



every

# Parking Meter, Los Angeles

Sunlight falls blue  
on the silver parking meter.  
The man in cargo shorts leafs  
through his many pockets,  
until he finds the source of the jingling.  
He pours a palm full of quarters  
into the throat of the cool machine.

If eight feet of curb costs 25 cents per half  
hour, what is the price of shaved ice?  
Of Summer?  
How many quarters to buy  
a Diet Shasta every day  
from corner vending machines, to do  
four loads of laundry at the Lavandaria  
Express, to keep the jukebox going  
with Beach Boys tunes?

One day  
men and women will feed a meter for eight feet  
of city park. Surfers will paddle out  
to orange buoys and drop  
a quarter in for each wave. And the homeless man  
will empty the change from his Styrofoam  
cup into the meter on his shopping cart, or  
it will disintegrate.

In the street a woman in  
brown uniform writes a ticket  
for the white Toyota  
of the man in cargo shorts.

But what about that man over there, I want to say  
give him a ticket for littering.  
Or the screaming child. Give the woman  
on skates a ticket for careening  
wildly into the bus stop patrons—  
or the bus driver, for rubbing her eyebrows off from  
the stress of listening to lunatics. Give  
the beach a ticket, for laughing too hard.

Imagine a city without parking meters, somewhere  
outside Helsinki or maybe Brazillania.  
Citizens sail around on wind vehicles, and tie  
their crafts to the stems  
of young trees.  
And every day looks like flag day  
with all the bright colored sails, blowing  
and flapping like clean laundry.

**Felice Austin**

Felice Austin is a freelance writer and columnist. She is also the president of Memoirs Ink, a personal history service that writes memoirs for private clients. Her monthly column "Cartoon Physics" can be found, (except when it can't be) at [www.madashellclub.net](http://www.madashellclub.net). She likes long walks on the beach, quantum physics, and all that stuff. She currently resides in Los Angeles and is mother to a beautiful 3 year-old daughter who teachers her more about poetry than anyone ever could.



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