

1933 and the depths of the Depression. Annie (11 years old) is living in the Municipal Orphanage on New York's Lower East Side. Miss Hannigan is the principal in charge of the orphanage and needs no lessons on being compared to the wicked witch of the West. Annie decides to escape and try and find her parents. Naturally this proves unsuccessful. However, Grace Farrell, secretary to the millionaire Oliver Warbucks is searching for an orphan that she might invite back to the Warbucks' household to celebrate Christmas.

Despite Warbucks' initial disappointment that Grace has not found a boy, Oliver takes to her and institutes a nationwide search to try and find the little girl's real parents. Miss Hannigan interferes and primes her brother Rooster and his girlfriend, Lily suggesting that they claim Annie as their daughter and thus the reward that goes with the information.

Meanwhile Annie is in Washington cheering up the president, Franklin D Roosevelt. However, Rooster and Lily turn up at the Warbucks' and claim Annie - and the reward. Grace, however, has seen Rooster at Miss Hannigan's office and smells a rat. Subsequently the couple's fraudulent claim is exposed - at the same time it is discovered that Annie's parents had, in fact, died some time ago. Warbucks plans to adopt Annie and her fellow orphans are invited back to the Warbucks' home to share in the festival of Christmas - just as America looks forward to future prosperity in the wake of the depression.

Synopsis

Annie is the lone cheery spirit at the Municipal Orphanage. Eleven years ago her parents left her there until they could afford to reclaim her. Around her neck she wears half a silver locket, longing for the day her parents will present the matching half and take her home. Now she decides it's time to look for them, and she escapes.

She befriends a mongrel dog and names him Sandy. However, the police pick her up and return her to the care of Miss Hannigan, the tyrannical spinster in charge of the orphanage. Before she can beat Annie, Grace Farrell, secretary to billionaire industrialist Oliver Warbucks, arrives to choose a child to spend Christmas at his home. Miss Hannigan is enraged as Annie is chosen and driven off to Warbucks' Fifth Avenue mansion.

Warbucks arrives and expresses his displeasure that Grace has not chosen a boy. However, Annie wins him over so completely that Warbucks wants to adopt her. Grace returns to the orphanage to inform a very distraught Miss Hannigan of the new developments. As Grace leaves, she bumps into Miss Hannigan's con-artist brother Rooster and his floozy girlfriend Lily. The shady trio reflect on how nice it would be to be on Easy Street like Annie.

Back at the mansion, Warbucks presents Annie with a new locket and tells her that he has arranged for adoption. Annie breaks into tears, explaining the old locket and that she wants to find her real mother and father. Disappointed, Warbucks vows to find them for her. He buys time on the most popular radio show to offer a \$50,000 reward to anyone who can prove they are Annie's parents.

That night Ralph and Shirley Mudge arrive at the orphanage claiming to be Annie's parents. Miss Hannigan knows they are fakes but is amazed to discover they are really Rooster and Lily in disguise. She agrees to provide them with convincing background proof in return for a split of the money.

Warbucks takes Annie to meet the President. Upon arrival in Washington they find FDR and his cabinet as depressed as the nation. Annie cheers them up and tells them that everything will be all right tomorrow.

A telegram arrives, advising Warbucks that people are jamming the streets outside his house claiming to be Annie's parents. Returning to New York they find that all are imposters, for none knew of the locket. Alone, Annie and Warbucks joyfully conclude that adoption would be best. At the adoption party the next evening, high spirits are dashed when the Mudges arrive with conclusive evidence that Annie is their daughter. Warbuck tells them that the \$50,000 will be ready in the morning and then asks if Annie can spend one more night at his home.

When they leave, Annie rushes up the stairs in tears just as FDR arrives for a surprise visit. Grace vaguely recalls Rooster from the orphanage and relays her suspicions to Warbucks. He asks Roosevelt for help from the FBI. When Annie awakes on Christmas morning, Warbucks is sad to inform her that her parents died many years ago. When the Mudges arrive to collect the money they are unmasked, and they implicate Miss Hannigan. As the police take them away, a large box arrives for Annie. Inside is Sandy. It's the most wonderful Christmas ever - and the beginning of a whole new life.