MATILDA THE MUSICAL – PLOT SYNOPSIS

(Spoiler Alert!)

Act 1

The show opens with a chorus of children expressing how much their parents love them. All the while, Mrs. Wormwood discovers she is nine months pregnant (to her surprise) and can therefore not attend her Ballroom dance competition. She is upset; she doesn’t want the baby as she already has a son. Fast forward to the delivery room. Matilda is born and Mr. Wormwood, her father, wishes she was a boy as he is unwilling to accept he has a daughter.

Five years later, we meet Matilda Wormwood, an avid reader with an unhappy home life. Her father (a crooked car salesman) tells the family of his plans to get rich by scamming Russian businessmen into buying used cars made-to-look new. Matilda stands up to her father, saying his plan isn’t fair, but he retaliates by blaming her for their family’s troubles. Having been sent to her room, Matilda, unhappy with her family’s treatment of her, sings about how “life isn’t fair, but if you don’t like it and you want to change it, don’t let being little stop you, change it.”

The next morning, Matilda visits the library, a place of comfort for her. While there, she begins to tell Mrs. Phelps, the librarian, a story she created about two great circus performers; an Acrobat and an Escapologist. The performers long to have a child, and as they grow old their work becomes the only escape from their longing. To try and evade the sadness, they set out to attempt the most dangerous act ever attempted.

The next day is Matilda’s first day of school. A chorus of older students warn the new students about the scary headmistress. Inside her classroom, Matilda’s teacher, Miss Honey, asks the class if they know their two-times-tables. Matilda does, and she can even complete complex questions in her head. Miss Honey is amazed. When they move on to reading, Miss Honey discovers five-year-old Matilda can also read full-length novels. As the bell rings, Miss Honey goes to recommend that Matilda be moved up with the older children, however, the nasty and child-hating headmistress, Miss Agatha Trunchbull, refuses. Miss Honey then vows to help Matilda learn, whether Miss Trunchbull likes it or not.

Outside, Matilda is playing with her new friend Lavender when a classmate approaches them worried. He tells them that Miss Trunchbull is after him. The older students explain that Nigel will be put in the chokey, a cupboard in Miss Trunchbull’s office that is lined with nails and broken glass. The children try to hide Nigel under a pile of coats. When Miss Trunchbull angrily approaches, Matilda fibs and says that Nigel has been under the coats for an hour because he suffers from narcolepsy. Furious that Matilda has out-smarted her, Miss Trunchbull turns her anger onto a small girl named Amanda; she swings her around by her pigtails and throws her off into the distance.

Back at Matilda’s house after school, Miss Honey arrives to talk to the Wormwood’s about Matilda’s advanced abilities, but Mrs. Wormwood is uninterested as she is in the middle of her dance lesson. She explains to Miss Honey that Matilda shouldn’t be reading and should only think about her looks. Miss Honey feels defeated and wishes Matilda knew how special she is.

At the library once again, Matilda continues her story to Mrs. Phelps: The dangerous act was arranged by the Acrobat’s evil sister. When the Escapologist steps on stage, he declares that the stunt has been cancelled because his wife, the Acrobat, is finally pregnant. The audience roars in appreciation. Everyone forgets about the cancelled stunt, except for the sister who produces a signed contract stating the stunt must be performed, or they must go to jail.

The next day at school, Miss Trunchbull storms into the classroom blaming Matilda for stealing a piece of her chocolate cake. Bruce, one of Matilda’s classmates, admits he ate the cake. Miss Trunchbull then produces a massive chocolate cake and instructs Bruce to eat the entire cake as a punishment. He can hardly finish, but with his classmates’ encouragement, he completes the challenge. But his punishment isn’t over; Miss Trunchbull then drags him off to the chokey.

Act 2

The second act begins in the library where Matilda continues with the rest of her story: The Acrobat and the Escapologist perform their stunt for the audience. It starts well, but something goes wrong and the Acrobat falls. She manages to live long enough to deliver the child, but the effort is too much, and she dies. Then things get worse. The Escapologist doesn’t blame the evil sister but instead invites her to move into the house and help raise his daughter. The evil sister was cruel to the child in secret and her father never knew.

Back at the Wormwood’s house, Mr. Wormwood explains to the family that he discovered how to fraudulently reduce the mileage on used cars and that his scheme to sell the cars worked. Matilda gets angry with her father for lying, and in retaliation he threatens to ban her from the library and never let her read again. In her room, Matilda tells the rest of her story to herself: The Escapologist’s daughter cried herself to sleep, alone. She never said anything about her evil aunt, and the cruelties only got worse until one day she was locked in a cellar. Fortunately, that day her father came home early and when he heard his daughter crying in the cellar, he smashed open the door and grew very angry at the evil sister after learning of her cruelty. Unfortunately, that was the last time the girl ever saw her father.

At school, Lavender brings Miss Trunchbull a glass of water, but decides to play a prank by putting a newt inside the glass. Miss Trunchbull drinks, and then screams when she notices the newt. Instead of blaming Lavender she blames Eric, another classmate, and she starts pulling on his ears; stretching them. Matilda suddenly stands up and says, “Leave him alone, you BIG FAT BULLY!” Chaos ensues, and Matilda focuses her gaze on Miss Trunchbull’s glass, willing it to tip over. Suddenly it flies toward Miss Trunchbull and she runs out screaming.

Miss Honey dismisses the class before Miss Trunchbull returns, however Matilda remains behind. She asks Miss Honey if her abilities make her strange. They walk from school together and Miss Honey tells Matilda that she believes her abilities have to do with her incredible mind. Miss Honey then asks Matilda about her father, to which she explains that he is awful to her.

When they arrive at her cottage, Miss Honey explains how she came to be poor. She tells Matilda that she used to live with her father, Magnus, and her aunt in a beautiful house, but when her father died her aunt became her guardian. Her aunt was a mean and cruel woman and when Miss Honey got a job, her aunt gave her a bill outlining all the costs of raising her and made her sign a contract to pay back every penny. Desperate to get away, she found refuge in an old shed. Matilda realizes that the story she thought she made up about the Acrobat and the Escapologist was really a story about Miss Honey’s parents, and her wicked aunt is Miss Trunchbull.

The next day at school, Miss Trunchbull administers a very difficult spelling test; anyone who gets just one letter wrong gets sent to the chokey. When Lavender makes a mistake, Miss Trunchbull starts to remove her, but before they get far, the other children purposely make mistakes, thinking that Miss Trunchbull cannot possibly put them all in the chokey. Suddenly, Miss Trunchbull reveals a wall of chokeys she has been building. They all freeze when they see chalk floating as it writes on the chalkboard, “Agatha, this is Magnus! Give my Jenny back her house, then leave, or I will get you like YOU GOT ME!” to which Miss Trunchbull runs away terrified. The children rejoice as they resolve that Miss Trunchbull will never bully them again.

A little while later, Miss Honey receives a letter stating her parents’ will had been discovered and that she was the rightful owner of the beautiful house. Miss Trunchbull was never seen again and Miss Honey took over as headmistress of the school. Matilda was never again able to move things with her mind; she claimed it was because she no longer needed a super power.

The Wormwood’s suddenly arrive and Mr. Wormwood tells Matilda that they are fleeing to Spain forever because he sold the used cars to the Russian Mafia. Miss Honey offers to let Matilda live with her instead. The Russians, who have been chasing the Wormwoods, arrive unexpectedly and everyone hides except Matilda. Sergei, the head of the Mafia, explains to Matilda that her father is very stupid and he is surprised when she agrees with him.

Unfortunately, Michael, Matilda’s older brother, gives away their hiding location and the Russians drag them out of the bushes. While they are deciding what to do with Mr. Wormwood, Matilda interjects in Russian. Everyone is surprised and she explains that she taught herself the language from reading novels. Sergei is amazed and offers to ‘take care’ of her father for her, but Matilda says no, she’s “had enough of revenge.” The Russian Mafia leaves with a warning and Mr. Wormwood agrees to let Matilda stay with Miss Honey, forever.

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