

# A Worker Says Farewell

By Valerie Bean

To my work friends, to whom I wish the very best, thank you for the memorable moments. I miss you already.

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(BTW, the order of the list is totally rando. I was going to do alphabetical order, or it in order we met, or according to the floor plan. You know, something organized and rational, but this sequence is more in-line with the way I think. So don't put any weight of importance on where your name appears in the list.)

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To S, my favourite cubemate, who made it fun for me to be illogical when you were sensible, to be loud when you were quiet, and disruptive when you were focused. You took it all in stride. Thanks for putting up with me. I know it wasn't always easy.

To DH,  
One of the good ones. All the best in your new job.

To L,  
We were separated after the move from RBP, where you lived around the corner and entertained me with your passionate discussions with DH. Your compassion and thoughtfulness are never more obvious than when we talk about home, or family. Any mention of Rod and I'm a goner. I've missed working close by.

To KJV,  
I knew that any co-op who could complete a mundane, tedious, data cleansing assignment, accurately and without compliant was corporate standards. You've been cracking me up ever since. Making fun of me has never been so funny. Nobody makes me laugh more at my own goofy behaviour than you. Thanks for the silliness and friendship and for reminding me at every turn how much smarter your generation is than mine. Online, or in-person, our conversations were equally entertaining. I may even miss the memes. Yes, I will most def miss the memes.

To J,  
Where to start? Maybe with thanking you for patiently waiting (and wading) through one too many long-winded anecdotes. You said it best: It's the song that never ends. It goes on and on my friend. Thanks for the giggles; there were many. And thanks for the occasional bit of advice, for the different viewpoint, for lightening the mood when I was too serious about something insignificant, for the punctuation debates. Especially your intense—and unfathomable! —hatred of the semi-colon. Stay south of the checkboard, my friend.

To P,

My battle-weary compatriot, I probably spent more time telling instead of showing, complaining instead of listening, but I think we can laugh about it now. Thanks for the gifts and the souvenirs and the occasional empathetic ear.

To JJ and N and A,

Genuine articles, you. Thank you for your friendship, for the candid and amusing conversations, for Remembering When. Thank you for demonstrating that we can walk with ease, no matter what we're faced with. Your collective outlook is refreshing. You're golden. All three of you. Mostly equally. Okay, across the board. You get a pass Niddhi for making me a millionaire with lottery ticket picks.

To KV and J, thank you for welcoming me into that tiny corner of the office, if only temporarily. You are my people.

To A, for your patience with my vague requests, your graphic talents, my endless questions about your work, and putting up with all those last-minute requests. Oh, and for the LinkedIn photo. I think I still owe you lunch.

To KJ,

Seque, man. Seque-man? From the work-at-hand to Marvel/DC characters to work to music to work to popular culture and back, again. Few colleagues can follow my scatterplot thoughts and without being annoyed. If you were, nice job at hiding it, dude. You could catch any lyric I threw your way, and you always bested my salty language with NSFW commentary. It was a pleasure to collaborate when we did. All the best in that fancy new role of yours.

To D,

For the coffee breaks, the serious discussions. For whatever reason, our conversations always turned to the heavy stuff. We never talked only about the weather, and I'm glad we didn't. Thank you for your kind support.

To A (aka S), thanks for the lessons about Russian history and the recommended reading lists. The novels were delightful, as promised. Please thank your daughter again for me.

To MW, our morning exchanges at RBP were a nice way to start the day, but we lost that ritual after the move. It's one less thing I like about 100 ASW. Thanks for making a point of shaking my hand and wishing me well. Expressions of kindness matter, even the small ones. Maybe especially the small ones.

To LM, same. I don't know many people who can tell off-colour jokes in two different languages and not lose the funny. You're my favourite kind of person: unassuming and delightful.

To S, hugs, man.

And to P, for inviting me to join the company and introducing me to all these super-cool people. For a while, it felt like home.

## **Sharpest Edge**

She walked the dirt road  
her bare feet pressing

sharp edges of stone  
breaking comfort

the flesh of mud rising  
between her toes

as she her feet pushed  
the stones behind her

with thoughts of love and lovers  
and heat that rose against her skin

against depth of how not to be  
how not to surrender

to every need

lightly she came, quietly  
she rose, in solitude

in gratitude, in a mood

## **Holding Life**

The first thing you notice is that there is no privacy, nowhere  
to cry when you're given the news, so you walk and you walk

and you walk. Through crowds of people, past pockets of folks.  
Office workers at lunch, on a break, running errands.

All of them laughing and talking and commiserating  
and gossiping and complaining about work

and love and family and bosses. There is nowhere to cry when  
you are given the news. You feel as if everything around you

is spinning and whirling such velocity that you no longer  
feel the ground, and you think about who you will leave behind

and who will come into your life. And in that moment  
your hands comfort your belly, where you hold life.

## Manhattan, 2006

On 32nd Street, in Korea Town, alone  
on the fifth floor, thinking of you  
on a bed, unmade. Delivery  
trucks below inventing idle love  
calls to men standing

in doorways smoking cigarettes. I call back.  
The musician playing his saxophone beneath  
a bridge made of stone. Slow notes tumbling  
down my back as I walk a path

tucked neatly into a ridge. Make-believe  
a lover's hand strolls  
with mine. I imagine kissing him

open-mouthed, in a taxi-cab. Instead,  
I sleep, I write  
"I was here" on the hotel wall, adding  
"Where were you?"

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Footsteps call for you, a slow beat. They echo  
against the skyline, settle in the morning light.

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At a museum I buy a book of poetry  
inside it reads, "denying everything  
I am looking for you." I recite this line  
at ten-minute intervals, throughout

the night. I walk Broadway  
in a rainstorm – my first.  
I believe  
the city is crying for me.

The rain extinguishes taxi-cab lights. It fills  
narrow corridors and building lobbies.  
It holds me  
down.

This is October and I would rather  
turn my collar against falling snow.

By nightfall I have denied everything.