

## Lies, spies and NBC: Ronan Farrow on the stunning revelations in “Catch and Kill”

Ronan Farrow was not surprised that even before the official publication date of his bombshell-dropping book “Catch and Kill: Lies, Spies, and a Conspiracy to Protect Predators” people were calling him a liar.

5 “In most of the stories I report on, there are similar kind of smear<sup>1</sup> campaigns that spin up,” he said recently. “There’s an effort to make it as underhanded<sup>2</sup> and personal as possible; there are outright untrue statements that are trafficked.”

Only this time, at least one of the statements he was referring to comes from his former employers at NBC News, where, ironically enough, he began the investigation that would eventually result in this book.

10 It was for NBC News that he began investigating Harvey Weinstein after Rose McGowan tweeted that a producer, whom many assumed was Weinstein, had raped her. And it was NBC News that, according to Farrow in “Catch and Kill,” shut down his story under pressure from Weinstein. [...]

15 A coherent story about how Weinstein and other powerful men could allegedly<sup>3</sup> get away with years of sexual abuse and settlements that included not just NBC’s refusal to air<sup>4</sup> the story (or, as Farrow points out in the book, to report on the Weinstein scandal much at all in the early days after it broke) but also the revelations of agents and double agents working on Weinstein’s behalf. [...]

[But] it was the realization that Weinstein had allegedly hired an international private espionage company, Black Cube, to spy on and attempt to intimidate Farrow, McGowan and other reporters and sources that was the real “gut punch<sup>5</sup>.”

20 Throughout the book, Farrow chronicles his growing suspicion that he was being followed, the email requests that seemed off, the weird weather alerts showing up on his phone and the repeated suggestions that he should arm himself (which led him to a shooting range for target practice, though he would not say whether he had bought a gun), only to find that this was not a case of self-aggrandizing paranoia. He was being followed and tracked and approached by agents of Black Cube.

25 “It is a very serious point to emphasize that these cloak-and-dagger<sup>6</sup> tactics should stay in the world of [Robert] Ludlum novels and not be directed at real world journalists and sources in our country,” he says. “On a personal level, there were many moments that felt stranger than fiction, and it was only after rigorous investigation that I realized, ‘Holy moly, this is really happening.’”

30 “You can imagine,” he adds with a laugh, “going to your editor, as I did, saying, ‘Hi, there’s a secret Israeli spy group staffed by former Mossad agents after me and my sources; they’re called Black Cube.’ The unanimous reaction was: ‘This can’t be true.’ But it really was, it’s all true.” [...]

“Catch and Kill,” he says, is designed to be a testament to all the great journalists who “bang their head against these stories and don’t give up” and to the profession of journalism itself, which Farrow characterizes as “precious” and “imperiled.”

Also, he adds, to fact-checkers, especially Sean Lavery, a senior fact-checker at the New Yorker.

35 “I hope the impact this book is having,” Farrow says, “also serves as a reminder to news outlets that fact checking is really important.”

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**1.** attempt to damage someone’s reputation **2.** secret and dishonest **3.** Supposedly **4.** broadcast on radio, TV or online **5.** shock / blow **6.** clandestine / undercover