



<http://www.scaryguys.com/junkyard.htm>

## It Came From The Junkyard

**Building an Expensive Looking Show Out of Discarded Treasures!**  
By Oliver Holler

*"Waste not, want not." \* -Oliver's Mom*

\*Author's Note: More accurately, what my mother actually said was: "You'll finish your supper or get it for breakfast.", but I think the first quote touches more closely on the essence of this article.

### "Oh Say, Can You. . . Scavenge?"

America is a wealthy nation. This is the "land of plenty", or landfills of plenty, depending on how you look at it! Our scrap yards reflect such overabundance. Fortunately, all the refuse in metal salvage places is sent on to be recycled, and if we catch it at the right moment, we can recycle some things directly by using them in our haunts!

Good News! Everywhere, people throw stuff away. Industries bring material to the scrap yards by the truck load. And chances are, there is a scrap yard somewhere near YOU!

### Love Thy Junk Merchant.

Good public relations are key in many aspects of haunting. Just like dealing with the fire marshal, you want to form a good relationship with your scrap yard owner. Policies vary from place to place and because of liability issues, some yards may prohibit 'scavenging'. However, I haven't found one yet. They are in the business of buying and selling metal. If you buy it from them direct, they don't have to haul it away! And their argument to the insurance agent is that folks have to drive in and unload the junk, so what's so different about picking up a few things and putting it in their vehicles? When you find your 'Golden Getting Place', make sure you lavish them with free tickets, homemade apple pie and whatever else you can do to make those nice folks happy. They are the guardians of your own private hauntings resource!

### That Shopping Dream We've All Had.

(No, not the one where we're in Victoria's Secret and suddenly we're naked and. . . never mind.)

Have you ever dreamed about what it's like to walk into a store and be able to afford anything and everything you wanted? Would you like to know how it feels to be dirty, filthy, stinking rich? Well, don your top hat and head for the junkyard, because although it won't actually make you rich, you will certainly return home from shopping feeling like a million, with armloads of bountiful treasure -along with being dirty, filthy and stinking! How, you may ask, can one of modest reserves afford such treasure? Here is a key factor and a beautiful thing: You buy items at a scrap yard by weight, not by the condition it's in or even what that item may actually be. It doesn't matter to them what wonderful things you discover. What may be a medical gurney that lists for thousands of dollars in a hospital supply catalog, costs you only as much as it weighs.

### **How Much For The Brass Chihuahua?**

Prices vary slightly depending on what kind of metal you choose and current market prices. Also remember that recyclers sell for slightly higher than they buy. Like most businesses, they want to make a profit. So if you bring your aluminum cans for redemption, don't expect the amount they pay you to be the same that you would pay them to buy the same amount of aluminum. On a few occasions, I have 'traded' scrap-for-scrap, which is quick and easy and no money or receipts have to be handled!

Here's a ballpark breakdown notated on 2/4/2002.

Aluminum.....	35¢-50¢/lb.
Stainless Steel.....	25¢-35¢/lb.
Steel.....	16¢-21¢/lb.
Copper.....	60¢-65¢/lb.
Brass.....	40¢-45¢/lb.

So for that 60 pound stainless steel medical gurney laying in the dirt, Dr. Frankenstein will only have to cough up about \$18 bucks.

### **Finders Keepers!**

What kind of stuff is at a scrap yard? Granted, some salvage places are better than others. Your local industries will partially determine what you may expect to find when you dock to search for booty. Some things are common, like metal office furnishings, copy machines, satellite dishes, etc. Some areas that happen to be near a military base will more than likely have the good fortune of finding jet plane parts, groovy electronic scrap, and other 'surplus' type stuff. If you live near an automotive plant, you may find plenty of brand new car parts (rejected for minor reasons), and certain car hardware, wire, molds and off-cuts. Lots of restaurants nearby? You can find everything from stainless serving bowls to the kitchen sink! Hospitals, hotels, schools, libraries, and more, all throw incredible stuff away. When business is good, some yards turn over train loads of scrap daily. You may want to visit often to increase your chances of finding the bargain of a lifetime. And don't be too disappointed if you don't find everything on your list the first day, or even the first week. Heck, you may find nothing on your list, but discover dozens of other things you didn't realize your haunt desperately needed! You can't put a price tag on inspiration! (Note: If you find a human skeleton buried under a pile of stuff, you really should hand it over to the police. Skeletons don't show up in scrap yards very often.) Remember, it's not Walmart. But with the differences, come the benefits described.

### Use Your Imagination.

When was the last time you looked at the clouds and tried to see what shapes they could form? You can conduct the same brain exercises amongst piles of metal. Could that car hood be a dinosaur jaw? And what's that over there? That pile of radiators looks like a space ship interior. Sure, you'll eventually have to take into consideration weight, functionality, and other logistics of 'reality', but you can really have a fun time getting 'lost' in all of the shapes to be found within junk.

### Keep an Open Mind.

As you browse the scrap yard, be thinking about props (figures, decoration), sets (fabrics, paint, building materials) and special effects (lighting, sounds) as you wander through the mountains of raw potential. Your Medieval Castle may have no need for a stainless steel sink. Or does it? What about your backstage areas? A resourceful haunter can outfit their facility with top notch equipment including stainless steel 'slop sinks' and shelving for your paint and brush area, filing cabinets, desks, chairs, and counters for your offices, even doors, windows, lights and other 'fixtures' for the rest of your building.

Just a few of the things we've actually found at the scrap yard:

Air cylinders (New!)	Aluminum grating	Barrels	Buckets	Brooms
Cable	Chainsaw	Conduit	Coffin (I hope new...)	Conveyor belts
Desk	Dish Lights	Electrical boxes	Filing Cabinet	Gloves
Hand trucks	Hard hats	Hardware	Hinges	Lockers
Medical gurney	Motors	Outlets	Set Dressing	Stairs -12' metal rolling unit
Shutters	Solenoids (New!)	Switches	Trash Cans	Televisions
Telephones	Threaded rod	Tools	Tool Boxes	Vending machines
Wire	Wheels			

### Is That A Crowbar In Your Pocket . . . ?

Bring tools with you! Sadness is seeing the perfect item and not being able to get it loose from scrap that it's entwined within. There it is, ripe for the picking, if only you had the right tool to

persuade it from the clutches of other junk. 9 times out of 10, a good pocket tool has everything you need. Screwdrivers (both phillips and slotted, a knife, and needlenose pliers. Pliers, and wire cutters are oft used tools when foraging for your haunt. More ambitious scavengers may want to carry a small tool kit with a socket set, vicegrips, and maybe even a hacksaw. A hammer is usually redundant, since there is always a nice chunky piece of steel available to use for heavy whackin' applications.

### **Be Safe!**

Beware the 'monster'. Most scrap yards have large machinery used to move massive piles from one place to another. Stay alert and know where these machines are when and if they begin operation. Stay clear of machines in operation. If not out of respect for the operator who has a job to do, for your own safety. Some of these cranes have a huge range of movement and can pivot their boom swiftly, suddenly, and for a great distance. Be visible! Make sure the operator can see you. (Helpful note: Don't wear an outfit that makes you look like a Maytag washer.) Active scrap yards will have fork lifts and other vehicles driving in and out dumping things at random intervals. Again, be alert.

### **Dress To Survive!**

Wear Gloves. Do it. Save the blood sacrifices for back at the haunt, on your own property. Nothing is more embarrassing (and potentially damaging to your relationship with the owner) than going into the dispatch office, dripping blood all over their floor and having to ask for their first aid kit. So again, wear gloves. Wear thick soled shoes with good traction. Scrap yards are built on dirt. After a rain, the whole place can turn into a mud bog, so dress for potentially slippery conditions. Of course, it helps to plan visits during good weather, but you never know what incredible find is just waiting for you -or someone else to take home!

### **After The Big Hunt.**

Hose off any grime that might be adorning your finds (unless it looks really good for your purposes.) Keep in mind how patrons and even actors might injure themselves on a prop or scenic decor, and adjust accordingly. Is the item rusty or sharp and within reach? Sometimes it is better to paint faux rust on your surfaces rather than have patrons exit with real orange stains all over their clothing.

Some Junk Yard Finds, Ideas and Applications:

- Television (use it for lighting -it worked for that great scene in Poltergeist)
- Set dressing (Make your haunted house a HOME with clocks, sink, chairs, pictures, appliances, lamps, etc.)
- Steel rod (make a Rod Puppet out of your skeleton, the animatronic alternative!)
- Neon transformers (make a Jacobs Ladder!)
- Pallets (Great wood for crates, boarded up windows, etc.)
- Cans (make your own sound effects, like a rattle can, or a crash box!)-Discarded paint (whatever you find, I know it's the perfect color for something in your haunt!)
- Bike pumps (it's an air cylinder. . .)
- PVC (you can build almost anything out of PVC -ask Cliff Martin.)
- Styrofoam (for anything that couldn't be made out of PVC. -but that's another article!)
- Plumbing pipes (make stanchion posts, railings)

**Conclusion:**

No matter what you create from your discoveries in the junk yard, one thing is certain- It is an ADVENTURE! Aside from the fact that you'll have something unique that no other haunt has, and regardless that you'll carry with you a sense of pride and accomplishment for having created something wonderful out of a bunch of nothing, ultimately, the entire experience is far richer than merely flipping through the pages of a catalog, or e-shopping on the internet. Remember that life is not just about the end results or the destination. It's also about enjoying the journey and the process of discovery that gets you there.

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