

# *Penelope Pumpernickel: Dynamic Detective*

by MaryAnn Diorio

## Chapter One

### *The Mysterious Treasure Chest*

**H**i! My name is Penelope Pearl Pumpernickel, but my friends call me “Penny” for short. I am eight years old, and I’m a homeschooler. This means I go to school at home.

If you were with me on my first adventure, you know that my BFF—that means, “Best-Friend Forever”—is Tilly Mendoza. Tilly is the Queen of Ideas. You also know that there is a boy in my homeschool group who is a thorn in my flesh. This means he annoys me big-time. His name is Grandville Ungerleider, but everyone calls him “Grandy” for short.

Well, recently, Grandy started me on another adventure. And, boy, what an adventure it was!

It all began on a Thursday, the day of the week when my homeschool consortium meets in an old church building. In case you don’t remember, consortium means group.

Anyway, it was a rainy day and we couldn’t go out for recess. Instead, we were stuck in the lunchroom for a whole hour. Of course, it’s easy to get bored when you have to stay inside for recess. I needed something exciting to do. So, I asked Tilly if she had any ideas.

Tilly is a lively Latina (Ooh! An alliteration! As you may recall, I am the Queen of Alliteration). In case you forgot what alliteration is, it’s starting two or more words in a row with the same sound.

Anyway, Tilly shook her head. She didn’t have any ideas. This was an unusual response for her because Tilly usually has lots of ideas.

So, I wracked my brain for an adventurous idea.

Just then, Grandy approached us. Whenever Grandy approaches, my muscles get all tight and tense. Just seeing Grandy means that trouble is on the way. So, I took a deep breath and braced myself.

“Hi!” Grandy shouted at the top of his lungs.

“Why are you shouting?” I covered my ears.

“Because I just discovered something exciting in the basement.”

“What were you doing in the basement?”

No one ever went down to the church basement except Mr. Jamison, the custodian. It was too dark and scary down there. Plus, Mrs. Strudelberry, our Homeschool Director, had forbidden us to go down to the basement.

I narrowed my eyes, wondering if Grandy were telling the truth. You see, Grandy is known for stretching the truth at times. Stretching the truth means making something mean more than it really means. Mama told me that stretching the truth is the same as lying.

I studied Grandy’s face. “What did you discover down there?”

“A treasure chest!”

“Wow!” Tilly’s eyes grew as wide as saucers. Although she is my BFF, Tilly is a gullible girl. (Hey! Another alliteration!). *Gullible* means she believes everything people tell her.

Daddy told me that I need to be discerning, not gullible. Discerning means to check out if something is true or not.

Anyway, I quirked my eyebrows. “What do you mean, a treasure chest?”

“I mean a treasure chest—like a pirate’s treasure chest.” Grandy proceeded to shape the imaginary outline of a treasure chest with his hands.

Based on my previous experiences with Grandy, I could never tell if he were telling me the truth or not. That’s the problem with people who lie. When they do tell the truth, no one believes them. Grandy reminded me of the story of the boy who cried, “Wolf!” If you haven’t read that story, I would highly recommend that you read it.

Grandy’s voice interrupted my thoughts. “You’ve got to see the treasure chest!”

I narrowed my eyes. “What would a treasure chest be doing in the church basement?”

Grandy shrugged his shoulders. “I don’t know. Maybe there were pirates in the area at one time.”

I laughed. “Pirates! We aren’t even near the ocean.”

“Haven’t you ever heard of river pirates?”

I shook my head. “No.”

“River pirates are pirates who rob people on a river.”

Well, we did live near a river, so maybe Grandy was right about river pirates. “But how do you know that the treasure chest belonged to pirates, even if they were river pirates?”

“Because of the markings on it.”

“But don’t all pirate treasure chests have markings on them?”

“Yes. But treasure chests that belonged to river pirates have different kinds of markings on them.”

I crunched my mouth. Was Grandy making all this stuff up? “What kind of markings?”

“The kind river pirates put on their treasure chests.”

Big help Grandy was. “Can you be more specific?”

Grandy hemmed and hawed. “Things like a skull and bones.”

A shiver ran through me. “Did you actually see a skull and bones on the treasure chest in the basement?”

“I guess.”

“You guess? Don’t you know for sure?”

Grandy shook his head.

“Grandy, are you making all this up?”

He lowered his eyes. “Well, part of it.”

“What part?”

“The part about the skull and bones.”

“But why?”

“I don’t know. I guess I want you to like me.”

“But, Grandy, you lied. And lying is a sin.”

“But I did see a treasure chest, although not with a skull and bones on it.”

“But you still lied.”

“I’m sorry, Penny.”

“I forgive you, but don’t lie again. It makes Jesus sad, plus it puts you in danger.”

Grandy raised an eyebrow. “Danger?”

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