

Yes, Dear

By Dennis Knight

It was the 3X on Alameda, a bus full of mostly office workers in the afternoon rush hour wending our way east from jobs on Capitol Hill and downtown Denver. While I had a window seat, I was hoping my beefy seatmate on the aisle would get off first so I wouldn't have to crawl over her.

The seat to my front left was occupied by a man in a dark suit and necktie. He had a choice, but selected to sit on the aisle, subtly blocking others from the inside seat. Maybe he just didn't want to rub butts and elbows with a stranger. I didn't see him listening to music or engaged in conversation; he just looked straight ahead, anxious for his destination or dreading it.

I was relaxing in the peace and simple monotony of overheard conversation, engine and road noises amid infrequent stops along the lush residential stretches between Holly and Quebec when my reverie was interrupted by the most urgent of ring tones. I was among the dozen passengers nearby who grabbed for pockets and purses, grateful to discover it wasn't for us.

The call was answered by the man in the suit and tie. I was in a good place to intercept his side of the dialog, which was minimal and infrequent, and if I had been in the seat next to Baxter (I gave him a name) I might have even caught the other side. I can only tell you there weren't many pauses, and the volume, though quite incoherent, tested the walls of the cellphone Baxter held to his ear, sometimes close, sometimes not so close.

For the purposes of this report, I will first tell you what I heard Baxter say, but it wasn't much.

"Hullo? Yes. I tried. No dear. Yes dear. Yes. No. Thank you. Yes dear, I'll try again. Ten minutes. Okay. Yes Dear."

And now I will relate what I believe to be the specifics of what I didn't hear, basing it on my years of experience in the trenches of marital bliss.

"You idiot! Did you forget you need to be home early? What'dya mean you couldn't get out? Did you get that raise yet? Did you even ask for that raise yet? You know I can't get by on what you call a paycheck. I'm tired of the dollar store, and so is my mother.

"And speaking of mothers, did you even remember to call yours this morning? You know I need to borrow her curling iron. You don't know how lucky you are it's my mother who's living with us, not that battleaxe.

"Now it's gonna be another ten minutes? You know Mother and I have bingo tonight and we were counting on a nice early supper when you get home to fix it. But mister employee-of-the-month who can't get a raise misses his bus to stay just to impress his lousy boss.

"By the way, happy birthday, dear."