



# Belltown Babylon

by Elaine Bonow

## Chapter 9

**J**eez Louise! I don't like to use Belltown Babylon as an Agony Aunt, but there is something rotten in Belltown that has got me boiling mad. Have you, dear readers, tried to park near First Avenue after 5:30pm lately? And CANNOT? The reason is that the local Valets are PARKING CARS ON THE STREET instead of in designated parking lots. Hey people, haven't you heard of Seattle Municipal Code 11.70.200!? It makes street parking by business illegal, and it specifically addresses this issue. I quote: "No person shall park or store any motor vehicle upon any street or alley when such motor vehicle is in the custody or control of the owner or operator of any parking lot, garage, new or used car lot, service business, VALET PARKING SERVICE or car rental business, or his agent."

I got so mad I called the West precinct! And they literally laughed in my ear. The voice on the phone said he had never heard of such a code. Here's why we need this code: every night the boys in black run across traffic, jump into expensive "rides" and grab freshly-vacated parking spots. Once I told one these revved-up carjockeys that taking my parking spot was illegal, and he just glared at me and spat out, "Hey lady, haven't you ever heard of 'I'll-give-ya-a-twenty-to-keep-it-in-front?'"

These valets pull illegal U-turns and play musical cars to occupy the "6pm-2am" loading zones, shoving these fancy vehicles in your face, in your free evening parking place, for 20 bucks.

Now ordinary people like you, who come down to Belltown to play, work, live, take classes or go shopping, might have to pay \$7 to \$12 extra bucks for Valet or a lot. From where you might even have to take a taxi even if you don't plan to get over the .08% booze limit. Or where you've ventured below First to a spot that is scary after dark. Or you have to park a mile away on an obscure corner of 4th and Wall and then take a bus to Blanchard. You may just decide to stop coming downtown after 6pm at all if you can't afford to pay extra just to enter the First Avenue party zone.

Right now, there are at least a half a dozen Valet Parking Services in and around my one block. It is already difficult enough for my students to find a parking place without the extra burden of competing with the valets. I'm glad my business will move next year, since most classes here are held in the evening. I like to party as much as the next person. I just don't think that valet parking should break the law. They should be parking in their own parking areas. You can email comments to [editor@belltownmessenger.com](mailto:editor@belltownmessenger.com).