

Mr. Wormwood, Mrs. Wormwood (Matilda & Michael)

Suddenly there is a scream. HE panics, nearly drops the phone, turns around. MRS WORMWOOD (the source of the scream) stands horrified, staring at MATILDA, who sits reading a book.

MRS WORMWOOD

Harry!

MR WORMWOOD

Hang on –

MRS WORMWOOD

Look at this, she's reading a book. That's not normal for a five year old. I think she might be an idiot.

MATILDA

Listen to this – 'It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom–'

Her MOTHER screams, covers her ears.

MR WORMWOOD

Stop scaring your mother with that book, boy!

MATILDA

I'm a girl.

MRS WORMWOOD

And she keeps trying to tell me stories, Harry. Stories? Who wants stories? I mean it's not normal for a girl to be all thinking...

MR WORMWOOD

(into the phone)

I'm gonna call you straight back

(hangs up, turning to his wife)

Would you please shut up! I'm trying to pull off the biggest business deal of my life and I have to listen to this.

SHE is shocked, but HE persists.

It's your fault; you spend us into trouble and you expect me to get us out. What am I, a flaming escapologist?

MRS WORMWOOD

Escapologist he says! What about me then? I've got a whole house to look after – dinners don't microwave themselves you know! If you're an escapologist I must be an acrobat to balance that lot – the world's greatest acrobat. I am off to bleach my roots and I shan't be talking to you for the rest of the evening, you... horrid little man!

MR WORMWOOD

But I'm going to make us rich!

MRS WORMWOOD

(stops)

Rich?

(turns)

How rich?

MR WORMWOOD

Very rich. Russian businessmen. Very, very stupid. Your genius husband is going to sell them one hundred and fifty five knackered old bangers as... brand new luxury cars!

MATILDA

But that's not fair! The cars will break down, what about the Russians?

MR WORMWOOD

Fair? Listen to the boy!

MATILDA

I'm a girl.

MR WORMWOOD

Fair does not get you anywhere, you thick-headed twitbrain! All I can say is thank heavens Michael has inherited his old man's brains, eh son?

MICHAEL

Mi-chael.

MRS WORMWOOD

Hmm. Well, I shall take the money when you earn it. And I shall spend it. But I shan't enjoy it because of the despicable way in which you have spoken to me tonight.