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# The Adventures of Meg

By M. M. McCallum

## Meg's first date

Meg wiggled her toes happily. She clasped the pretty red velvet and lace box closely in her arms.

Empty now, the box still smelled faintly of the chocolates it had contained. It was her first real "valentine", her first box of candy from a boy.

"Oh, Rex," she said, "hasn't it been just the most beautiful Valentine's Day ever? And just think, I am going to the movies on a real date. Mum and Dad have been just super. Imagine them understanding how I feel!"

Meg's face turned as pink as the rose on the box as Mum's gay laugh floated in from the stairwell.

"Meg," she said, "talking to Rex is all very well, he won't tell your secrets but I have ears you know. Why shouldn't Dad and I be understanding? We were young too remember, and those olden days are not quite as 'olden' as a lot of young people seem to think."

"Mum, do you remember your first date? Was it a movie? Was it with Dad? Were you older than me? Oh what did you wear?"

"Well," said Mum, sitting herself on the windowseat beside Meg and Rex, "I was about your age and I remember it very well. His name was Joe, tall and dark. Really, Meg, I think every woman remembers her first young love."

"I had a beautiful dress," went on Mum dreamily. "It was lilac voile with a circular skirt and tiny covered buttons down the front. Puff sleeves and Peter Pan collars were all the style then, and that dress had both."

"My hair was as red as yours,

Meg, set off by a white straw hat and of course I had white shoes and gloves."

"I plan to wear my pale green wool slacks and sweater," said Meg.

"Very suitable," answered Mum. "It is cold this time of year, though I remember how elegant I felt walking up that marble staircase and later, coming down, all floaty with Joe's hand cupping my elbow. I remember he laughed and said what fun it would be to slide down the beautiful broad bannister."

"Of course, back then, everyone knew everyone else and the head usher was one of our neighbors. He looked so grand in his uniform with yards and yards of gold braid. I felt very shy but he just smiled and bowed as though I had a date every Saturday night."

The special day arrived. After hearing Mum's story, Meg had suggested they go to the same theatre. Joe's brother was driving them to the capital city.

Stepping through the huge doors, Meg drew a big breath. Oh, it was just as Mum had described it — the big lobby the grand staircase rising, rising, parting to right and left at the top.

"Oh, Joe, can we sit upstairs?"

"Certainly ma'm," said Joe, bowing from the waist and sweeping off his hat. "Let us ascend to the mezzanine."

The popcorn was just right, hot and buttery. The peppermints, sharp and melting, and just as the hero sang his love song to the lady, Meg felt Joe

take her hand in his, ever so gently.

The curtain descended, the house lights rose, the audience shifted and made its way through the heavy drapes of the arched doorways.

Meg and Joe lingered to look about them. The paintings of famous actors of the distant past gazed back at them from the panelled walls. Meg smiled at Joe. She felt so good. As her warm hand touched the cool marble of the bannister, a mischievous glint appeared in her eyes. Her mother's words echoed in her brain: bannister, slide, fun.

Looking quickly around the almost deserted lobby, Meg cried, "Let's do it Joe," and flung herself atop the broad, smooth ribbon.

Down, down, down to land in a breathless heap at the base of a huge potted palm. Joe followed her down, laughing at his date turned tomboy, their laughter drawing the theatre staff from their offices.

An older gentleman, his uniform almost covered with braid, rubbed his eyes with the back of his hand as Meg brushed herself off, little and slim, red hair gleaming, blue eyes flashing. He rubbed harder. For just a moment he thought he had seen a white straw hat on the red head and a floaty lilac dress in place of the green trousers.

"Now, now," he said to himself, "it's time to think of retiring when my imagination plays tricks like that, but for a moment there ... no, no, it couldn't be, could it?"

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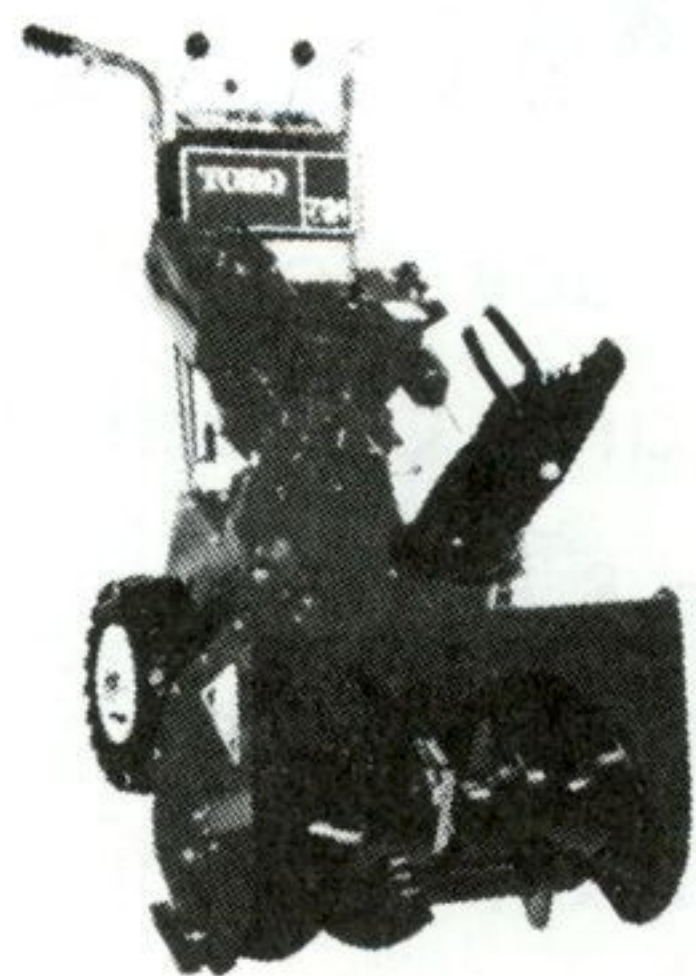


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