

The Fortune Hunter

A novel by
Jan Pollard



Strategic Book Publishing and Rights Co.

Copyright © 2014

All rights reserved – Jan Pollard

No part of this book may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, graphic, electronic, or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, taping, or by any information storage retrieval system, without the permission, in writing, from the publisher.

Strategic Book Publishing and Rights Co.
12620 FM 1960, Suite A4-507
Houston, TX 77065
www.sbpra.com

ISBN: 978-1-63135-227-0

Book Design: Suzanne Kelly

For Louisa and Angela, with love.

CHAPTER 1

It started a long time before Anna had met him, and had she known about it she would never have married him, but then who does know the person they marry until it is too late.

Harry had always been a difficult child; one minute giving the appearance of a kind and thoughtful boy, when it suited, and the next minute an evil little monster; the perfect opposite of each other, like a two-sided coin. His parents could do nothing with him and being wealthy sent him to a prestigious boarding school as soon as he was old enough, hoping they could sort him out. But Harry, being Harry, went from bad to worse as he grew into manhood, leaving a trail of misery and destruction behind him as he spent his inheritance in a riotous orgy of self-indulgence until there was hardly anything left. That was where Anna comes into the story but to find out what happened you will need to read the book to the very last page.

By the age of ten Harry knew that his father, Percival Langford, might have been in line for a title and the wealth that came with it, had it not been for his older brother Walter, who had married in his late sixties a young and flighty actress who had given him a son, Rupert, before running off with a much younger man. Rupert of course would now inherit the title of Lord Charlesworth on the death of his ancient father which would put Harry third in line, and that did not suit Harry.

Rupert and Harry although close to each other in age were like chalk and cheese. Rupert was often bullied by his peers as, like his father, he suffered from myopia and wore unattractive round spectacles without which he could see very little. He was

a studious boy and kept to himself rather than join in with boys of his own age, who gave him the nickname, Professor Owl. Harry however was strong and athletic and could hold his own amongst his peers. Harry was afraid of no one and was the biggest bully in his form and the leader of the pack. Fortunately for Rupert they went to different schools, but Rupert dreaded the school holidays and the cruel tricks which his cousin, Harry, thought up each year to frighten him.

Every summer holiday the cousins spent together at The Old Priory, the Langford's home on the Essex/Suffolk borders where there was a large impressive garden, a tennis court and a swimming pool for the boys. The coast was not too far away and a comfortable beach house overlooking the grey North Sea, and a hut at Frinton were also at their disposal. There was a well paid staff, to look after the boys' every need and they had each other for company. Once they were a bit older then holidays abroad would be arranged and skiing trips and sailing lessons would come into the picture, or so their parents thought without knowing that Rupert would no longer be around to share such delights.

Harry's parents spent the summer at their country retreat in the south of France, far away from their son and his problems. Harry never missed them and they had given up on him since he had been expelled from his last public school. Next term he would be attending a school in the Essex countryside where there were no rules of any kind; even attendance at class was up to each child. The development of the individual, without restrictions, was the aim of this school. Harry was looking forward to the new term for the first time in his life but before that happened Rupert was coming to stay, and Harry had plans about that.

The garden at The Old Priory boasted a lake and on this particular holiday Harry decided to build a raft. As Rupert had just finished reading Robinson Crusoe he found the idea more

appealing than some of Harry's previous ideas and joined in with enthusiasm. Once completed to the boy's satisfaction the raft had been launched with Rupert being encouraged to be the first on board.

'I have made you the Captain,' said Harry, in case Rupert might show some sign of being nervous, as they launched the unstable raft of logs.

Once Rupert had grasped the mast to steady himself Harry had pushed it off into the deep water of the lake and Rupert found himself alone, with no means of steering his craft. Fumbling around to get his balance Rupert lost his spectacles and panicked. His surroundings became blurred and he fell onto the logs, unable to do anything to help himself. Worse still, Rupert had never learned to swim and the water seeping between the roughly tied logs frightened him. He called out to his cousin to help him but that was the last thing on Harry's mind as he watched from the lakeside. When Rupert had rolled into the water and sunk without trace then Harry ran back to the house to call for help, but it was too late by then and Rupert had drowned.

'I told him not to go on his own,' insisted Harry, 'but he wouldn't listen. He wanted to be the first. We were playing at being Robinson Crusoe. He really enjoyed making the raft – I shall miss him. We had some good times together – especially on this holiday.'

As nobody had witnessed the sad event then Harry's explanation of events had to be believed although those who knew Harry and the unkind tricks he used to play on his cousin were in two minds about it. There was nothing anyone could do to alter the situation and a verdict of accidental drowning was decided upon.

A few months later Rupert's father died; a broken man at the loss of his son and heir. Harry's father became the new Lord Charlesworth with a large inheritance to go with the title and Harry became the heir apparent, much to his satisfaction. An unfortunate car accident in the south of France killed both Harry's father and his step-mother, the Lady Letitia, leaving Harry in sole possession of their estate and a title.

