILITARY BASES CAN BE FOUND ANYWHERE. THIS ONE IS IN ROSWELL NEW MEXICO. UFO LAND. THE FRONT SHOULD BE A RECREATION OF THE TYPE OF MILITARY BUILDING USED DURING THE

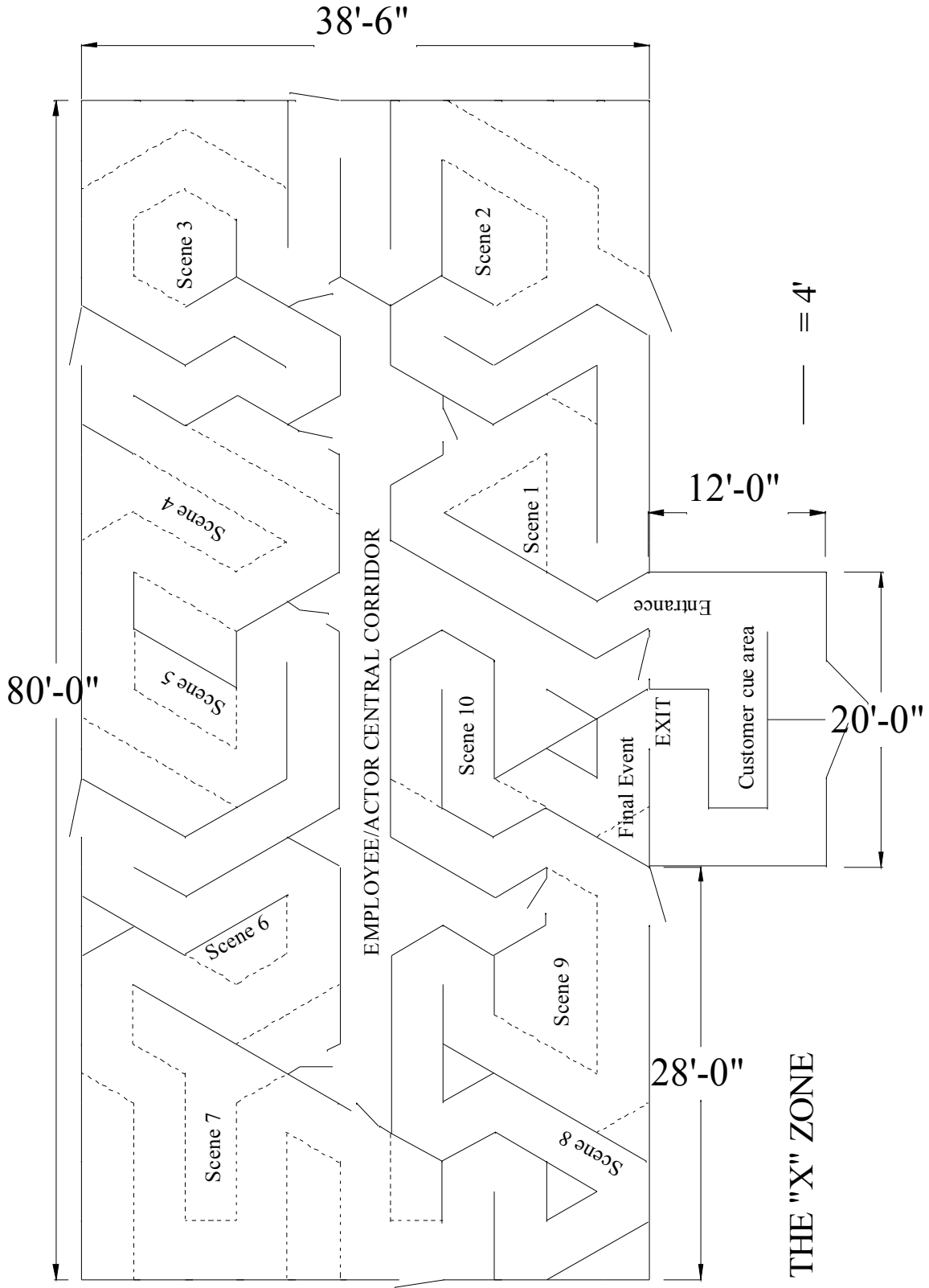
TIME YOU ARE RECREATING THE EVENT, SAY 1947. INTO THE TOP AND STICKING OUT AS FAR AS YOUR BUDGET WILL ALLOW IS AN ATYPICAL FLYING SAUCER. MAYBE A DEAD ALIEN DANGLING ABOUT AND MAYBE A FEW DEAD SOLDIERS, TOO, DECORATING THE ROOF.

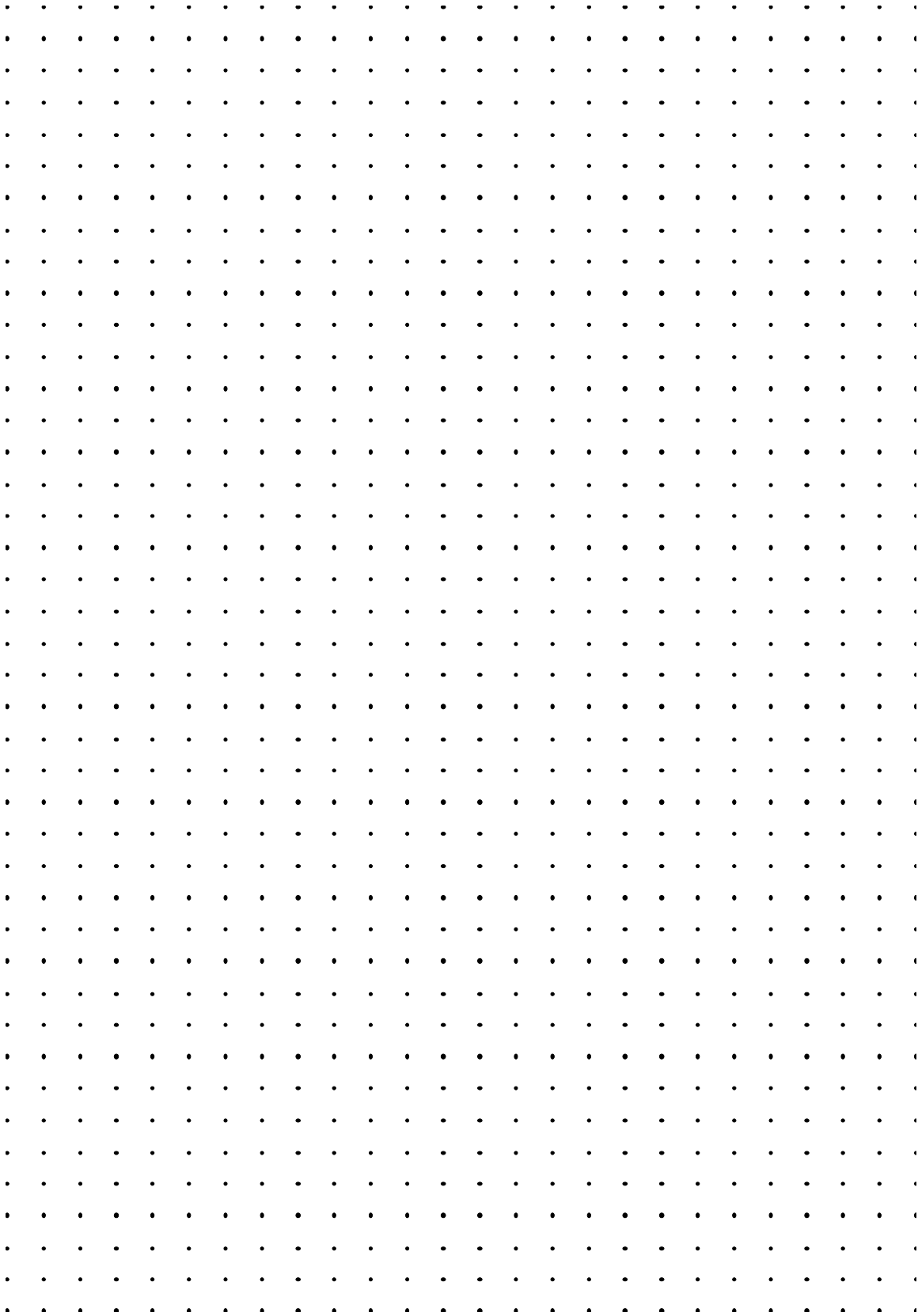
INSIDE THE "X" ZONE RECEPTION AREA IS A WAITING/QUEUE LINE TO ENTER THE ATTRACTION. THIS AREA SHOULD HELP SET THE SCENE AND LOOK LIKE A 1947 MILITARY RECEPTION ROOM. INCLUDE CLASSIFIED DIAGRAMS AND DOCUMENTS ON ALIENS AND UFOs AS WALL DECORATIONS. MAYBE HAVE A LOST VOICE REPEATING A CRY FOR HELP OVER THE RADIO OR INSTEAD A VOICE ASKING FOR A RESPONSE FROM THOSE NOT PRESENT.

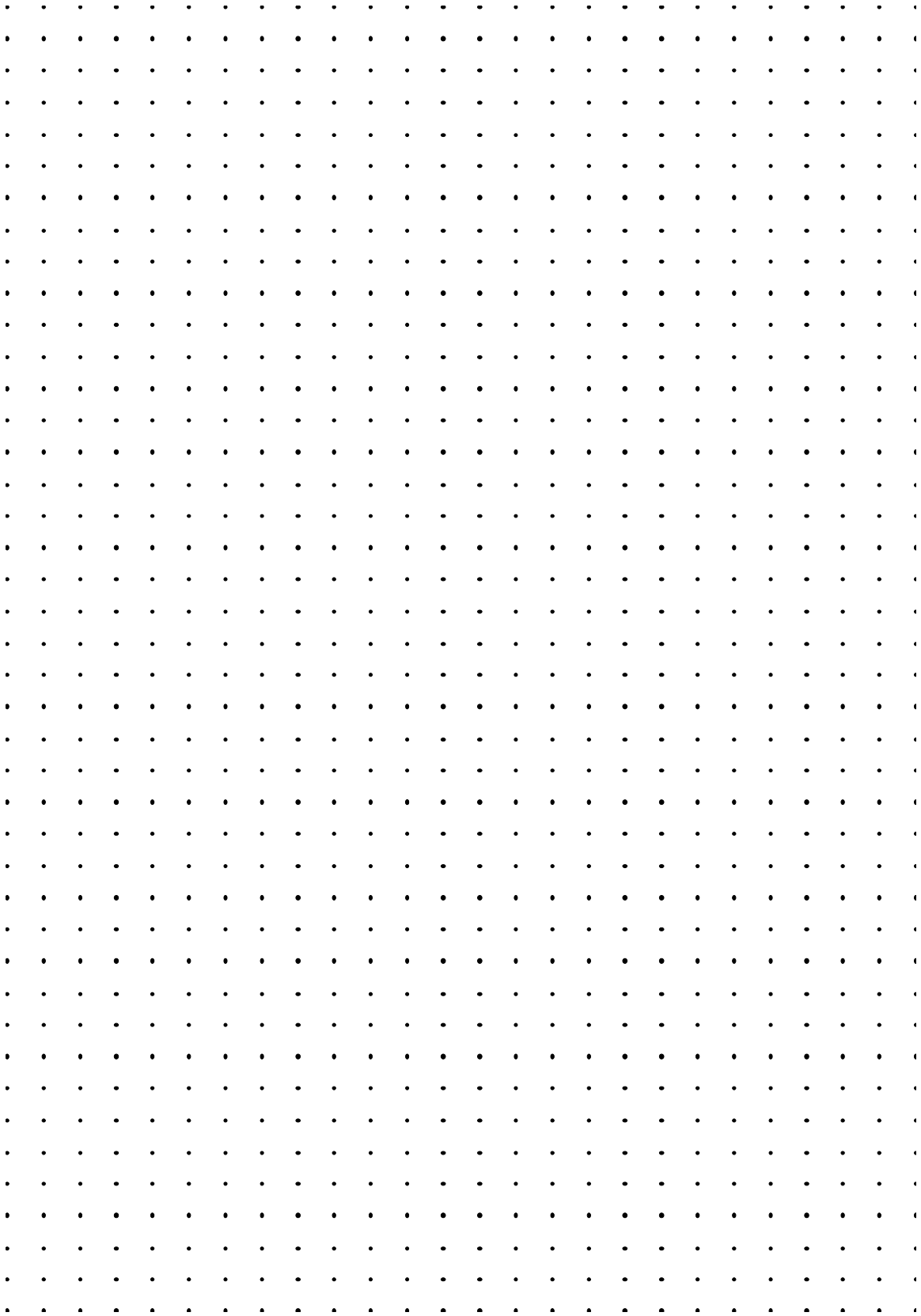
BETWEEN EACH SCENE IS A SERIES OF HALLS/SWITCHBACKS. THESE ARE JUST AS IMPORTANT AS THE SCENES, AS THEY ALLOW A BRIEF RESPITE FROM SCENE TERRORS AND OFFER IMAGINED TERRORS ALL OF THEIR OWN. THE HALLWAYS HELP TO ISOLATE THE SCENES SOUND WISE ALSO. AS YOUR ATTRACTION MATURES YOU CAN ADD LOW KEY STATIONARY DISPLAYS, ADDITIONAL SOUND EFFECTS, GHOST ILLUSIONS AND OTHER ITEMS TO RAISE THE ENTERTAINMENT VALUE AND SPACE OUT YOUR SCENES.

ONCE INSIDE THE ATTRACTION CARRY THE THEME ON TO A CONCLUSION. ALIENS, SOLDIERS AND... ? WILL POPULATE YOUR SCENES. THIS EXAMPLE WILL CONSIST OF TEN SCENES AND WILL BE DEVELOPED FURTHER IN THE FOLLOWING PAGES. PAGE 37 IS A COMPLETE FLOOR PLAN OF THIS CONCEPT USING THE 60 DEGREE PANEL METHOD. SEE COMPANION BOOK "HOW TO BUILD A PORTABLE MODULAR DARK ATTRACTION". THE APPENDIX CONTAINS MORE SAMPLE PLANS AND EARLIER PLANS BEFORE I BEGAN USING THE 60 DEGREE DESIGN.

PLEASE NOTE THAT OPPOSITE EACH EXAMPLE IS A 60 DEGREE LAYOUT GRID FOR NOTES. MAKE SEVERAL COPIES OF ONE OF THESE FOR FUTURE USE BEFORE DRAWING ON ALL OF THEM.

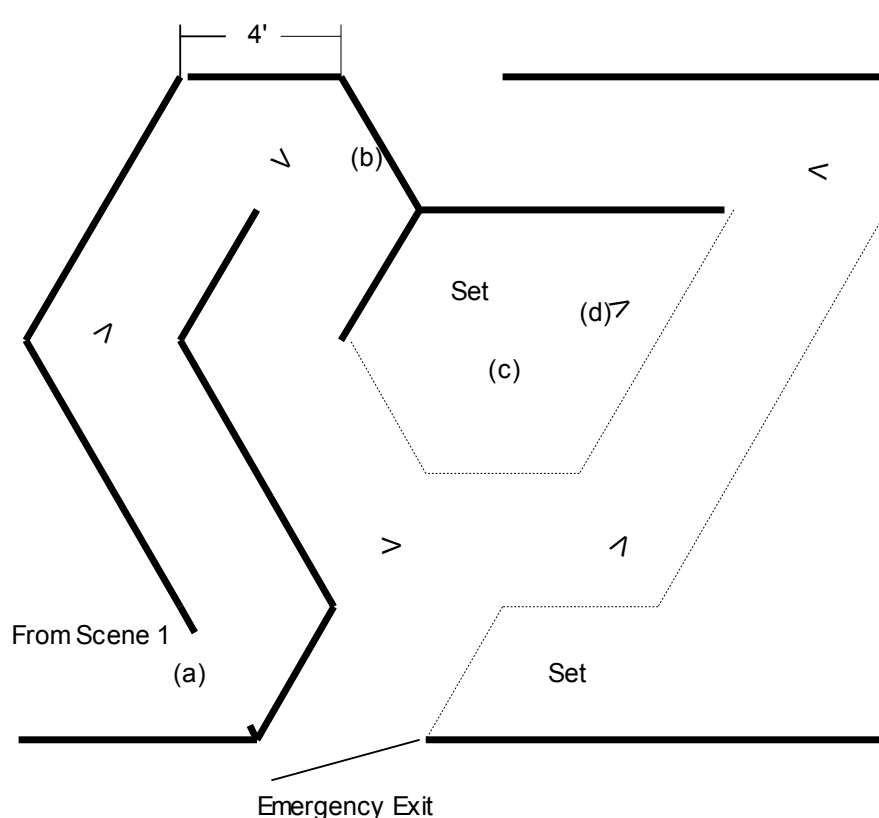


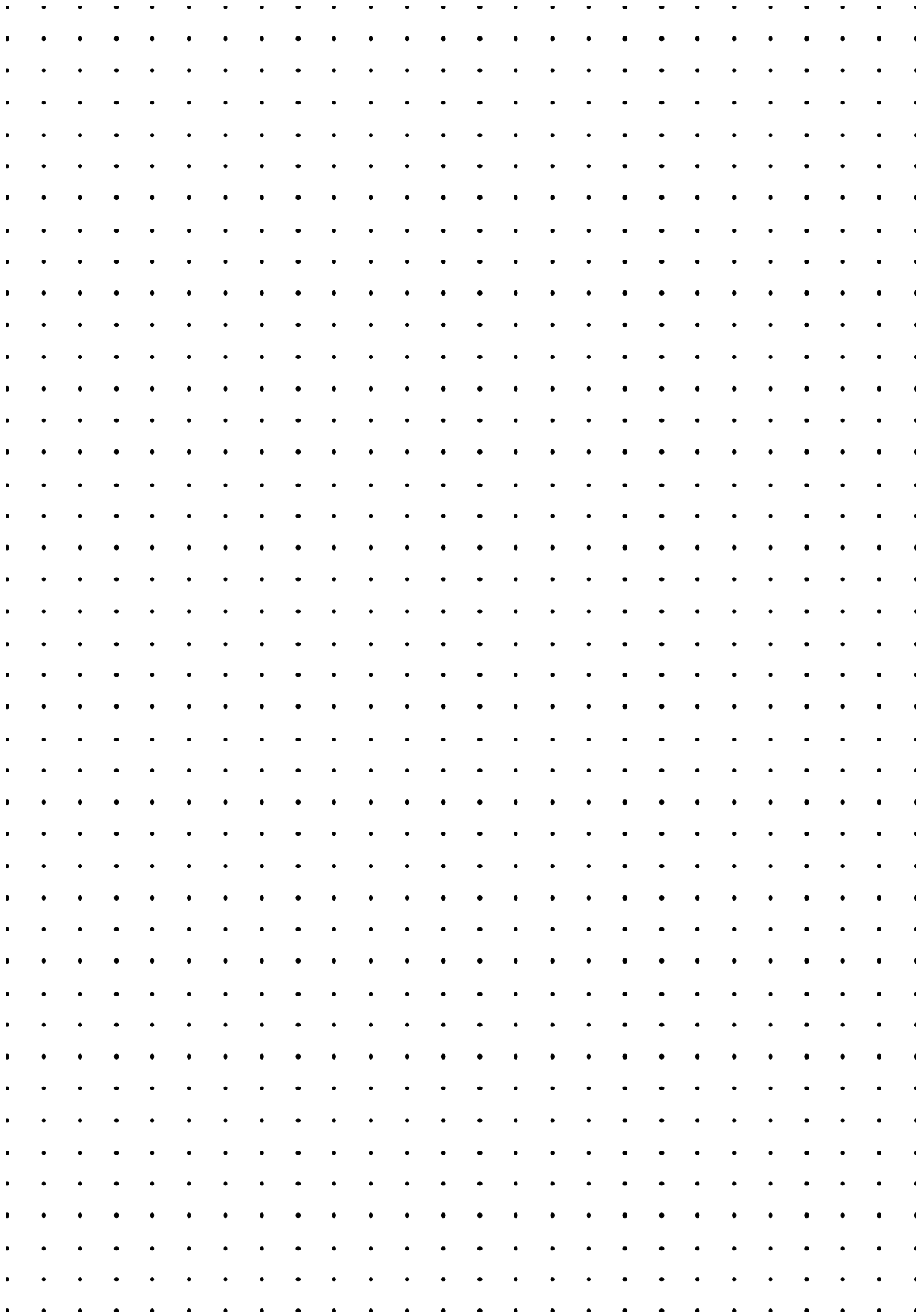




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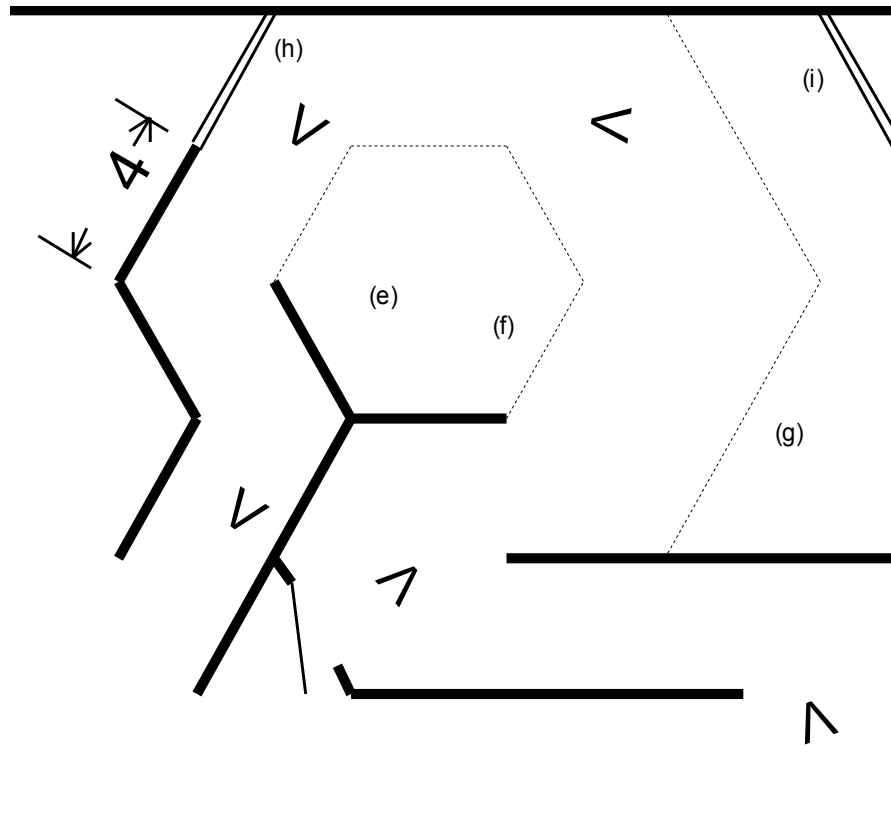
THE CUSTOMERS HAVE JUST WALKED THROUGH A DOORWAY(a) INDICATING THAT DOWN THIS HALLWAY LIES RADIATION CONTAMINATION. THE HALLWAY SHOULD REFLECT THIS WITH MORE FLASHING LIGHTS, SIGNS THAT SAY PROTECTIVE CLOTHING SHOULD BE WORN, ETC. NOW A SIGN(b) APPEARS, "OBSERVATION ROOM". THE ROOM ENTERED MAKES MAXIMUM USE OF THE SCENE AS THE CUSTOMERS ALMOST WALK ENTIRELY AROUND THE MACHINE. A DISORIENTATED SCIENTIST IS ATTENDING TO THE MACHINE(c) WITH A LARGE CRACKED GLASS WINDOW IN FRONT THROUGH WHICH A SHADOWY FIGURE CAN BE SEEN LURKING. THE SHADOW TRIES REACHING OUT FOR THE SCIENTIST BY LUNGING AT THE GLASS AS THE CUSTOMERS MOVE AROUND, THE SCIENTIST JERKS BACK TOWARDS THE CUSTOMERS GIVING THEM A SMALL JOLT OF FEAR, AS THE CUSTOMERS CONTINUE AROUND, THE CREATURE BREAKS OUT OF THE MACHINES BACK SIDE(d) NEAR THE CUSTOMER EXIT FROM THE ROOM, HELPING TO SEND THEM ON THEIR WAY. THE WINDOW SHOULD BE CLEAR PLEXI GLASS SMEARED WITH PETROLEUM JELLY TO GIVE A BLURRED VISION, THE CRACK IS A DECAL. CONTROL PANELS, SOME DAMAGED, SHOULD DECORATE THE WALLS. SOUND TRACK OF MACHINE/PANEL OPERATIONS AND INCLUDE SOUNDS OF MACHINE BREAKDOWN. LIGHT LEVEL IN THIS SCENE SHOULD BE HIGH. POSSIBLE TO ADD DISTRACTION TO CUSTOMERS PATH ON RIGHT SIDE. DISTRACTION SHOULD COME BEFORE ALIEN ESCAPES. THE ALIEN COULD PULL A CORD MOVING AN OBJECT TO THE CUSTOMERS RIGHT JUST BEFORE HE ENTERS THE ROOM.

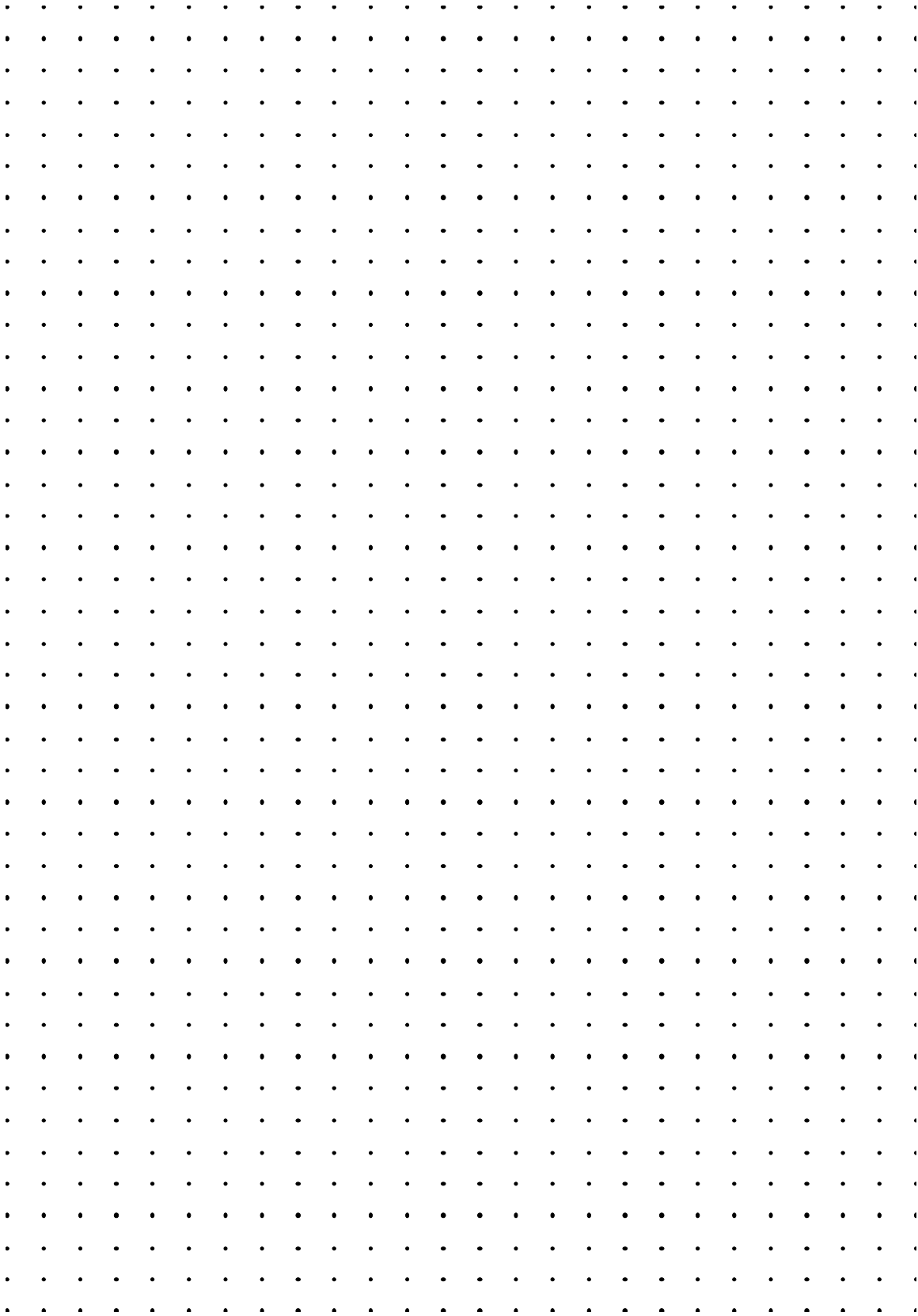




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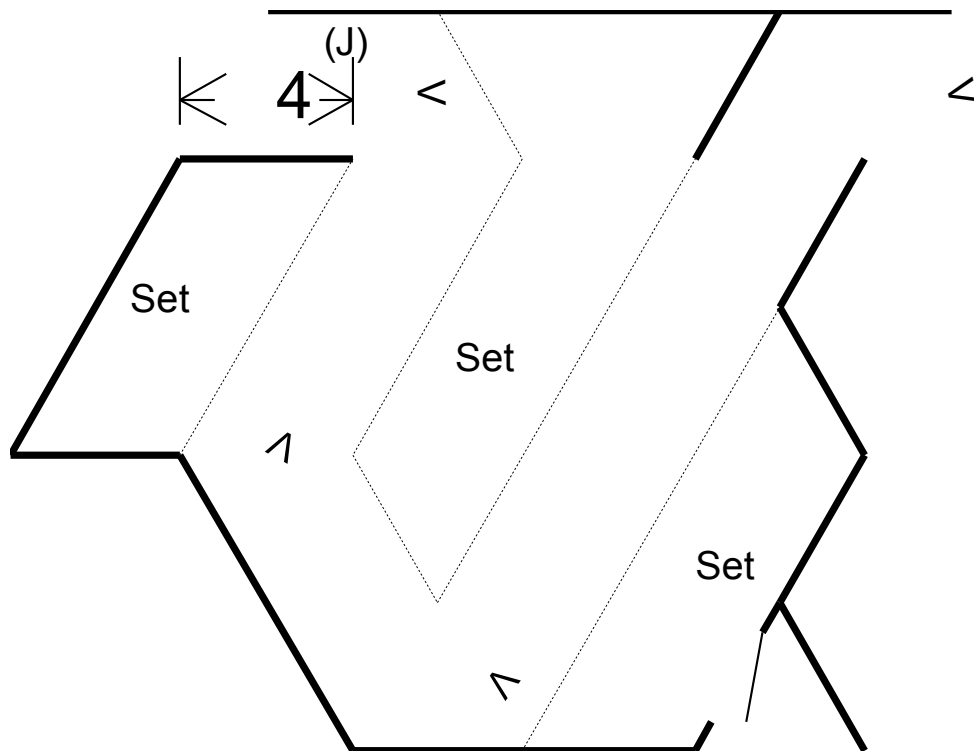
TIME TO SET THE STAGE AND GIVE THE CUSTOMER A GOOD LOOK AT THE ALIENS. THE CUSTOMERS ENTER THE AUTOPSY ROOM. A WALK THROUGH SCENE. AN ALIEN IS LAID ON THE OPERATING TABLE(e), CUT DOWN THE MIDDLE. ORGANS HAVE BEEN REMOVED AND CAN BE SEEN FLOATING IN ASSORTED PLASTIC JARS. A DOCTOR (f, DUMMY) LAYS ON THE FLOOR IN FULL MEDICAL GARB WITH A BLASTER HOLE IN THE BACK AND FACE TURNED AWAY FROM CUSTOMERS, A NURSE SITS DAZED AT A TABLE(g) MUMBLING, HER ARM HAS A BLAST HOLE IN IT AND MUCH DAMAGE CAN BE SEEN, BEHIND A DOOR(i) LOUD NOISES CAN BE HEARD AS THE DOOR BURSTS OPEN AND A LIVE ALIEN ENTERS IN FULL RAGE THE NURSE POPS UP AND SCREAMS BEFORE PASSING OUT OR BEING BLASTED AND OUR CUSTOMERS RUN FOR THE EXIT. ONE OF THE NICE THINGS ABOUT SCENES IS THAT VARIATIONS ABOUND. THE NURSE COULD BEGIN TO REACT TO: THE CUSTOMERS AS THEY ENTER, SHE THINKS THEY ARE THERE TO HARM HER; OR SHE COULD REACT TO A DUMMY DOOR(h), ITS KNOB COULD RATTLE JUST BEFORE THE ALIEN ENTERS THE ROOM. LOW LIGHT LEVELS. SOUND TRACK MUSIC WITH A BEAT CLOSE TO A HEART BEAT, SUB WOOFERS TO CARRY THE BASE, NO MID TO HIGH RANGE. THE DOOR BURSTING OPEN IS BRIGHTLY BACK LIT, THE ALIEN EMERGES AS A SHADOW AND THE CUSTOMERS ARE TEMPORALLY BLINDED.

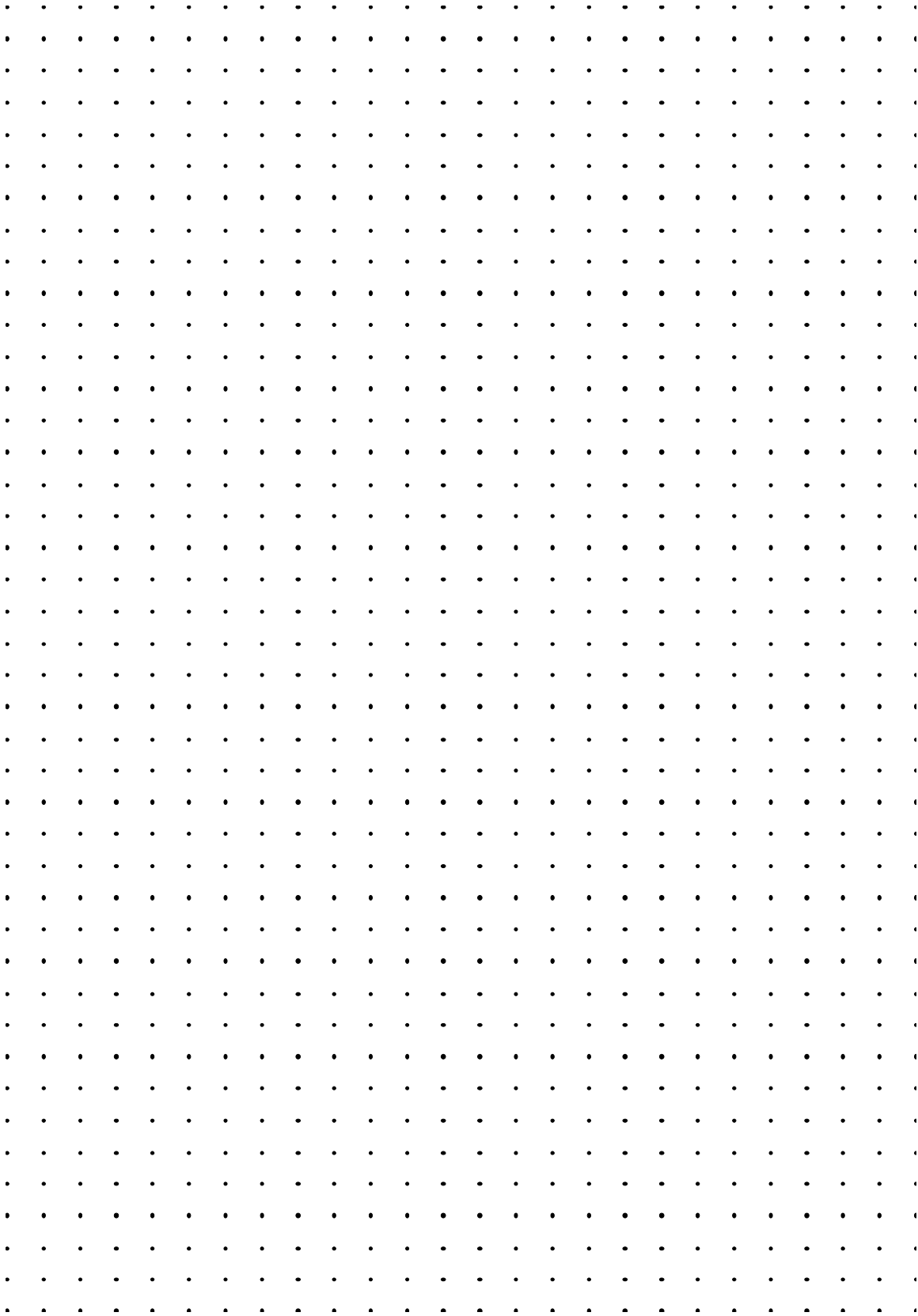


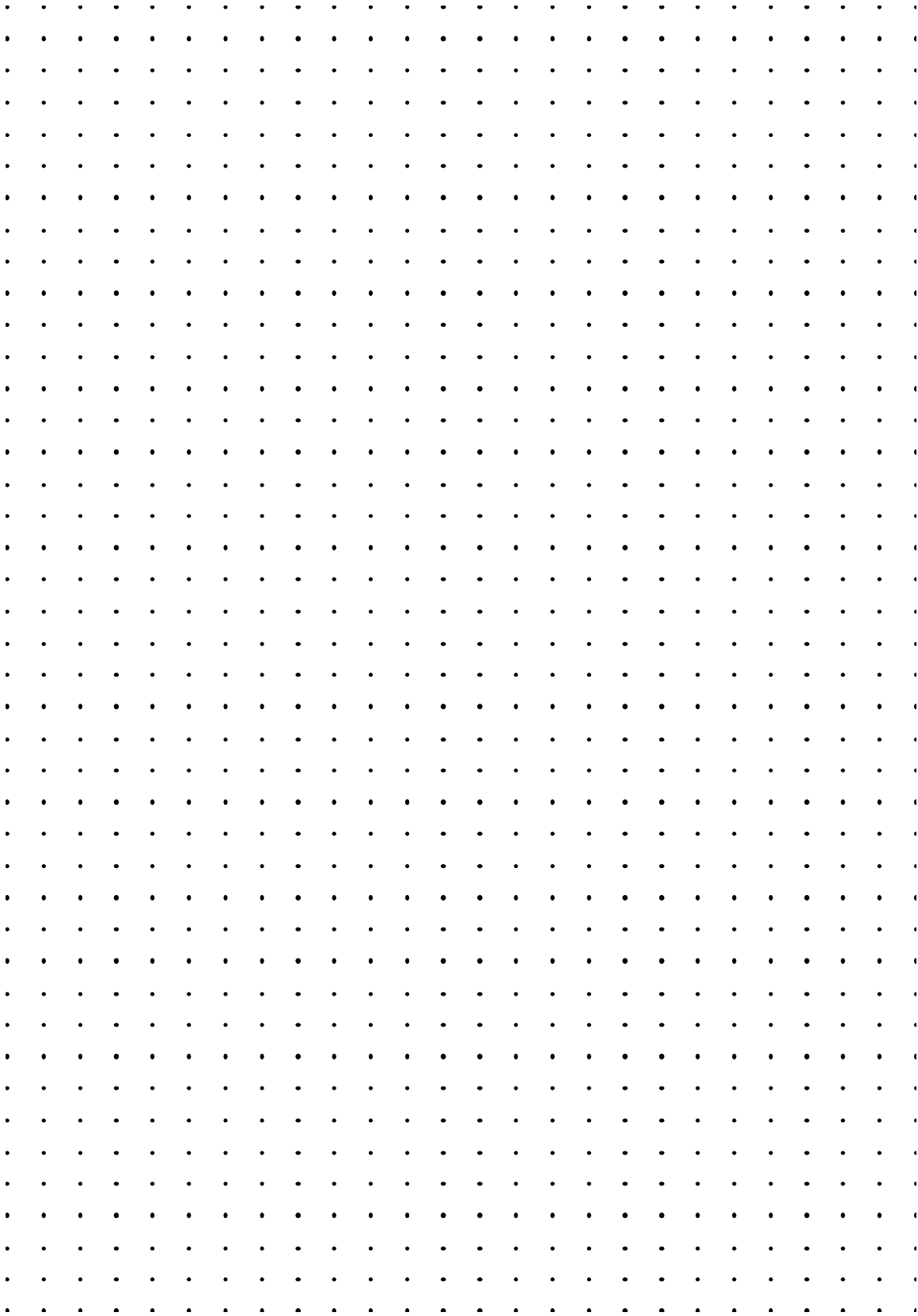


SCENE 4...

VISUAL TREAT. NON-THREATENING SCENE FULL OF ANTICIPATION. CUSTOMERS DO NOT KNOW WHAT TO EXPECT. IF SCENE THREE WAS EXECUTED PROPERLY, THEN THE CUSTOMERS WILL BE EXPECTING MORE OF THE SAME. IN REALITY NO ACTORS WILL BE PRESENT. THE SCENE SHOULD CONTINUE THE THEME. MAYBE A ROOM WITH SPACECRAFT ARTIFACTS, SPACE ALIEN ITEMS, MAYBE A SET OF X-RAYS ON A VIEWER, ETC. VISUAL TREAT. i.e., THE CUSTOMER HAS MANY THINGS TO LOOK AT, GIVE THE CUSTOMER TIME TO WIND DOWN, THE PATH CONNECTING SCENE THREE AND FOUR COULD BE LONGER. MEDIUM TO BRIGHT LIGHT, WITH LIGHT IN THE CUSTOMERS EYES AS THEY EXIT THE SCENE(j). BACKGROUND SOUND EFFECTS OF A LAB WITH EERIE MUSIC.

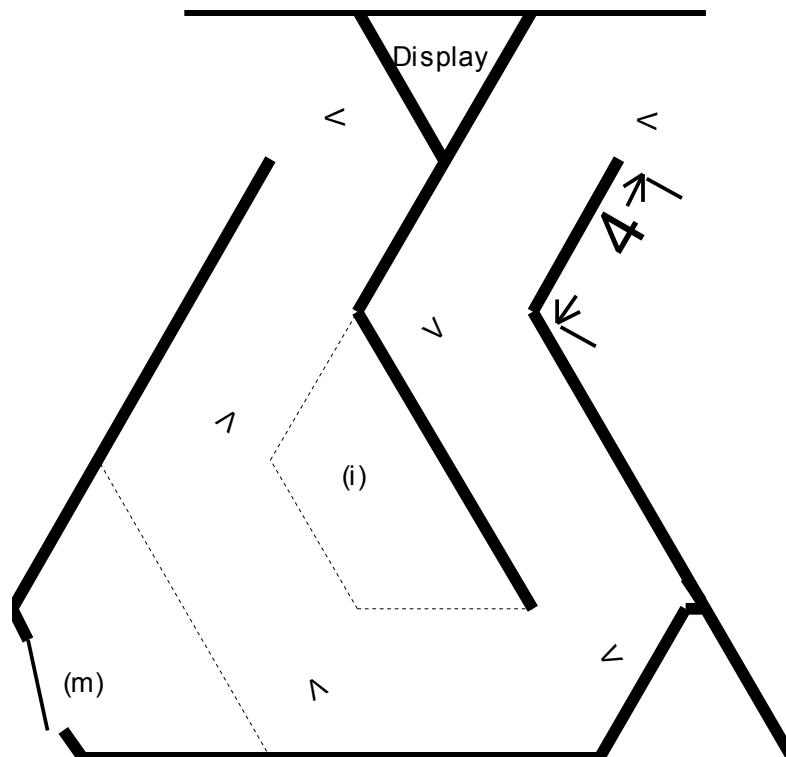


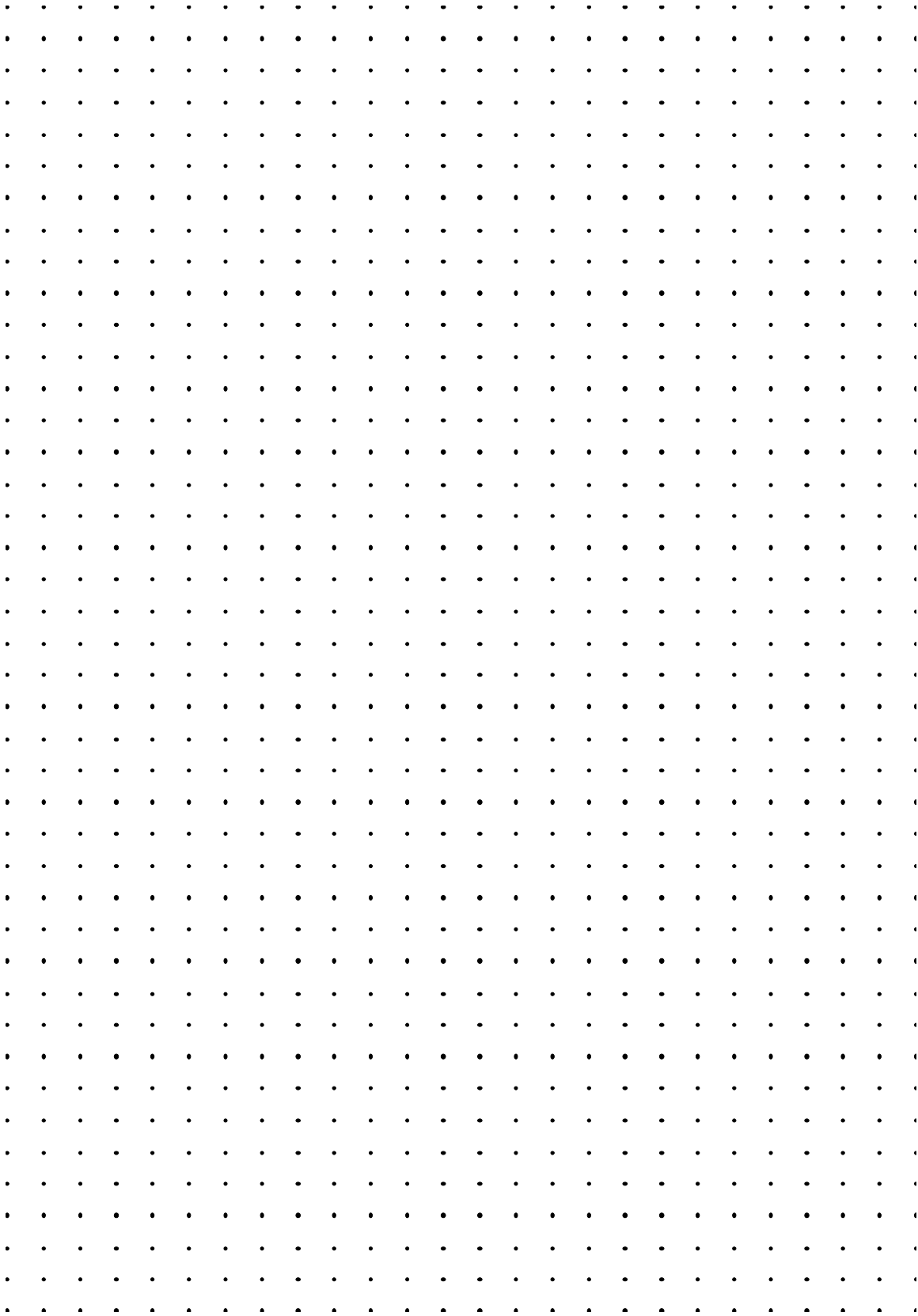




SCENE 6...

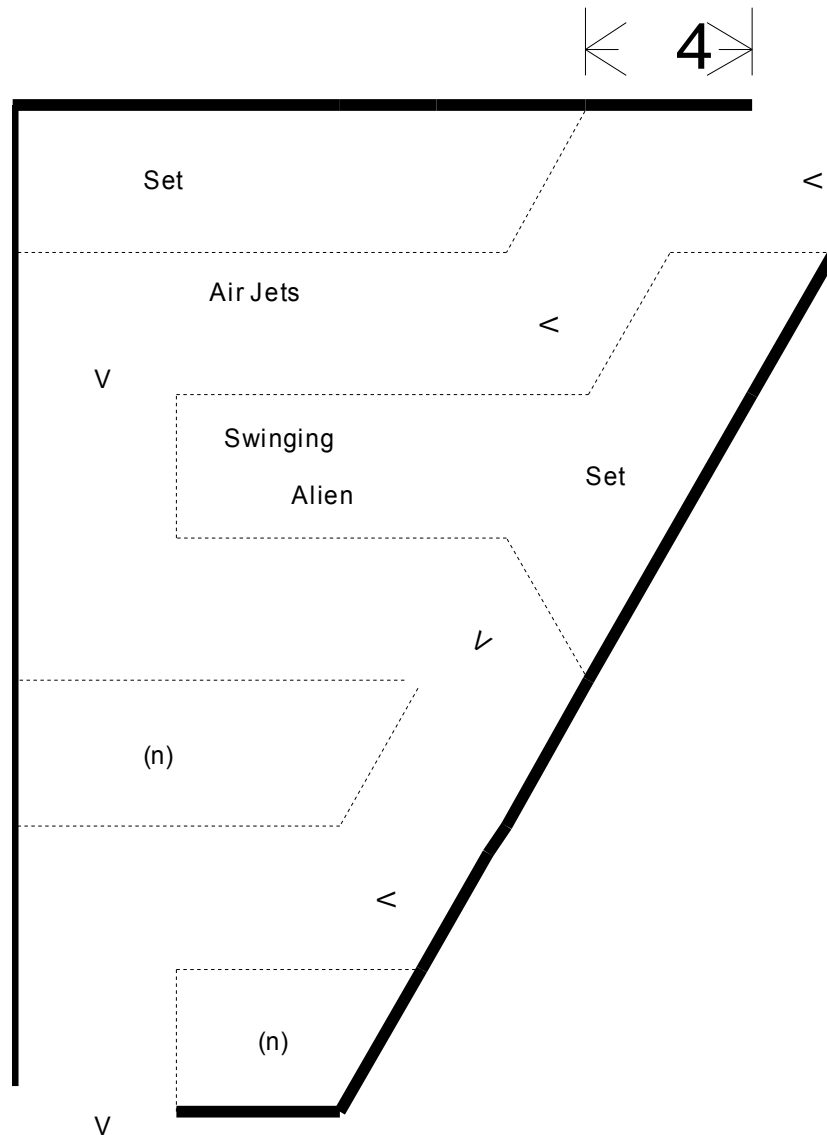
AFTER SUCH A GOOD SCARE OUR CUSTOMERS NEED TO HAVE THEIR FEAR OF OUR ALIENS REINFORCED. THEY ENTER A ROOM WHERE A PARTIALLY DISEMBOWELED ARMY OFFICER IS STRETCHED OUT ACROSS A DESK OR EQUIPMENT TABLE(I) IN A CONTORTED SHAPE. AN ALIEN IS FEASTING ON THE STILL LIVING OFFICERS ENTRAILS. THE ALIEN SHOULD ALL BUT IGNORE THE CUSTOMERS, THE OFFICER SHOULD BE WEAKLY PLEADING FOR HELP OR GROANING IN A SEMI CONSCIOUS STATE. SHOULD A CUSTOMER GET CLOSE, THE ALIEN CAN ROAR OR MAKE SOME GROWLING SOUNDS, THE MOVEMENT SHOULD BE SHARP AND QUICK, THEN THE ALIEN GOES RIGHT BACK TO FEEDING. THE ROOM MAY CONTAIN OTHER VERY DEAD ALIENS/HUMANS. A HUMAN COULD BE DRESSED OUT LIKE THE POLICE OFFICER IN SILENCE OF THE LAMBS. AN ALIEN COULD HAVE AN UMBRELLA SHOVED THROUGH HIS/HER GUT. AN EXTREME ADDITION TO THE ROOM WOULD BE AN ARMY MP BURSTING OUT OF THE DOOR (m) WITH A MACHINE GUN FIRING BLANKS. THIS IS EXTREMELY DANGEROUS, USE ONLY PROP WEAPONS AND AMMUNITION, FIRE ONLY THREE OR FOUR ROUNDS (the ammunition cost will eat you alive) AND THEN ONLY AT THE CEILING. A LICENSED PYRO-TECHNICIAN SHOULD BE IN CHARGE OF WEAPON MAINTENANCE AND LOADING, NOT AN ACTOR. RED LIGHTING ON HUMANS, GREEN ON ALIENS, THE ROOM SHOULD BE WELL ILLUMINATED. MUSIC LIKE THE SHOWER SCENE FROM PSYCHO.

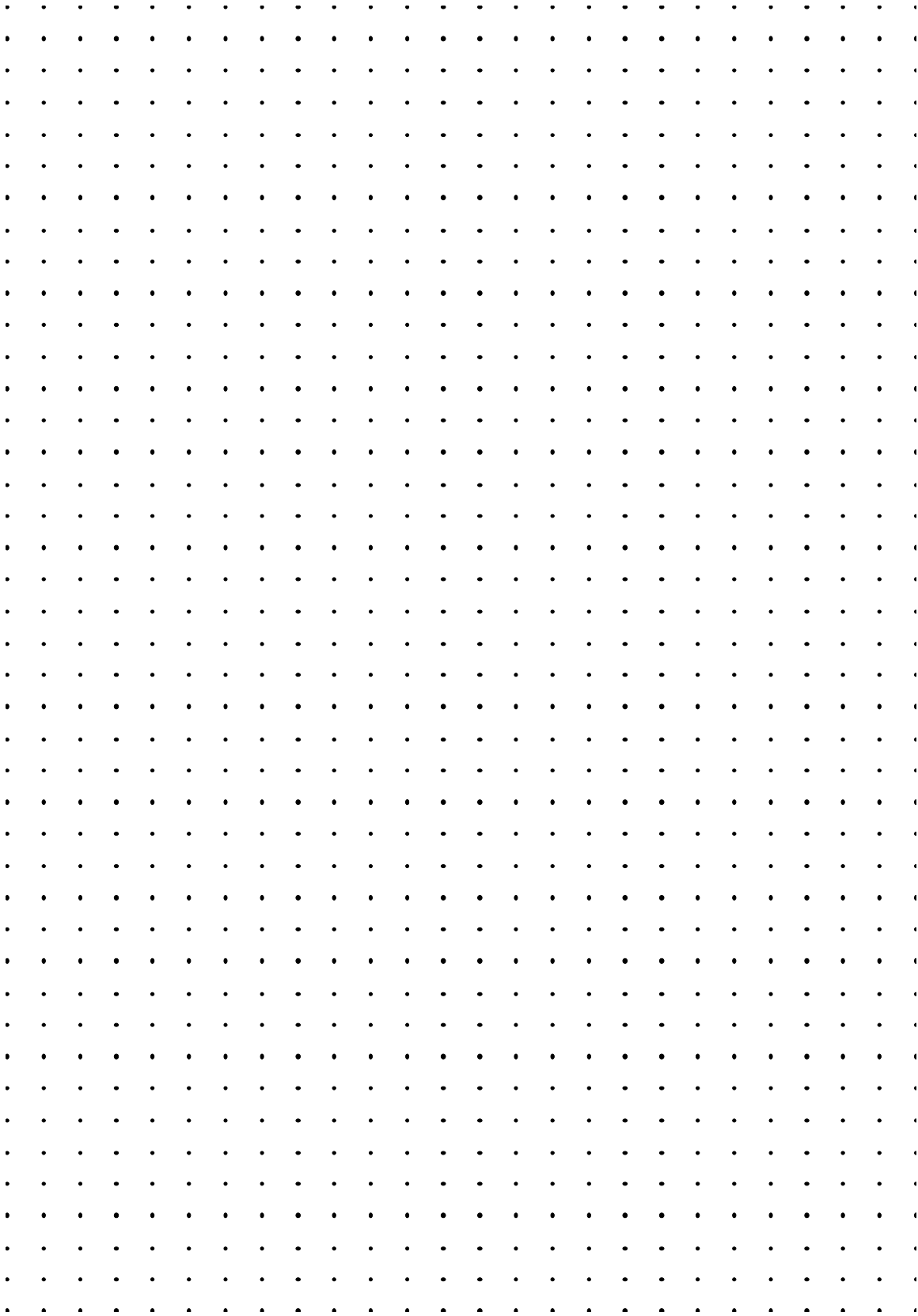


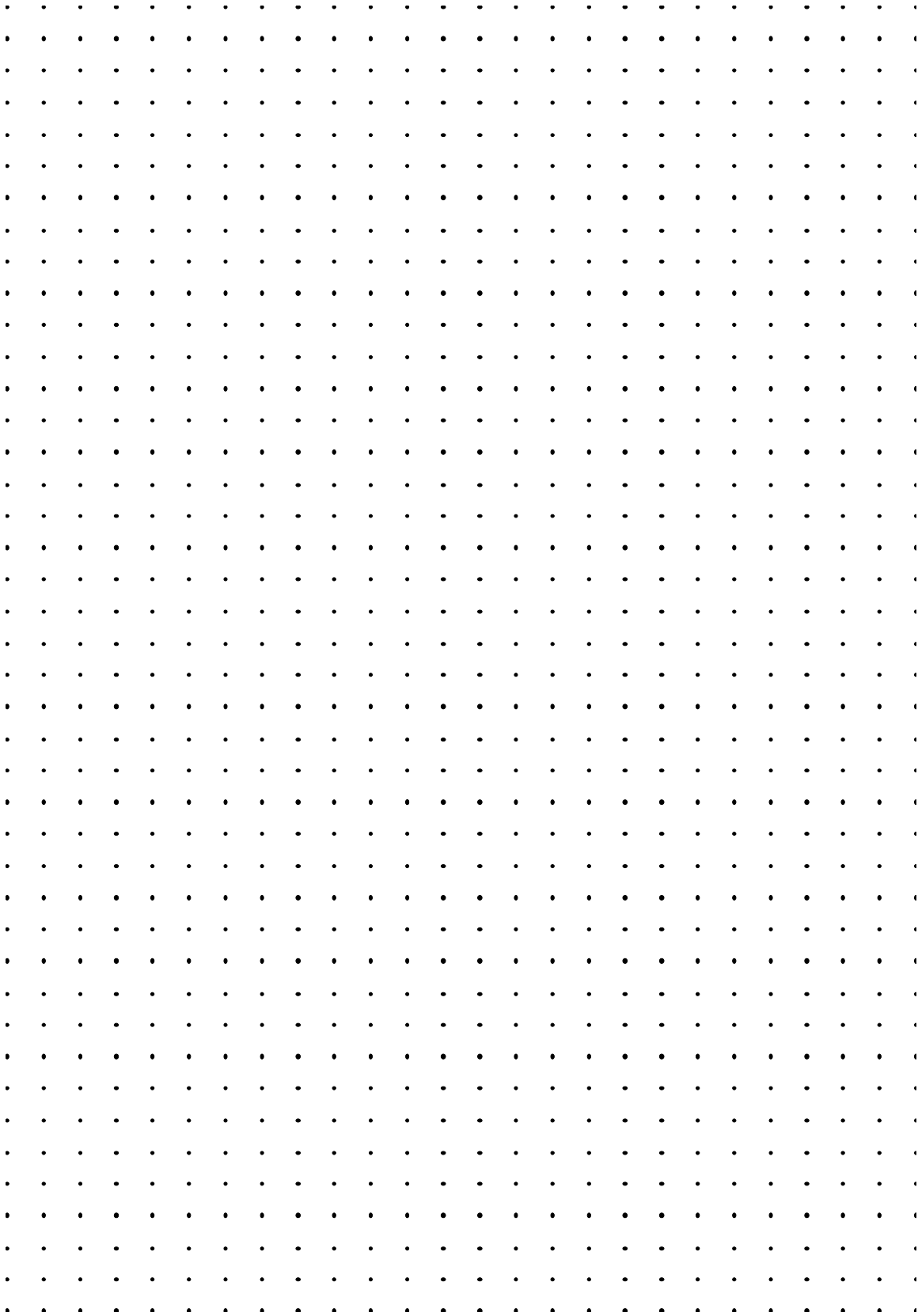


SCENE 7...

LARGE ROOM. PARTIALLY COLLAPSED BEAMS AND CEILING SECTIONS (again continuing our theme). OUR CUSTOMERS MUST DUCK UNDER PIPES, CONDUIT AND BEAMS TO TRAVEL THE PATH. PORTIONS OF WALLS/BEAMS/ETC. ARE MOVING, CREAKING. BURSTS OF AIR DIRECTED AT THE CUSTOMER PATH FIRE RANDOMLY. SWINGING ABOVE THEM IS AN ALIEN TRYING TO LOAD A MACHINE GUN. NOTHING HAPPENS. JUST THE SIGHT OF ANOTHER MACHINE GUN WILL SCARE THE HELL OUT OF THE CUSTOMERS, THE ANTICIPATION OF A REPEAT PERFORMANCE OF THE ROOM BEFORE WILL CAUSE THE EXIT DOOR BEFORE THIS ROOM TO BE THE MOST USED. NOT ONLY FOR THIS ROOM BUT THE WEAKER CUSTOMERS EXITING ROOM SIX WILL BE READY TO LEAVE, TOO. SOUND EFFECTS CREAKING AND OF GUNFIRE IN THE DISTANCE. AS THE ROOM ENDS ROWS OF PACKING CRATES(n) LINE OUR CUSTOMERS PATH. AS THEY NEAR THE EXIT A LID POPS UP AND AN ALIEN POPS OUT AND FROM ABOVE AN ALIEN REACHES DOWN. AN AIR RAM ON A CRATE LID OPPOSITE OUR ALIEN WILL ACT AS AN ADDITIONAL DIVERSION PRIOR TO HIS APPEARANCE OUT OF A CRATE AND HE ACTS AS THE DIVERSION PRIOR TO THE ALIEN REACHING DOWN. ALL IN ALL A VERY INTENSE EVENT. HOUSE SOUND, LOW LIGHT LEVELS.

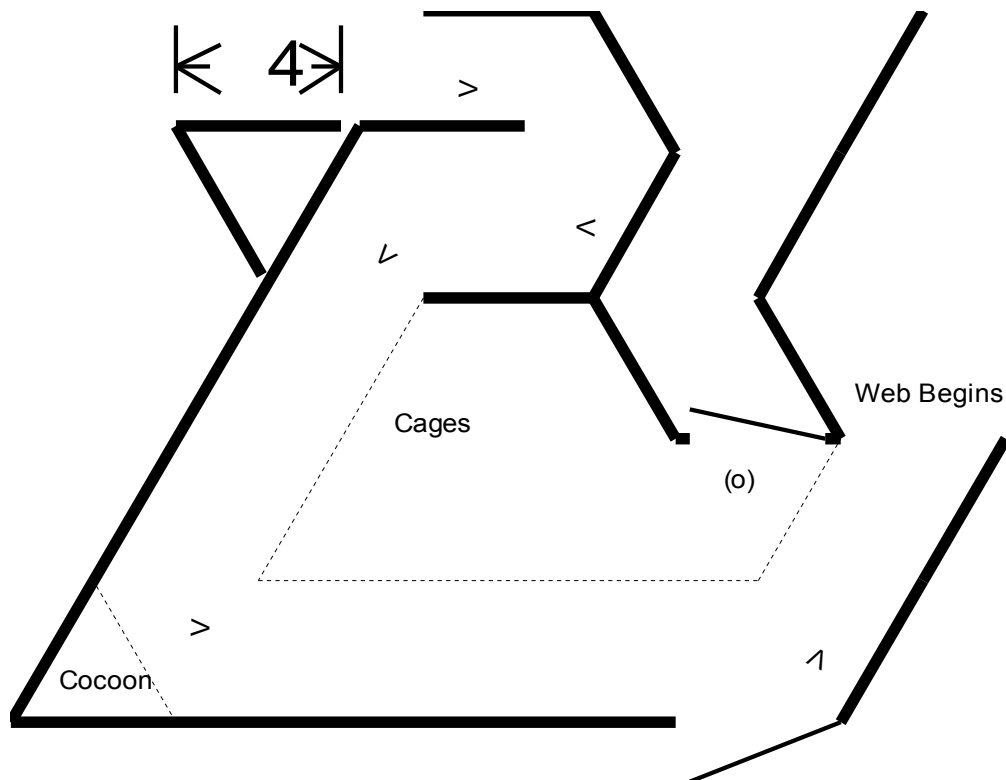


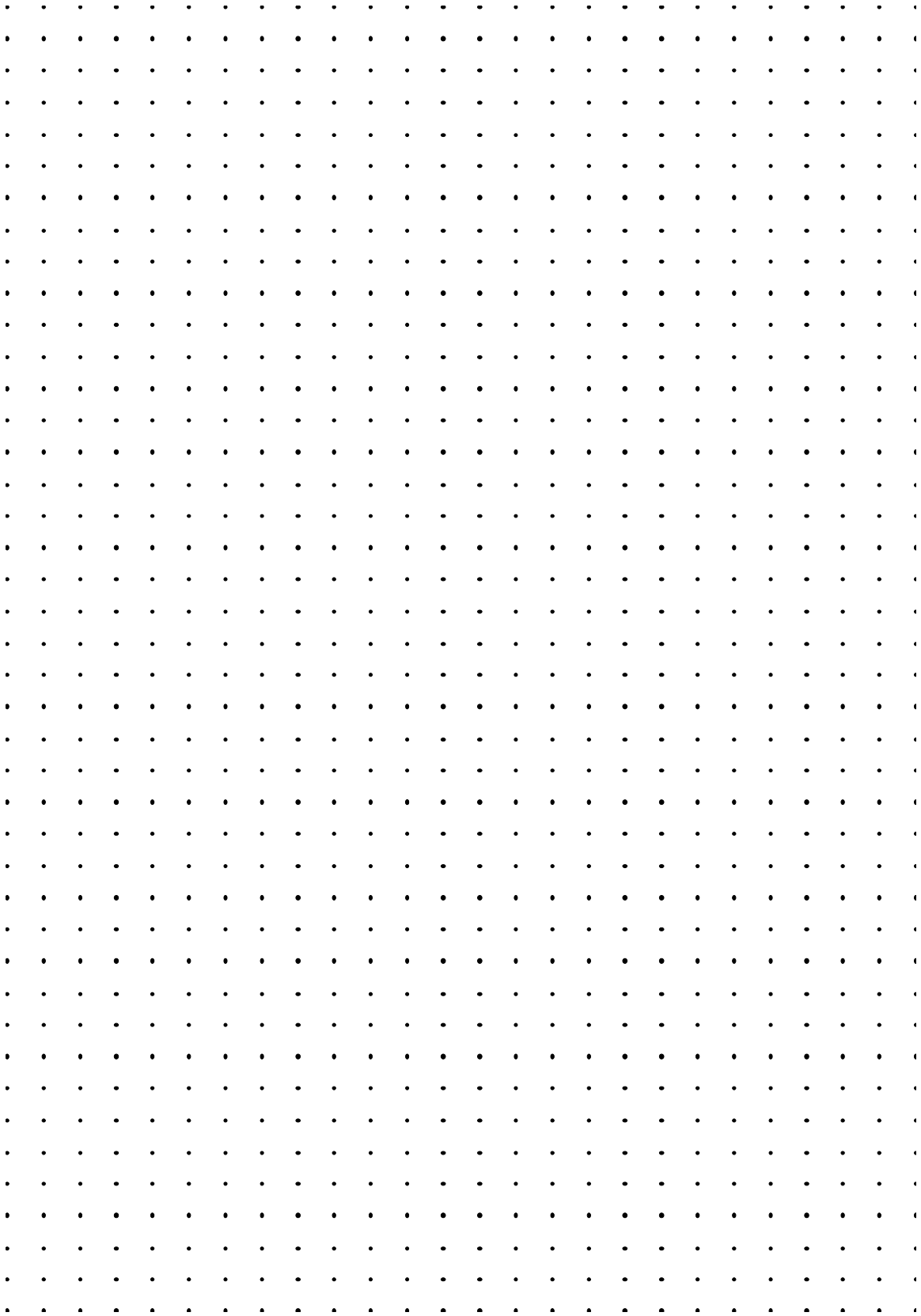


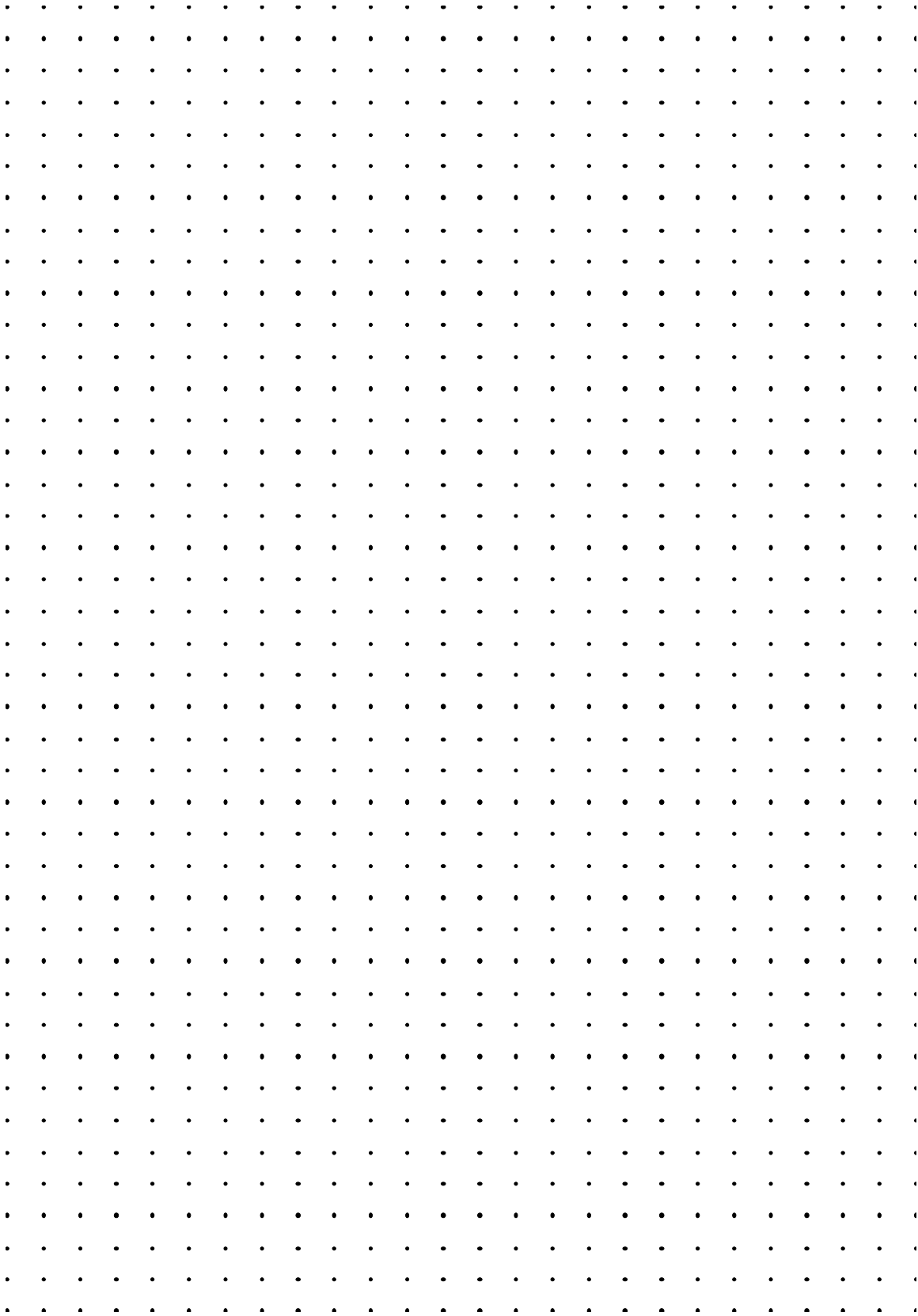


SCENE 9...

THEY ENTER ANOTHER LAB, MUTANT GIANT SPIDER RESEARCH. THE ROOM CONTAINS LAB EQUIPMENT AND THREE CAGES. ONE CAGE CONTAINS A LIVE DOG ANOTHER A LIVE CAT THE THIRD, A GIANT CAGE, IS EMPTY THE BARS HAVE BEEN TWISTED OUT OF SHAPE. THE PARTIAL SIGN REMAINING INDICATES A GIANT TARANTULA. THE ANIMALS ARE LABELED LUNCH AND DINNER. LIMBS OF VICTIMS, ALIENS AND HUMANS ALIKE, LITTER THE AREA. IN A CORNER SUSPENDED IS A MILITARY PERSON WRAPPED IN A COCOON(o), OTHER COCOONS ARE HANGING OR ATTACHED TO THE WALLS THE EXIT IS LINED WITH THE BEGINNINGS OF A WEB AS OUR CUSTOMERS FIND THEMSELVES DUCKING TO EXIT THE ACTOR AT (o) MOANS. LOW LEVEL LIGHTING. HIGH FREQUENCY MUSIC/SOUND EFFECTS. AS THEY TRAVEL TO SCENE TEN THE CUSTOMERS ARE SLOWLY DRIVEN TO THEIR KNEES AND FORCED TO EITHER DUCK WALK OR CRAWL INTO...

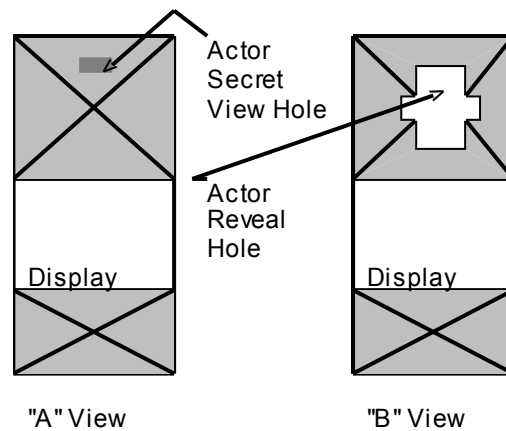
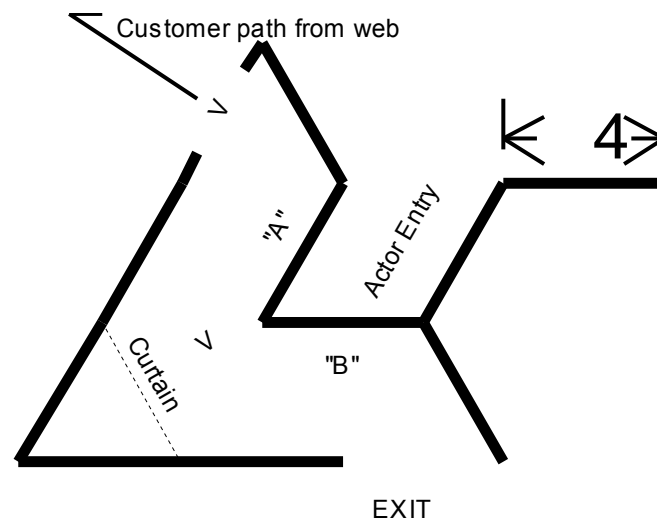


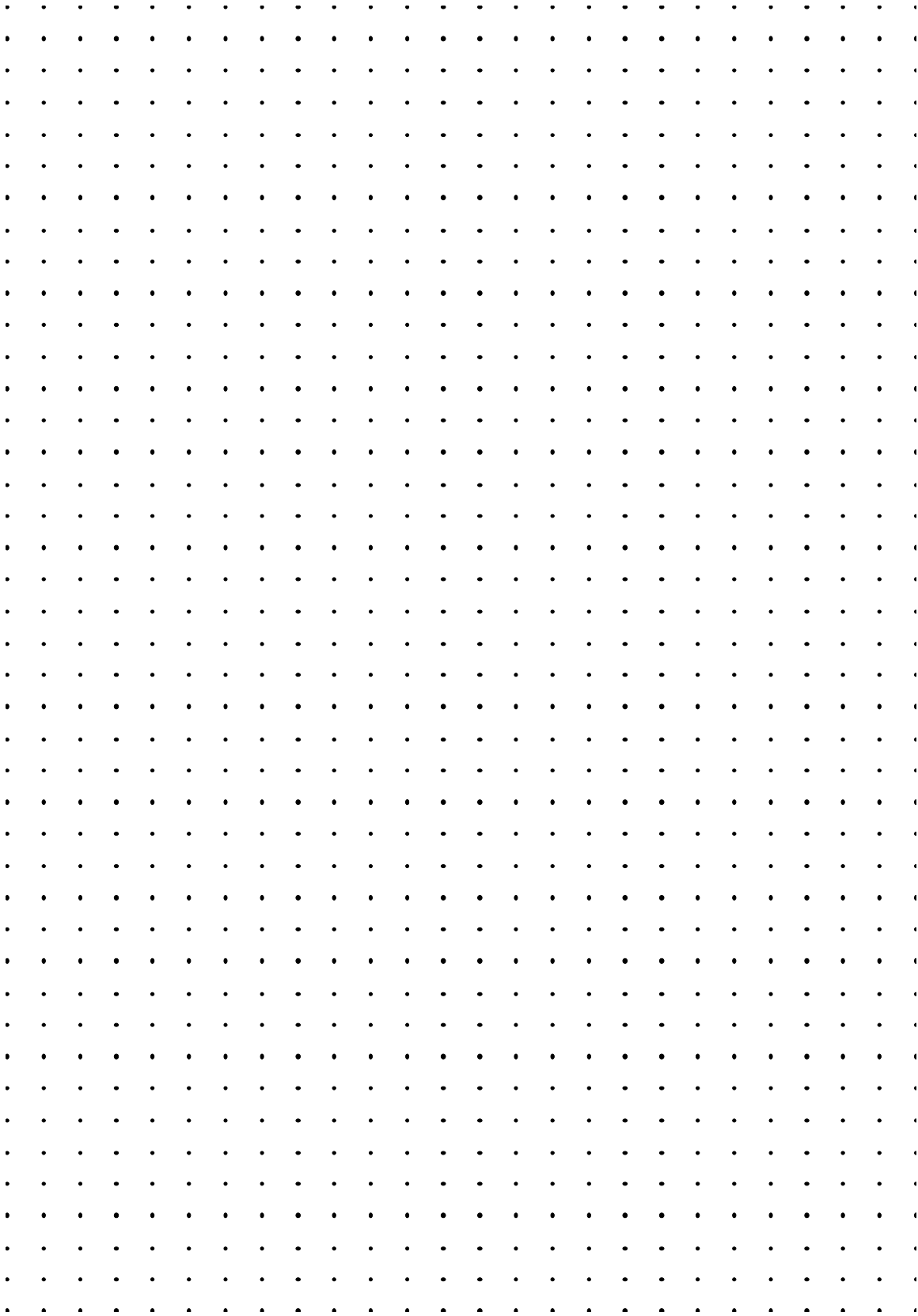




FINAL EVENT

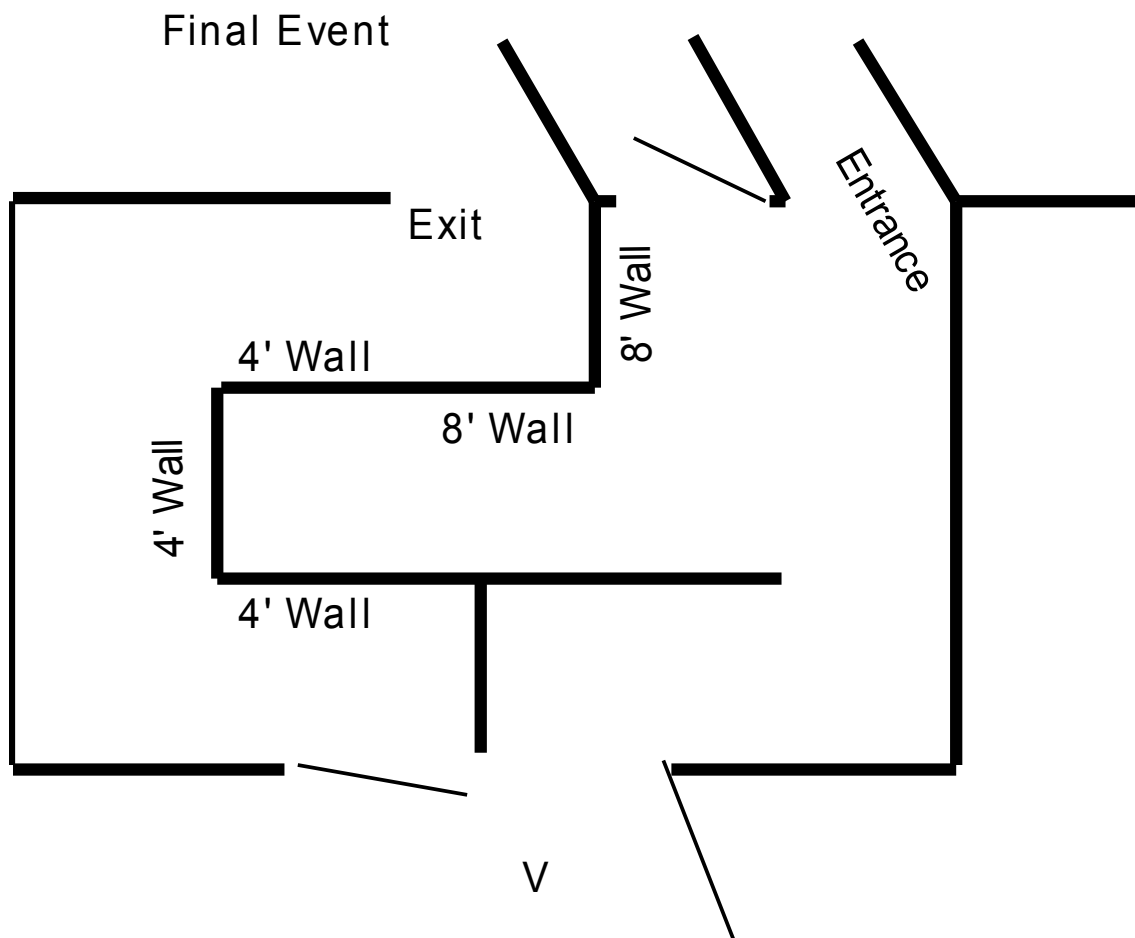
THE CUSTOMER EXITING THE SPIDER WEB CAN SEE THE EXIT AS HE/SHE BEGINS TO STAND UP. BENEATH THE FINAL EVENT IS A LAME STATIC DISPLAY, IN WHITE WITH A SLOW STROBE. ABOVE THIS SEE OVER THE TOP OF DISPLAY IS AN ACTOR IN STREET CLOTHES ON A RAISED FLOOR, NO MASK, EVEN A CHILD WITH GOOD TIMING CAN DO THIS. IN THE ACTORS HANDS A LONG HEAVY CHAIN ALL BUNDLED UP AND READY TO DROP. THE CUSTOMER WILL NOTICE THE DISPLAY FIRST; THE EXIT BEYOND IT SECOND, CREATING THE ANTICIPATION OF THE END OF BEING SCARED AND THIRD A PAIR OF SHOES STICKING OUT FROM UNDER A CURTAIN, THE DIVERSION. THE CUSTOMER WILL BELIEVE THE SCARE TO BE COMING FROM THE CURTAIN. SOME WILL CHECK THE CURTAIN OUT, OTHERS WILL MAKE A COMMENT AND PRETEND TO BE TOUGH, MOST WILL BACK AWAY FROM THE CURTAIN TOWARDS THE ACTOR WHERE THEY ARE SCARED FROM ABOVE AND BEHIND. SOME CUSTOMERS WILL TURN AROUND AND LOOK AT THE SOURCE, LAUGHING AT THEMSELVES FOR BEING SCARED BY A CHILD OR A PERSON IN STREET CLOTHES. MOST WILL RUN LIKE HELL, NEVER LOOKING BACK AND GIVING THE CUSTOMERS YET TO ENTER A SHOW TO WATCH WHILE WAITING IN LINE.





ENTRY - EXIT AREA

THIS AREA PROVIDES THREE FUNCTIONS. THE CUSTOMERS ENTER THROUGH HERE AND THEY EXIT THROUGH HERE. ALSO, THE CENTRAL CORRIDOR IS ACCESSIBLE FROM THIS AREA. AS AN ENTRY AREA, IT PROVIDES A PLACE FOR PEOPLE TO WAIT OUT OF THE WEATHER BEFORE ENTERING YOUR ATTRACTION. DURING THIS TIME, IT PROVIDES YOU WITH AN OPPORTUNITY TO ENTERTAIN THEM. THE MORE VISUALS YOU PROVIDE AS DECORATION TO SET THE THEME AND MOOD BEFORE THE CUSTOMERS ENTER, THE BETTER THE CHANCE TO BECOME A PART OF YOUR MAILING LIST, PHOTO OP AND THE SHOW YOUR ADMISSIONS PERSON PUTS ON WHILE ADMITTING CUSTOMERS. THE BEST ENTERTAINMENT, HOWEVER, IS THE EXIT FROM YOUR ATTRACTION. IF YOUR FINAL EVENT IS WORKING PROPERLY CUSTOMERS SHOULD BE RUNNING OUT OF THE ATTRACTION OR AT LEAST AMUSED AND LAUGHING. NOTE THE EXIT AND THE LOCATION OF 4' HIGH WALLS. THE FULL WALL UNITS BLOCK THE VIEW OF THE FINAL EVENT FROM CUSTOMERS WAITING. THE HALF WALLS ALLOW WAITING CUSTOMERS TO SEE EXITING CUSTOMERS AS THEY RUN, LAUGH OR SCREAM THEIR WAY OUT OF YOUR ATTRACTION.



APPENDIX

IS CONTAINED IN ITS OWN DIRECTORY
THE QUALITY OF THE ORIGINALS IS POOR,
THEREFORE THE TRANSFER TO CD ROM IS LESS
THAN GREAT. SHOULD YOU WISH A HARD COPY
VERSION OF THE APPENDIX
SEND \$5 FOR P&H TO
CASTLE DRAGON
(address no longer valid)

