

Robert Newton Peck

author of A DAY NO PIGS WOULD DIE

# Soup





Chapter One

*A Note from  
Miss Kelly*

*Dear Mrs. Peck,*

*Your son Robert made a rude remark to Miss Boland, our school nurse. Perhaps it was not intended to be as coarse as it sounded. Miss Boland thinks that you (his mother) should be informed of this. I quite agree.*

*Miss Kelly*

I stood stock-still in the kitchen while my mother read the note. Underneath my corduroy knickers, the underwear was starting to itch my legs. But I didn't scratch. Instead I just stood there and masterminded various routes of escape.

"What does the note say, Mama?"

This was step one. Soup and I had, of course, both read the note over and over all the way home and could have recited it upside-down in a barrel of water. But by asking Mama what it said, she would have to believe in my innocence. And as I asked the question, I made sure my eyes were open as wide and pure as I could force them. It was also a good trick not to blink as long as possible, which made your eyes water.

"Let me see it," said Aunt Carrie.

Aunt Carrie read the note, looked at Mama, and made her customary statement. It was what she always said, usually about ten times in just the forenoon.

"What he needs is a good, sound thrashing."

"Yes," said Mama, "he certainly does."

"No, I don't," I said. "It was all a mistake. Honest. It was really Miss Kelly's fault."

"Miss Kelly's fault?"

When either Mama or Aunt Carrie started asking in-

*A Note from Miss Kelly*

stead of telling, I knew that the cause was not lost. There was still a chance to miss the whip, if I could just keep talking. And so I made the explanation as long-winded as possible to let their ire cool. Soup always said it was important to keep talking.

But I must advance with caution, being careful not to demean the noble name of Miss Kelly, who for the past one hundred years had taught first, second, third, and fourth grade (I was in third) in the small red brick Vermont schoolhouse. Kids who were my fellow classmates often remarked that *their* mothers and fathers had learned many a stern lesson from no other than Miss Kelly herself. So there was no way that I could push all the blame on such a worthy soul. I must step with stealth.

“Well,” I said, “I don’t really mean it was *all* Miss Kelly’s fault. But the other day, she was teaching us on how to talk.”

“A lesson you don’t need,” said Aunt Carrie, who believed that little boys and little girls should be seen and not heard—a rule that applied until our ages caught up to hers, which would be never.

“Miss Kelly said that when you talk to somebody it’s like you’re playing ball. First the somebody asks you a

# What are friends for?

Best buddies Rob Peck and Soup Vinson know the answer: adventure! But for these two, big adventure usually means big trouble, too. A simple game of whipping apples turns sour when the boys aim for the church bell tower—and hit the stained-glass windows instead. And barreling full-speed down Dugan Hill is *supposed* to be fun—as long as you miss the chicken coop at the bottom.

Indeed, Soup and Rob manage to find mischief at every turn. But who cares about trouble when you've got your best friend by your side?

★ **“Wryly humorous.”**

—*School Library Journal*, Starred

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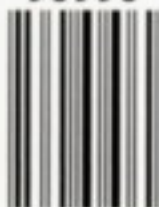
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