

Dime Store D'Ette's  
hellscape podcast for *Moloch*  
October 2024

Supersonic Brainshredder here. Thanks for joining me. I came to repent!

When I came to New York City in March, I stayed in Dime Store because it was walking distance from E and E, and I also thought it would be funny. Then I couldn't shake the bit. I kept going back to the Dime Store Hotel website. I knew I'd end up spending a lot of money on that hotel the first time I laid eyes on it. Money is the dumbest thing in the world. I love to spend money.

What's so funny about Dime Store? It's like preschool-aged by now, but that's an eternity in microtime, and I'm already a latecomer. When I was born, people lived in the Lower East Side. People still live there now! The first day in my Dime Store hotel, I met a wealthy Turkish man whose son was temporarily setting up his Istanbul gallery inside a Lower East Side gallery. I was admiring the curtains in the hotel sitting room, waiting for my room key, and the man, who was also a Palm Beach resident, thought I was an architect or designer. I told him I'm an artist. He lit up—as most people do. "My son," he said, "He is opening an art gallery here on Saturday night." But I was leaving on Friday.

God, my Dime Store hotel was so nice. Fountainhead bookended by rough, stylish assemblies of clay, and the book I'd planned to buy to read on the trip was also in the room's little library, but I didn't see it until I was leaving. It's fine. Couldn't really get into it when I got home anyway. Two nights with fresh cookies by the bed, soft sheets and pillows, no over bleachy smell. Degree perfect thermostat. So clean, no luggage scrapes or dents on the doors or corners yet. Built in cabinets, too many custom features to list. The sound system on par with visiting Hi-Fi Haven in Whittier, if you know what I mean. I loved channel number 4, curated by some speaker engineer and the maker of Dime Store Hotel's audio system. Channel 4 creates an immersive listening experience with classical, electronic, and ambient selections.

I'm like a celebrity in Dime Store. I walk around that part of town and I start to imagine I stand out. Everyone in the shops wants to talk to *me*. I must be rich to be walking around in the middle of the day like this. I must be someone's parent or I'm down there buying art. I was wearing a secondhand coat that dressed me, maybe as an art

collector? People even much younger than me think they've aged out of understanding the scorn for good old Dime Store. And still younger people are posting about it through a reading of *La Société du Spectacle*.

I'm looking for pictures from my Dime Store trip on my phone, so I search "March 2024," but I mistype "3024"—I'll be dead. Again, I mistype "2925"—I'll be dead. What will the world look like?? Everyone I know is dead. It's like the Louis C.K. bit when he talks about how most people are dead.

When I was young, I worked at a pet store. My boyfriend worked there and I wanted a job, too. Their only availability was what I'll call a traffic engagement job. I dressed up as a Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtle and danced on the sidewalk to attract potential customers. One of the first things I saw when I got inside Dime Store Hotel and looked out the window was the ninja turtle across the street on a brick building. I think it's Raphael because of the red bandana. Michelangelo wore orange. I think I was Michelangelo in front of the pet store.

The creators of the Ninja Turtles considered giving the turtles Japanese names, but instead named them after the Italian Renaissance artists Leonardo, Donatello, Raphael and Michelangelo, which one of them said, "felt just quirky enough to fit the concept."

What part of New York City do the ninja turtles fight crime in? The turtles live in Manhattan. The exact location of their headquarters is not clear but definitely feels below midtown.

I see that Ninja Turtle and I know my days are numbered.

What's going on in Dime Store?

When I talk to E in late September, she mentions spotting some Guardian Angels in the Lower East Side. She describes young people in red jackets. What? I say, I know the ones! They started in New York in 1979 as citizen safety patrols. I remember the Guardian Angels from when I was 10 and West Coast chapters wanted to protect their communities from the Night Stalker. The Night Stalker had been terrorizing Los Angeles county with his serial killings. I would imagine him hiding in the ivy fence, stalking our house. Kids at school would say they were sleeping with knives under their pillows.

The Night Stalker was a 1960 leap year baby, so a Pisces like me.

He never expressed remorse, and, after receiving his sentence, he stated, "Big deal. Death always went with the territory."

E's Guardian Angels sighting makes me think about threads coming out of Dime Store, or at least imagined, like new catholics, and other, darker, lurking ideologues. I've aged out, far out, and I'm cosplaying in Dime Store Hotel. In March I order a little breakfast burrito and eat at the Dime Store Deli counter. I sit next to an employee on their break. They have a bowl of soft warm mush. I listen to two Dime Store moms talk on the other end of the counter. One of them has an erewhon bag. Although I don't know these moms, that's my club at home—validated by my yearly membership.

E and I discuss a spot not far from where she lives, it's a gathering place. She's not quite sure about the goings on, but she finds it sus. I think I saw this place when I was in Dime Store, people hanging out in front of a brownstone. It comes up while we're surmising about the recently converted Angels and Catholics. I did not grow up Catholic, but I married a non-practicing though still affected Catholic. I realize when we get off the phone that E was referring to King Podium house. I think she's concerned because it seems a little soft-fash.

Something I did in Dime Store was walk from my Dime Store hotel down the street to where an unlikely gallery had been in the early 2000s. It was run by an artist plus others collective—they did a screening of a film by Michael Asher, a show of school-teacher and artist Jeff Geys, who played an anti-war song in the gallery. They put up a show called September 11, 1973, that considered two moments—a CIA coup in Chile and the then recent terrorist attack. They positioned New York and New York artists' work within the cloud formations of global conditions and figures like Bush, Osama, a booming art market, oil interests. The exhibition pointed out New York is rightfully seen as the center, "a center of other types of agitation, the home for making and exhibiting art of an extreme critical content and radical nature." They did a show about the success medium called *Painters Without Paintings and Paintings without Painters* that presumably and maybe from their point of view, regrettably, showed some paintings.

It's another gallery now.

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And by listeners like you.

Some complain that there's no art coming out of Dime Store. Here in hell, I'm surprised to hear people complaining that there's not enough art, because art sets things in motion, because money and coffee and news articles attach to them like white on Chinatown rice. As Cookie says, the only constant we have [in New York City] is change. Change is seen as something evil only by those who have lost their youth or sense of humor. (Cookie Mueller)

On Western Ave. in Los Angeles, we have a *barrel* of laughs. A guy from the movie project X is buying it all up. Western Ave. used to be the westernmost end in old Los Angeles. The developer wants it to be a walking neighborhood with a hotel. He refers to the vicinity as Melrose Hill. I lived in Melrose Hill for 10 years. It's really just a little pocket between Western Ave. and the Hollywood freeway. I guess he's never been there because there are a lot of people walking around.

Cookie also says, "Remember, with change comes hope—this is another constant," and then she has some follow up questions. "Where will people in the neighborhood eat" and "Will the new food spots take food stamps and how will non-wealthy artists afford rent on their studios? What are *they* going to eat?"

It's really nothing new, the neighborhood has been cooking for ages, it's cycled over in nanoseconds.

That same week when I talked to E, I had delivered my Mountain School talk. I tell the participants this talk's theme is the holy ghost, part 3 of a trinity.

I talk to this group while *flinging myself into the illusion that I am contemporary with the young bodies before me.* (Roland Barthes)

I talk about the agency we give the thing that holds our attention and guides us to some type of truth, like Ezra Pound's monument, the Tempio Malatestiano. It captured his attention his entire life and became the subject of his Malatesta Cantos, including his forbidden cantos that he wrote after the allied bombing of the Tempio Malatestiano, the cantos in which Pound rallied for a revival of fascism in Italy. I suggested to the Mountain School that these objects be viewed as our paracletes, our holy ghosts, but maybe we give the ghosts that control, because the truth they offer usually points back to us.

My religious background is Pentecostal, which also positions the holy ghost as a translator. A mysterious one. My grandmother spoke in tongues regularly. I never was touched by the holy spirit like that, but the church is still in me. I still get hymns stuck in my head, and I question my righteousness daily, in microtime of course.

My Mountain talk's prologue was the prologue to Anne Radcliffe's very old book, *The Italian*, but it was my translation of the text from English to English. It's Radcliffe's funny and softly bigoted set up about English travelers in Naples who are shocked to come upon an assassin finding sanctuary in a church. One of the English travelers is accompanied by an Italian friend who explains "We have so many assassinations...If we didn't help people like this we'd lose half our population."

Talking to the Mountain School about religion, I wondered if the new Catholics, of which I guess are actually few and they're just getting attention, might be looking for a new routine and devotion, divorcing themselves from secularism's regard for reason. The cultural industrial class had been distancing themselves from communities with strong ties and commitments, but maybe something is shifting.

What does the pope say? Do you care?

A priest and a rabbi are flying together to an ecumenical convention. As the plane takes off, both men instinctively cross themselves.

"For the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost!" the priest explains.

"Wallet, cigars, spectacles, testicles," the rabbi explains.

Women want to be deacons, but the pope says no, "women are superior because the church is woman...To masculinize the church, to masculinize women, is not human, it's not Christian."

The pope condemns immoral use of force in military retaliation and talks to the parish in Gaza every day to learn of the latest cruelties. October 7 is tomorrow. Somehow I inherit my grandparents' Christian junk mail, can you imagine, all the way down here in hell? My hand-me-down hell mail says God's chosen people are under attack and I'd better give to defend them, but I pay USA dollars for this already.

I've read about two types of violence. This type is machinic. It has direct, immediate, and murderous effects. People rise up and get activated against it. The other type, even though people are living now in microtime and it *seems* like things age quickly, is slow, distant, dispersed, it gradually displaces people, and maybe it isn't viewed as violence at all.

When Radcliff wrote *The Italian* in the 1790s, people were into conspiracy theories. Free Masons, Illuminati, Reading Societies, Jacobinism. Even liberal writers froze under the pressure of revolution and conservatism. The book carries the political anxieties of the day.

The full title is *The Italian, or the Confessional of the Black Penitents*. Of course it's a romance.

One might say The Mountain School of Los Angeles is cloaked in mystery.

Someone might say it about Dime Store, too. The bizarre specificity coming from the microneighborhood *can* be confusing, *though*. It mimics the overall complex and confusing state of things. So much reconfiguration, restructuring, reframing.

I'm more suspicious of party leaders who hawk freedom while they seek more censorship and serve only the free market.

Like the Presbyterian minister says, *the stealth ideology of neoliberalism enshrines the power of our rulers who purposely obscure its origins and underlying philosophy. Neoliberalism has maintained its dominance through exploiting the many to sustain the prosperity of the few. Its effects have radically reconfigured Western societies through deindustrialization, austerity, the privatization of*

*utilities, postal services, schools, hospitals, prisons, intelligence gathering, police, parts of the military and railroads, along with spawning wage stagnation and debt peonage. In the world of neoliberalism everything, including human beings and the natural world, is a commodity that is exploited until exhaustion or collapse. Neoliberalism inverts traditional social, cultural and religious values. The market is God. All will be sacrificed before the idol Moloch.* (Chris Hedges)

When I talk to E in September about putting a show together quick and dirty, I'm having a busy week, a kind of young/old week. My husband has a scheduled hand surgery from a recreational accident and we're hanging out with our young friends.

Our young friends are 15 years younger than us or more. Boy are they smart, cool, and beautiful. They seem to possess a wisdom I never had. One friend and I quickly find common ground in our interest in Montana. I tell her about protection dogs I want to film there, she tells me about the TV show *Yellowstone*. She says it's good. We check it out. We start bingeing. Man versus man gets the juices flowing every time. Kevin Costner is in the lead. He's John Dutton. The object leading back to Dutton again and again is his family ranch. He will never concede even an inch of that property. It keeps him whole. You take an inch, you take the whole man.

In 2001, Jason Rhoades made *The Costner Complex (Perfect Process)*. Rhoades' students took a class trip to Puglia to study olive oil production. Kevin Costner was their other inquiry. They engaged in what his manuscript describes as a "close study of the complete oeuvre of the actor, whose polymathic pursuits were posed as an accessible American counterpart to the multivalent artistic activities of Marcel Duchamp." They turned the Gallery into a cottage business of bottling pickled concoctions called "Gardeniera alla Potpourri." A KC centrifuge equipped with monitors playing Costner's movies was installed to radiate the jars of pickles with the actor's "essence."

The spectre of Jason Rhoades' late work rubs. Special secretions of his process in the early 2000s. Lots of words for pussy expressed in neon. He'd be dead soon. One of the late projects presents a type of mosque, a floor covered in towels that were hot-glued together, in the hotbed of post 9/11. Another is *Black Pussy Soirée Cabaret Macramé*. A series of parties, invite only. Rhoades wanted to exclude an art public that was nosy and critical. Live entertainment. A Jewish Elvis. Lots of photos.



It seems guests were wearing all white, like a Puff Daddy White Party.

Rhoades said, "It has its own charisma. That's what this is—it's a charisma catcher. I believe that in order to be with works of art, you have to give up some of your magic, and then you get more back. But you have to let yourself go. I think a lot of works today are just bad posturing, just slight commentary or decoration. There's no dedication, no investment.

Everything I do informs the next thing that is going to happen. The pieces blend into each other, they go into each other and kind of contaminate each other. And, of course, I've learned from it—though actually learning kind of sucks! Once you learn, then you know, and it's better to be a bit stupid about things."

Hands are tied now. Did you hear the one about the institution that pulled the artist's work without her knowing? I did.

Something I mentioned to The Mountain School is that they just need a room to show work. The friends are your audience for your wack brain, your wack brain that you know is spot on. Some of our young friends run a great gallery out of an apartment. The space feels removed from the center and free-er. No fictive collective consciousness. It's not policed.

D'Ette, it's Kamala. (Comma-la)

In September 2022 I went to the Biennale Americana. Jason Rhoades' caprice was outside. At night it was shrouded in a car cover. Around 2001 I met him at the Mac Center in Los Angeles. He asked me to drive one of his cars, not the decommissioned detective car that was the Caprice, now a sculpture. It was a Crown Vic, dark in color. I had an unusual assignment which was to drive Rhoades, a curator, and a Los Angeles Public Librarian to sites autobiographically significant to the writer James Ellroy. Ellroy writes noir crime fiction. When he was a boy, his mother, Jean Ellroy, was murdered. The killer was never found and the case was closed. His memoir tells of his and a homicide detective's investigation into Jean's murder. Ellroy had come up with a theory about his mother that her murderer viewed her as desperate. They'd had sex and she wanted more. "More sex or more male attention." His theory made him feel closer to his mother because he was "hooked on MORE as bad as she was." But the homicide detective, Stoner, doesn't buy it and tells Ellroy his theory straight up. Ellroy's book describes Stoner's theory start to finish,

about the swarthy man who wanted some pussy. But Jean refused. The swarthy man hit Jean and knocked her unconscious before raping her and strangling her with her own stocking. He hauled her body out of the car and dumped it in the ivy.

I drove our little field crew to El Monte where Jean's body was discovered by some little league coaches and their players. Using Ellroy's memoir, the guys make an estimate of where she had been discarded. We know there was an athletic field and that she was in some ivy. We locate an area, the guy's best guess and stand around. There's a tall hedge lining a sidewalk, maybe ivy, but I don't exactly remember. Someone came up with the idea of restaging Jean's body, but I wouldn't have to lie down, it would make more sense to stand and position my body according to what we know. If the camera captured me on the same plane as the hedge, it could look as if I was lying down. Somewhere there's a photo of me playing Jean.

This story puts Rhoades squarely in Los Angeles. Cars and Rhoades. A sunny haven for cultism. In the early 90s, Los Angeles institutions poised its artists to figure more globally. One European gallerist brought the cult phenomenon of Rhoades and other Los Angeles artists to SoHo.

He's just remodeled a street corner on Western Ave. with a flagship, South of Melrose Hill, and staged a 30th anniversary show.

New York descends on Los Angeles. There's space, but you have to drive. A cybertruck.

I really loved being in Dime Store and not having to drive.

I walked from Dime Store Hotel to find a church's garden in Maintenance Village, one of those places where the dust settled long ago and everyone wants to keep things just so. I came across an officer and asked him for directions. *He smiled and said: "You asking me the way?" "Yes," I said, "since I can't find it myself." Give it up! Give it up! Said he, and turned with a sudden jerk, like someone who wants to be alone with his laughter.* (Kafka's story "Give it Up!")

This has been Supersonic Brainshredder\*. I came to repent!  
Thanks for listening.

\*from Ralph Nader's article "Super Sonic Brain Shredder" about the information age, micro-advertisements, soundbites, time pressures on

workers, technology's unintended consequences, *Forbes Magazine*, Nov. 30, 1998.