

CHAPTER 9:

MINIONS

When I arrived at Gramercy Tavern, Gutierrez was already sitting in a back corner, ramrod straight and perfectly still. “I’m always early,” she said. That wasn’t the half of it. She was, I came to find, a formidably organized and strategic person. Gutierrez was born in Turin, Italy. She’d grown up watching her Italian father, whom she described as a “Dr. Jekyll—and—Mr. Hyde person,” beat her Filipina mother. When Gutierrez tried to intervene, she was beaten as well. As an adolescent, she became the caretaker, supporting her mother and distracting her younger brother from the violence. She had an exaggerated beauty, like an anime character: vanishingly slender with improbably large eyes. That day at the restaurant, she seemed nervous. “I want to help,” she said, a tremor in her Italian accent. “It’s just I’m in difficult situation.” It was only when I said that another woman had gone on camera with a complaint about Weinstein, and that still more were considering doing so, that she began to tell her story.

In March 2015, Gutierrez’s modeling agent had invited her to a reception at Radio City Music Hall for *New York Spring Spectacular*, a show that Weinstein produced. As usual, Weinstein had rallied

industry friends to support the show. He’d talked to Steve Burke, the CEO of NBCUniversal, and Burke had agreed to provide costumes of characters from the ubiquitous *Minions* franchise. At the reception, Weinstein stared at Gutierrez openly across the room. He approached and said hello, telling her and her agent several times that she looked like the actress Mila Kunis. After the event, Gutierrez’s modeling agency emailed her to say that Weinstein wanted to set up a business meeting as soon as possible.

Gutierrez arrived at Weinstein’s office in Tribeca early the next evening with her modeling portfolio. As she and Weinstein sat on a couch reviewing the portfolio, he began staring at her breasts, asking if they were real. Gutierrez said that Weinstein then lunged at her, groping her breasts and attempting to put a hand up her skirt while she protested. He finally backed off and told her that his assistant would give her tickets to *Finding Neverland* later that night. He said he would meet her at the show.

Gutierrez was twenty-two at the time. “Because of trauma in my past,” she told me, “being touched for me was something that was very big.” After the encounter with Weinstein, she remembered shaking, stopping by a bathroom, and beginning to weep. She caught a cab to her agent’s office and cried there, too. Then she and the agent went to the nearest police station. She remembered arriving, and telling the officers Weinstein’s name, and one saying, “Again?”

Weinstein telephoned her later that evening, annoyed that she hadn’t come to the show. She picked up the call while sitting with investigators from the Special Victims Division, who listened in and devised a plan: Gutierrez would agree to see the show the following day and then meet with Weinstein. She would wear a wire and attempt to extract a confession.

“It was a scary decision, of course,” she said. “And of course I had a sleepless night.” Anyone asked to do something risky to expose

something important has to balance a complicated mix of self-interested and altruistic incentives. Sometimes, in some stories, the two coincide. But in this story, there was almost no upside. Gutierrez faced legal and professional annihilation. She wanted only to stop Weinstein from doing it again. "Everyone told me the guy could close all the doors for me," she said. "I was willing to risk this for the fact that this guy should not have done this to anyone anymore."

The following day, Gutierrez met Weinstein at the Tribeca Grand Hotel's Church Bar, a plush room with golden stars and clouds stenciled on its blue walls. A team of undercover officers kept watch. Weinstein was flattering. He said, again and again, how beautiful she was. He told her he'd help her get acting jobs, if she would just be his friend, and named several other prominent actresses for whom, he said, he had done the same. The accent would need work, of course, but he said he could arrange lessons.

Weinstein excused himself to go to the restroom, then returned, demanding with sudden urgency that they go up to his penthouse suite. He said he wanted to take a shower. Gutierrez, frightened that he would touch her again or discover that she was wearing a wire, resisted. Undeterred, he tried to bring her upstairs repeatedly. The first time, she used a tactic the officers had suggested, leaving behind a jacket and insisting they go back downstairs for it. The second time, one of the undercover officers, posing as a TMZ photographer, started peppering Weinstein with questions, sending him to complain to hotel staff. Gutierrez kept trying, and failing, to extricate herself. Finally, Weinstein got her upstairs, leading her toward his room. By this time, they'd lost the undercover officers. Adding to her problems, her phone, which officers had instructed her to keep on and recording in her purse as a backup, was running out of power.

With increasing belligerence, Weinstein demanded that she go into the room. Gutierrez, terrified, pleaded and tried to draw away. In the

course of the interaction, Weinstein copped to groping her the previous day: a full, dramatic confession, caught on tape. She kept pleading, and he finally relented, and they went downstairs. Officers, no longer concealing their identities, approached Weinstein and said the police wanted to speak to him.

Had he been charged, Weinstein could have faced a count of sexual abuse in the third degree, a misdemeanor punishable by up to three months in jail. "We had so much proof of everything," Gutierrez told me. "Everyone was telling me, 'Congratulations, we stopped a monster.'" But then the tabloids began to publish their stories about Gutierrez's supposed past as a prostitute. And the office of Manhattan district attorney Cyrus Vance Jr. began to raise the same points. When Martha Bashford, the head of Vance's Sex Crimes Unit, questioned Gutierrez, she grilled her about Berlusconi and her personal sexual history with unusual hostility, according to two law enforcement sources. The district attorney's press office later told the *New York Times* that the questioning was "a normal, typical interview" intended to anticipate questions that would be raised in a cross-examination. The law enforcement sources disagreed. "They went at her like they were Weinstein's defense attorneys," one of them told me. "It was weird," Gutierrez recalled of the questioning. "I'm, like, 'What is the connection? I don't understand. Just listen to the proof.'"

On April 10, 2015, two weeks after Gutierrez reported Weinstein to the police, the district attorney's office announced that it wasn't going to press charges. It released a brief statement: "This case was taken seriously from the outset, with a thorough investigation conducted by our Sex Crimes Unit. After analyzing the available evidence, including multiple interviews with both parties, a criminal charge is not supported."

The NYPD was incensed by the decision—so much so that the

department's Special Victims Division launched an internal review of the last ten criminal complaints in Manhattan stemming from similar allegations of groping or forcible touching. "They didn't have a quarter of the evidence we had," still another law enforcement source said of the other cases. "There were no controlled meets, and only rarely controlled calls." Yet, that source said, "all of them resulted in arrests." The public had never learned of the damning evidence Vance possessed.

Law enforcement officials began to whisper that the DA's office had behaved strangely. Vance's staff had been receiving new information about Gutierrez's past on a regular basis, and hadn't been disclosing where it was coming from. It was, one official told me, as if Weinstein had infiltrated Vance's office personally.



At the time of the Gutierrez incident, Weinstein's legal team was stacked with political influence. Former New York mayor Rudolph Giuliani was closely involved. "Rudy was always in the office after the Ambra thing," one Weinstein Company employee recalled. "He still had his mind then." Giuliani worked so many hours on the Gutierrez matter that a spat arose afterward over billing. These fights over invoices were a leitmotif in Weinstein's business dealings.

Several members of Weinstein's legal team made donations to Vance's campaigns. One attorney, Elkan Abramowitz, was a partner at the firm that formerly employed Vance, and had contributed \$26,450 to Vance's campaigns since 2008. I recognized Abramowitz's name. When my sister reiterated her claim that Woody Allen sexually assaulted her, Allen dispatched Abramowitz to the morning shows to smile affably and deny the allegations. That history made my feelings about Abramowitz less personal, not more. This wasn't about any one

victim; this, for Abramowitz and many other lawyers, was a cottage industry.

David Boies had also worked on the Gutierrez imbroglio, and also kept the Manhattan district attorney close. He'd been a longtime donor. He would give \$10,000 to Vance's reelection campaign in the months following the decision not to press charges.



After that decision, Gutierrez was shaken, then worried about her future. "I couldn't sleep, I couldn't eat," she told me. As Weinstein leaned on his tabloid contacts to drum up items portraying Gutierrez as a hustler, she felt like history was repeating. She believed that the stories from Italy about her having worked as a prostitute were a product of her having testified in the corruption case against Berlusconi. She told me Berlusconi had used his power to smear her. "They said that I was a Bunga Bunga girl, that I was having affairs with sugar daddies," she said. "Anyone who knows me knows those things are completely fake." Slut shaming, it seemed, was a universal language. Several tabloid editors later told me they regretted their coverage of Gutierrez, and felt it laid uncomfortably bare Weinstein's transactional relationships in their industry.

Weinstein particularly exploited his bond with Pecker and Howard at the *National Enquirer*. Weinstein's employees recalled an uptick in calls from him to Pecker. Howard ordered his staff to stand down on reporting about Gutierrez's claim, then inquired about purchasing her story in order to bury it. And then there was the item the *Enquirer* ultimately ran, claiming, apparently based on its own entreaties to Gutierrez, that she was flogging the story on the open market.

It was as if "just because I am a lingerie model or whatever, I had to be in the wrong," Gutierrez said. "I had people telling me, 'Maybe

it was how you dressed.” (She had dressed in professional office attire to meet Weinstein, with thick tights because of the cold weather.) Her reputation was curdling. “My work depends on image, and my image was destroyed,” she said. Casting calls evaporated. Paparazzi laid siege to her apartment. Her brother called from Italy to say reporters had found him at work.

When attorneys Gutierrez consulted urged her to accept a settlement, she at first resisted. But her resolve began to crack. “I didn’t want to make my family suffer anymore,” she said. “I was twenty-two years old. I knew if he could move the press in this way, I couldn’t fight him.” On the morning of April 20, 2015, Gutierrez sat in a law firm office in Midtown Manhattan with a voluminous legal agreement and a pen in front of her. In exchange for a million-dollar payment, she would agree to never again talk publicly about Weinstein or the effort to charge him. “I didn’t even understand almost what I was doing with all those papers,” she told me. “I was really disoriented. My English was very bad. All of the words in that agreement were super-difficult to understand. I guess even now I can’t really comprehend everything.” Across the table, Weinstein’s attorney from Giuliani’s firm, Daniel S. Connolly, was trembling visibly as Gutierrez picked up the pen. “I saw him shaking and I realized how big this was. But then I thought I needed to support my mom and brother and how my life was being destroyed, and I did it,” she told me.

“The moment I did it, I really felt it was wrong.” She knew people would judge her for taking the money. “A lot of people are not empathetic,” she said. “They don’t put themselves in the situation.” After the contract was signed, Gutierrez became depressed and developed an eating disorder. Eventually, her brother, who was concerned, came to the United States. “He knew I was really bad,” she said. He took her to Italy and then the Philippines “to start again.” She told me, “I was completely destroyed.”

CHAPTER 10:

MAMA

Two years later, Gutierrez shut her eyes at the memory. “Do you have the document?” I asked. She opened her eyes, stared at me. “I promise you,” I said, “I will only use anything I learn here today in a way you’re comfortable with. Even if it means giving up the story.” She picked up a white iPhone, began clicking and scrolling. She pushed the phone across to me, letting me read the million-dollar nondisclosure agreement.

The document was eighteen pages long. It was signed, on the last page, by Gutierrez and Weinstein. The lawyers involved in drafting it must have been so convinced of its enforceability that they never considered the possibility of it emerging. The contract ordered the destruction of all copies of audio recordings of Weinstein admitting to the groping. Gutierrez agreed to give her phone and any other devices that might have contained evidence to Kroll, a private-security firm retained by Weinstein. She also agreed to surrender the passwords to her email accounts and other forms of digital communication that could have been used to spirit out copies. “The Weinstein confidentiality agreement is perhaps the most usurious one I have seen in decades of practice,” one attorney who represented

Gutierrez later told me. A sworn statement, pre-signed by Gutierrez, was attached to the agreement, to be released in the event of any breach. It stated that the behavior Weinstein admitted to in the recording never happened.

I looked up from the agreement, and the reporter's notebook in which I'd been transcribing notes as quickly as I could. "Ambra. Are all the copies of the tape destroyed?"

Gutierrez folded her hands in her lap and looked at them.



A moment later, I was walking fast out of the restaurant and toward the subway, dialing Rich McHugh. I told him the story. "It's real," I said. "And there's audio of him admitting to it."

I texted Noah Oppenheim. "I'm now in touch with five women with HW allegations, FYI. I just met with a model who wore a wire for an NYPD investigation in 2015. She's going to play me the recordings. She wants to talk but she took a payout with an NDA—she showed me the document. It's legit. Signed by HW, a million dollars." When he replied hours later, he asked only, "Who's your producer on this?" then fell silent.

Back at 30 Rockefeller Plaza, McHugh and I sat opposite Rich Greenberg in his office on the fourth floor. "It's quite a story," Greenberg said, leaning back in his mesh office chair.

"I mean, it's huge," said McHugh. "He admits to a crime."

Greenberg swiveled toward his monitor.

"Let's see here . . .," he said, typing Gutierrez's name into Google and switching over to the Images tab. He scrolled through a few pictures of Gutierrez sprawling seductively in lingerie and said, "Not bad."

"We're close to a big piece of evidence here," I said, impatient. "She says she'll play the audio for me."

"Well, let's see about that," Greenberg said.

"And there's the contract," McHugh added.

"That part's complicated," Greenberg said. "We can't be making her breach contract."

"We're not making her do anything," I replied.

Later that afternoon, I called Chung, the NBC lawyer. "Theoretically, someone could say we induced her to violate the contract. But that tort is weird. There are a lot of conflicting interpretations of what's required to prove it. Some say you need to demonstrate the defendant had the sole purpose of violating the contract, which obviously isn't your objective," he said. "I'm sure Rich is; just being careful."



I had tried Jonathan a few times over the course of the afternoon but only got through as I ducked out of Rockefeller Plaza at sunset. "Six calls!" he said. "I thought it was an emergency!" He was stepping out of a meeting. "Five!" I countered. We'd met shortly after he left his job as a presidential speechwriter. In the years we'd been together, he'd drifted, creating a short-lived sitcom and tweeting a lot. A couple of months earlier, he and his friends had started a media company focused on podcasts on the West Coast. It had taken off faster than anyone predicted. His trips to New York had become shorter and less frequent.

"I'm checking," he was saying.

"Do it," I replied. I waited thirty seconds. "Jonathan!"

"Sorry! Forgot you were there." This happened more than you'd think. These days, our relationship consisted almost exclusively of endless calls. Occasionally, he'd try to pause me, forgetting I wasn't a podcast.

My phone pinged. I looked down to see a string of twenty or

thirty Instagram message alerts. They came from an account with no profile photo. They read, over and over, "I'm watching you, I'm watching you, I'm watching you." I swiped them away. Strange messages were an occupational hazard of being on television.

"The crazies love me," I said to Jonathan, and read him the messages.

"He thinks he loves you, but wait until he experiences dating you."

"What does that mean?"

"It means I love you?"

"Does it?"

"Just working on my vows for the ceremony. On the moon. In our gravity boots."

This was a running joke. Jonathan's mother wanted grandchildren, and not in the age of lunar bases.

"*This* conversation again?" I said, playing along.

"Just get someone at NBC to take a look at the threats. Take it seriously, please."



After that first meeting with Gutierrez, I followed up again with the same contact in the district attorney's office. "It's weird," the contact said. "The recording. It's referenced in the case files. But I don't think we have it." This seemed improbable. The DA's office would, according to standard procedure, have retained any evidence, in case the investigation was ever reopened. I said "thank you" and chalked it up to an insufficiently thorough search.

A week after our first conversation, I met with Gutierrez again, at a basement noodle place near Union Square. She'd arrived from a casting call, in full hair and makeup. It was like conducting an interview in a shampoo commercial. She talked about Berlusconi's

corrupt media empire, and how she'd marshaled the strength to help expose him. With each conversation we had, she sounded more like she was ready to do it again.

Earlier in the day, she'd sent me a picture of an ancient MacBook and explained that she'd lost the charging cable. I had found a cable of the right vintage and, as we talked, the laptop charged on a nearby chair. I kept glancing over at it nervously. Finally I asked, as nonchalantly as possible, if she thought it had enough juice. The restaurant was noisy, so we left and walked around the corner to a Barnes & Noble. She opened the laptop again. Glancing from one side to the other, she navigated through a series of subfolders, past modeling photos and innocuous-looking Word documents.

"Before the order to give all my phone, my computer," she said, as she delved deeper into her hard drive, "I sent recording to myself, to all my emails." She'd agreed to give Kroll the passwords to all those accounts, and knew they'd find any she didn't disclose. But, in order to buy herself a brief window of opportunity, she'd told them she couldn't recall one password. Then, as Kroll wiped the other accounts, one by one, she'd logged into the one for which she was supposedly recovering the password, forwarded the audio to a temporary "burner" email, then cleared her sent mail. Finally, she downloaded the files to this old laptop, which she stuffed in the back of a closet. "I was not sure it works," she said. "It was like—" She made a gasping noise and held her breath, as if bracing for the worst. But Kroll didn't come knocking, and the laptop collected dust, uncharged, for two years.

On the screen in front of her, Gutierrez came to a folder labeled "Mama." Inside were audio files titled Mama1, Mama2, and Mama3: the recordings she'd had to frantically start each time her phone issued a push alert about its dwindling battery life during the police sting. She passed me a pair of headphones, and I listened. It was all

there: the promises of career advancement, the list of other actresses he had helped, the encounter with the officer Weinstein thought was a TMZ photographer. In the recording, Gutierrez's panic was palpable. "I don't want to," she said, standing in the hallway outside his room, refusing to go farther as Weinstein's tone turned menacing. "I want to leave," she added. "I want to go downstairs." At one point, she asked him why he had groped her breasts the day before.

"Oh, please, I'm sorry, just come on in," Weinstein replied. "I'm used to that. Come on. Please."

"You're used to that?" Gutierrez asked, incredulous.

"Yes," Weinstein said. He added, "I won't do it again."

After almost two minutes of back-and-forth in the hallway, he finally agreed to return to the bar.

Weinstein wheedled and menaced and bullied and didn't take no for an answer. But more than that, it was a smoking gun. It was inarguable. There he was, admitting not just to a crime but to a pattern. *"I'm used to that."*

"Ambra," I said, slipping off the headphones. "We need to make this public."

I produced a USB drive from my pocket and slid it toward her across the countertop.

"I can't tell you what to do," I said. "The decision is yours."

"I know that," she replied. She closed her eyes, seemed to sway for a moment. "I will," she said. "But not yet."

CHAPTER 11:

BLOOM

The second meeting with Gutierrez made me late for drinks with a former assistant to Phil Griffin, my old boss at MSNBC. "This is the most important story I've ever been on," I texted her. "If I am late it's because I have absolutely no choice." After journalism, drama and being late were my great passions.

"No worries hope it's going well," she replied tolerantly.

I was still apologizing when I arrived at the little French bistro where we'd agreed to meet. When I asked how Griffin was, she said it was funny I should mention it—that he'd asked after me, too.

Griffin was the one who took a chance on me and brought me inside NBC. He was a talented producer who'd worked his way up through roles at CNN and, later, the *Today* show and *Nightly News*. At CNN, he'd focused on sports. He was passionate about baseball, and gracious about my incomprehension during his impassioned monologues about it. He talked about a lifelong dream of working for the New York Mets, and you got the sense he was only mostly joking. At the helm of MSNBC, he'd overseen the cable channel's periods of greatest success, and survived its brutal low points. Griffin was the son of a Macy's executive and grew up in wealthy suburbs

outside New York City and Toledo. Trim and bald and excitable, he had the carefree bearing of a man who'd mostly gotten his way.

In the two years since my show was canceled, our contact had been limited to cordial office run-ins. I wondered if the former assistant was just being polite with the comment about Griffin mentioning me, and why I'd be on his radar if he had.



Harvey Weinstein had been calling Boies, his attorney, about Rose McGowan since shortly after she tweeted the previous fall. But it wasn't until that spring that Weinstein mentioned NBC.

"I've heard they're doing a story," Weinstein said. He wanted to know if Boies had heard anything. Boies said he hadn't. Within days, Weinstein was on the phone again, repeating the question.

By the second call with Boies, Weinstein seemed unsatisfied with the lawyer's answers. "I know people at NBC," Weinstein reminded Boies. "I'm gonna find out about it."

Weinstein had been apprehensively calling his attorneys about news outlets pursuing troublesome stories for years. But there was something different this time: he began telling people around him that he was getting information directly from NBC. Soon, he was relating claims about exactly how much the network had—and the name of the reporter who was working on the story.



Over the following weeks, I kept meeting with Gutierrez at the Union Square Barnes & Noble. She told me she'd meet with me and Greenberg and NBC's legal department to play them the audio and

show them the contract. But she was still grappling with whether to actually hand over the evidence.

After one of the meetings, I hesitated again before calling my sister Dylan. "So, you need my advice again," she said, a teasing note in her voice.

I explained the situation: a source, a tape, a contract. Everyone I spoke with was a potential informant who might relay information back to Weinstein. If I ever fully assembled the story, I'd be laying out the reporting for him and seeking comment. But for now, I was vulnerable, and warnings from sources about Weinstein's tactics had put me on edge. "Who do I turn to on this?" I asked her. "Who do I trust?"

She thought for a moment. "You should call Lisa Bloom."

Lisa Bloom was the kind of lawyer who also plays one on television, but she appeared to use the platform to defend not just her clients but also the ideal of protecting survivors of sexual violence who confronted the rich and powerful. She had written and spoken repeatedly in defense of my sister, when few others did. "You, your sister and mother have comported yourself with grace and dignity through the storm, empowering sexual abuse survivors everywhere," she'd written to me once. "The very least I could do was to speak out about Dylan's obvious credibility."

Bloom had appeared often on my show, representing accusers of Bill O'Reilly and of Bill Cosby. "Rich and powerful people get a pass. I see this every day in my own practice," she said in one segment about Cosby. "I represent many victims of wealthy and successful predators. The first thing they do is go on the attack against the victim, try to dredge up anything from her life that they can find to embarrass her." She'd seen how "women are smeared, or they are threatened that they will be smeared."



When Bloom picked up, I offered to keep our conversation off the record. She waved this away. "Please," she said. She had a warm voice with a slight rasp. "Most of the time, I'll *want* to comment, you know that."

"Thanks," I said. "But I'd appreciate your confidence, anyway."

"Of course," she said.

"I know we're not under attorney-client privilege, but as a fellow lawyer, I trust you. If I ask you about a sensitive story, do you feel comfortable promising not to mention it to anyone until it comes out?"

"Absolutely," she said.

I said I was working on a story involving heavy-duty nondisclosure agreements and asked her view of their enforceability. She said the agreements usually held up: that they often stipulated financially devastating liquidated damages as a penalty for breach, and contained arbitration clauses that allowed them to be enforced secretly, rather than in court. (Curiously, Gutierrez's otherwise draconian agreement had lacked such an arbitration clause.)

Some entities, like Fox News, had of late declined to enforce the nondisclosure agreements signed by former employees with sexual harassment complaints. Bloom said it all depended on who was doing the enforcing.

"It would help if I knew who this was about, Ronan." She said this very slowly.

"And you promise I have your word this will be kept in confidence?"

"You have my word," she said.

"It's about Harvey Weinstein."

I was standing in my apartment, looking out at a wall of

warehouse-style windows. Through one, a sliver of a ballet studio was visible. A leotard-clad back strained in and out of frame.

"I'm going to go to him for comment if it progresses to that point," I continued. "But in the meantime it's important, for these women, that it not get back to his people."

Another pause. Then Lisa Bloom said, "I understand completely."

Gutierrez and McGowan had both said they needed attorneys. As a reporter, I had to maintain distance from sources' legal cases. I'd told both that I couldn't give legal advice or directly recommend lawyers. But I could point them to publicly available information about experts in the field. I asked Bloom for advice on attorneys with experience in cases involving nondisclosure agreements. McGowan would later reach out to one of them.



Harvey Weinstein's standard approach to getting people on the phone was to bark their names at the assistants stationed in the anteroom outside his office. Not long after the calls with Boies about NBC, he shouted two new names: "Get me Andy Lack, now," he said. "And Phil Griffin."

When Weinstein reached Lack, the studio head and the network head exchanged brief pleasantries. But Weinstein, sounding anxious, got to the point quickly. "Hey," he said, "your boy Ronan is doing a story on me. About the nineties and stuff."

My name seemed to register only dimly. Lack suggested Weinstein try Griffin, my old boss at MSNBC. To this, Weinstein launched into an argument about his innocence and the folly of the story.

"Andy, it was the nineties. You know? Did I go out with an assistant or two that I shouldn't have, did I sleep with one or two of them, sure."

Lack said nothing to this.

"It was the nineties, Andy," Weinstein repeated. This seemed, for Weinstein, an important point of exculpation. And then, with a note of menace: "We all did that."

There was a pause before Andy Lack said, "Harvey, say no more. We'll look into it."



It was evening when Bloom called again. I was heading home, emerging from a subway stop. "How's it going?!" she asked. "I was thinking. You know, I actually know David Boies a little. And—and even Harvey a little."

"You didn't mention this to anyone, did you?" I asked Bloom.

"Of course I didn't! I'm just, you know, I had this idea I could maybe help connect you to them."

"Lisa, this is very sensitive, and very early. I promise you, I'll get in touch with him when the time comes. Just please, don't say anything yet. You gave your word."

"I just think it's worth considering," she said.

"I'll let you know if things develop further," I replied.

I was passing by St. Paul the Apostle, the fortress-like Gothic Revival church near my apartment. I looked up, then hurried out of its shadow.

"I'm here if you need anything, okay?" Bloom said. "Anything at all."

CHAPTER 12:

FUNNY

That week, McHugh and I sat in Greenberg's office, updating him on the conversations with Gutierrez. I told him about her offer to meet with our legal department and show them the evidence. "Let's get this scheduled, before she gets cold feet," I said.

Greenberg wouldn't commit to the meeting. He said we needed the audio in hand, not just played for us. I agreed but said Gutierrez was getting closer to sharing it and argued that the meeting with NBC might help persuade her. Greenberg again raised his concern that looking at contracts might incur liability. "You need to be running all of this by legal," he said. He kept fiddling with a pen in front of him on the desk.

I was reminding him that I'd run every step of the reporting by legal when the phone on his desk rang. He looked at the caller ID, paused.

"It's Harvey Weinstein," Greenberg said. "He called earlier today." McHugh and I looked at each other. This was news to us. Greenberg said Weinstein had pressed for details about the story. He'd led with flattery, saying he was a fan of mine, a fan of the network. Then he'd turned to saber-rattling.

"He mentioned he's retained some lawyers," Greenberg said.

He flipped through some notes in front of him.

"David Boies?" I asked.

"He mentioned Boies, but there was someone else as well. Here it is, Charles Harder." Harder was the pitbull attorney who, in an invasion of privacy case bankrolled by the billionaire Peter Thiel, had recently prevailed in shutting down the gossip news site *Gawker*.

"I told him we couldn't discuss specifics, of course," Greenberg continued. "We do this by the book. Let him call all he wants."



Our reporting was in limbo. Gutierrez was still deliberating about handing over the audio. Rosanna Arquette's agent had stopped returning my calls. The English actress confirmed the story her agent had told me, then got cold feet and fell silent. Ashley Judd, whose comments about an unnamed studio executive had featured echoes of McGowan's and Gutierrez's claims—a meeting moved from a hotel restaurant to a hotel room, a request that she watch him take a shower—hadn't responded to my inquiries.

One afternoon that March, I found a quiet stretch of cubicles vacated for renovations and called Annabella Sciorra. In the preceding weeks, others had mentioned she might have a story. Sciorra, who was raised in Brooklyn by Italian parents, had made a name for herself in movies like *The Hand That Rocks the Cradle* and later received an Emmy nomination for a guest role on *The Sopranos*. She had a reputation for playing steely, tough characters, but when she picked up the phone, her voice sounded small and tired. "It was so strange hearing from you," she said of my Twitter inquiry that had prompted the call. "I wasn't sure what it was about. But I'm an MSNBC viewer, you know, so I was happy to talk."

I told her I was working on a story about allegations of sexual harassment against Harvey Weinstein, and that two people had suggested she might have something to say.

"Oh, that," she said, managing a tinny laugh. "It's weird, I've heard that before. Who told you that?"

I told her I couldn't reveal other sources without their permission. "It could help a lot of people, if you do know anything," I said. "Even if you can only talk anonymously."

On the other end of the call, Sciorra was in her living room in Brooklyn, staring out at the East River. She hesitated, then said, "No. Nothing happened." Another thin laugh. "I don't know. I guess I just wasn't his type." I thanked her and told her to call me if she remembered anything. "I wish I could help," she replied. "I'm sorry."



Early that April, I sat at my desk and looked at a text that had just come in. "Hey . . .," it read. "It's Matthew Hiltzik have a quick question for you." Hiltzik was a prominent publicist. He was a reliable choice for news personalities and had, for years, handled Katie Couric's communications. When I'd despaired at the flood of tabloid items about me and my family several years earlier, I'd briefly retained his services at MSNBC's suggestion, and he'd been compassionate. Hiltzik was an equal-opportunity spin doctor. He was closely entwined with both the Clinton and Trump families. Ivanka Trump was a client of his firm, and two of his underlings, Hope Hicks and Josh Raffel, had found roles in Trump's White House.

Soon, Hiltzik was calling. "Hey, how are you doing?" he said brightly. There was a hum of voices in the background, like he was stepping out of a party. "I'm at this event," he explained. "Hillary's speaking."

Hiltzik never called without a reason. I stayed vague about how I was. “Juggling a few shoots,” I told him. “Dealing with a book deadline.” I’d been spending my nights furiously assembling a long-gestating book about the declining role of diplomacy in America’s foreign policy.

“So it sounds like your other stories are on the back burner a little,” Hiltzik was saying. “Like I said, Hillary’s here, and Harvey’s here, who I’ve worked with over the years.”

I said nothing.

“He just walked in, actually,” Hiltzik continued. “He said to me, ‘Who’s this Ronan guy? He’s asking questions about me? Is he investigating me?’”

“Are you representing him?” I asked.

“Not exactly. We have a long relationship. He knows I know you, I said I’d do him a little favor. I told him, ‘Look, calm down, Harvey, Ronan is a good guy.’ I said you and I would have a little chat.”

“I investigate a lot of leads and I really can’t talk about any of them until they’re ready to go.”

“Is this for NBC?” Hiltzik asked.

“I mean — I’m an investigative correspondent at NBC.”

“Is this about Rose McGowan?” he pressed. “Because he says he can clear that up.” Choosing my words carefully, I told him I always welcomed information. There was muffled shouting in the background. “He’s so funny,” Hiltzik said. “He’s saying all kinds of” — he paused for effect — “*funny* things.”

Two hours later, Hiltzik texted, “He is sort of hilarious. Gave your message. He asked me to call u back.” Then Hiltzik was on the phone again, saying of Weinstein, “He doesn’t always have a normal reaction,” and, “He’s agitated. He’s upset.”

“I’m sorry to hear that,” I said.

“At times people can be aggressive and try to mess with him by suggesting there’s even a story here. He says the same stories keep coming back, and the conclusion is always that it’s not true, or not true to the degree people think.” He mentioned that *The New Yorker* and *New York* magazine had pursued the story. One of the reporters had “just called everyone in Harvey’s world. It freaked him out.” Weinstein had “gotten more sensitive about it.”

“What does ‘sensitive’ mean?” I asked.

“He’s older now. He’s mellowed a bit. I don’t think he’s going to be taking action immediately, but —”

“Taking action?” I said.

“Well, he’s not dumb. He’s going to do something. Look, you have your book to finish, right? So this is on the back burner for you,” he said. I glanced at the notes I’d been taking throughout the call. My eyebrows went up when I saw it: Hiltzik had let slip a small but useful lead.

Applause sounded on Hiltzik’s end of the line. “What event are you at?” I asked.

Hiltzik explained that Hillary Clinton had finished a greenroom conversation with Weinstein, her old friend and fund-raiser, then stepped onstage to give a speech at Women in the World.



I texted Greenberg about Hiltzik immediately. The next day, Greenberg called. He led with strained small talk about my foreign policy book that suggested he was ramping up to something. Then, he said, “By the way, I met with Noah today, and you know — we were talking about ten different things, it wasn’t that we met about this topic, but he asked about your favorite story.” He chuckled. “I

told him there's smoke but I don't know that there's fire. We don't really have a smoking gun. I said, 'Noah, if you ask me right now, you know, I don't think we have it.'

I reminded him that I'd heard audio of Weinstein admitting to an assault and seen his signature on a million-dollar nondisclosure agreement. I pressed on whether we could schedule that meeting between Gutierrez and our lawyers. "It's not in the news. I don't think there's any rush here," Greenberg said. "I think where we stand now is, we give it a rest."

"What does 'give it a rest' mean?" I asked.

"You know, just—just keep it on the back burner," Greenberg said. *That phrase again*, I thought. "Ronan, you have so many promising things going on. You've got a lot of stories in progress, the series is doing well. You know, you don't have to necessarily focus on this."

A few minutes later, I was on the phone with McHugh. He was as puzzled as I was. "This feels like somebody called them," he said. "You hear from Hiltzik and Harvey, then this? It doesn't feel like a coincidence."

"I'm sure they got calls, and I'm sure they're standing up to them. Noah will back this."

"Well, our immediate boss doesn't want you reporting. You're gonna have to decide if you go along with that."

"We'll bring them more evidence, they'll come around," I said.

But when McHugh told Greenberg he was setting aside an afternoon to make calls on the Weinstein story, Greenberg said, simply, "I think that can wait." The situation was creating a Catch-22. We needed more evidence, but continuing to gather it openly was, suddenly, a liability. "What happens when we need to shoot more interviews?" McHugh asked.



"We're in fantastic shape here," Alan Berger, of Creative Artists Agency—CAA—was saying. The San Andreas fault could split open and Los Angeles could slip right into the Pacific and agents would still be running around reassuring clients how fantastic everything was. "Your *Nightly* story about the prisons. Phew!" Berger continued. He had a warm, avuncular voice, with an accent that knew its way around the Long Island Expressway. He was regarded in the business as a steady dealmaker.

"You know your contract's up this fall."

"I know," I said. I was in my apartment. In the ballet studio across the street, someone was buffing the floor. As the Weinstein story expanded, it crowded out other reporting and career considerations. I'd missed so many deadlines on my foreign policy book that my publisher had finally given up and canceled it, that very week.

"They love you there," Berger said, of NBC. "Noah loves you. Everyone sees a bigger role for you."

"Well, I'm working on some stories that are making things a little—"

"A little what, Ronan?"

"I can't talk about it, Alan. Just let me know if anything seems weird."

"Ronan, you're killing me," Berger said, laughing. "Just keep doing what you're doing. And don't piss anyone off."

CHAPTER 13:

DICK

I flipped through my notes from the call with Hiltzik and looked at his comment about *New York* and *The New Yorker* magazines. At *New York*, Carr, with his suspicions of surveillance and intimidation, had chased the story, but that was in the early 2000s. Something in Hiltzik's observation about Weinstein's sensitivity suggested someone else had tried more recently.

I sent another message to Jennifer Senior, the writer who'd worked with Carr. "Can you find out if anyone else at *New York* was working on the story we discussed, potentially more recently than David?" I asked. "I keep hearing that this might have been the case."

"Yr right," she wrote back. "Just looked at my email. But I feel uncomfortable, in this case, saying who." The attempt at the story, it seemed, had ended poorly. I asked her to pass on a message to the mystery writer.

At *The New Yorker*, Ken Auletta, a writer known for his thorough appraisals of business and media executives, had profiled Weinstein in 2002. Entitled "Beauty and the Beast," the piece made no explicit mention of sexual predation, but dwelled on Weinstein's brutality. He was, Auletta wrote, "spectacularly coarse, and even threatening."

And there was a curious, overheated passage that hinted that there was more to the story. Auletta noted that Weinstein's business partners "feel 'raped'—a word often invoked by those dealing with him." I sent a message to an acquaintance who worked at *The New Yorker* and asked for Auletta's email address.



Auletta was seventy-five. He grew up on Coney Island, raised by a Jewish mother and an Italian father. There was something elegant and old-world about his carriage and speech. And he was a careful, experienced reporter. "Of course, there was more to it than we were able to print," he told me when I called him, from an empty office near the investigative newsroom. Back in 2002, Auletta had pursued the claims that Weinstein was preying on women, and even asked about the allegations in an on-the-record interview. The two had been sitting in Weinstein's Tribeca offices. Weinstein stood up, face red, and shouted at Auletta, "Are you trying to get my fucking wife to divorce me?" Auletta stood, too, "fully prepared to beat the shit out of him." But then Weinstein crumpled, sitting back down and beginning to sob. "He basically said to me, 'Look I don't always behave well, but I love my wife.'" Weinstein hadn't denied the allegations.

Auletta hadn't been able to secure an on-the-record claim like McGowan's, or a piece of hard evidence like Gutierrez's tape and contract. But he had spoken to Zelda Perkins, one of two former employees of Miramax in London who were involved in a joint sexual harassment settlement with Weinstein. Though she was too frightened to go on the record, Auletta had been able to use Perkins's account as leverage, compelling Weinstein to concede there had been some kind of settlement with her and the other employee in London.

Weinstein even presented to *The New Yorker* the voided check used in the transaction, to establish that it had been underwritten not by Miramax's parent company, Disney, but with private money from an account belonging to Weinstein's brother, Bob.

But the checks had been shown to him off the record. When the brothers, along with David Boies, met with Auletta and *New Yorker* editor David Remnick, Weinstein had provided none of the further information they'd hoped might render the claims publishable. He'd evinced only furious denials and a barely checked temper.

Years later, Auletta's frustration was still palpable. He was like a homicide detective kept awake at night by the case that got away. "I had a fixation," he told me. By the end of his reporting, he said, "I came to believe that he's a predator, a serial rapist, and to see exposing him as a public service." He had tried reviving the story twice over the years, most recently after the Gutierrez incident. But he'd gotten no traction. "If you have any chance of succeeding where I failed," he told me, "keep at it."



Rose McGowan had stayed in touch, urging us to come shoot more with her. She mentioned, in our conversations, that she was finding more support. Lacy Lynch, the literary agent who had passed along the inquiry from Seth Freedman, the empathetic former *Guardian* writer, was also forwarding other expressions of solidarity. The day I spoke to Auletta, one such email arrived, from Reuben Capital Partners, a London-based wealth management firm seeking to enlist McGowan in a charitable project called Women in Focus. The firm was planning a gala dinner at the end of the year and hoped McGowan would give a keynote speech: "We have taken a keen interest in the work Ms Rose McGowan does for the advocacy of

women's rights and we believe that the ideals she strives towards align closely with those upheld by our new initiative."

"I think it sounds good," Lynch wrote to McGowan. "Would love to set up a call to learn more."

The email from Reuben Capital Partners was signed by Diana Filip, deputy head of sustainable and responsible investments.



The following morning, an email that I obtained many months later appeared in Harvey Weinstein's private Gmail account. "RF Info," the subject line read. "LEGALLY PRIVILEGED."

"Harvey," the email read, "Here is a rough overview of the info I have compiled so far on Ronan Farrow." Several dozen exhibits were attached. In a section of the email titled "persons of interest that Farrow is following" was a list of some accusers I'd found, and some I hadn't. The email noted that McHugh and I had followed, on social media, a cluster of McGowan's associates around the date of our interview, "out of the blue," and speculated that I'd gotten her to talk. It observed that I was "a fan" of Lisa Bloom, appearing to assess her level of access to me. And it described my attempts to get in touch with Judd, Sciorra, and Arquette. The email analyzed the likelihood that each of them would talk. It flagged any public statements the women had made about sexual violence as a warning sign.

A section titled "Farrow Employment" contained an exhaustive list of coworkers who might provide access or information. There were the obvious on-air investigative correspondents with whom I'd worked, like Cynthia McFadden and Stephanie Gosk. But the list also included coworkers who wouldn't be publicly identifiable, like an NBC intern whose desk was adjacent to mine.

A biographical section appeared to search for pressure points. It noted what it described as “family drama,” stirred by “his sister Dylan Farrow in her accusations of rape against their father Woody Allen.” The topic I’d spent years trying to outrun was coming back to haunt me.

The email was sent by Sara Ness, a private investigator at a firm called PSOPS. Jack Palladino and Sandra Sutherland, a husband-and-wife team, operated the firm. A rare profile of the two in *People* magazine compared them to Nick and Nora Charles, the detective couple from *The Thin Man*, minus the glamour. During the 1992 presidential campaign, Bill Clinton hired Palladino to “discredit stories about women claiming to have had relationships with the Arkansas governor,” per the *Washington Post*. By the late nineties, Palladino had earned the nickname “the President’s Dick.” He said he never broke the law. But, he proudly noted, “I go right to the boundaries of the envelope.”

“Jack is overseas, but I have kept him up to speed on this investigation and will confer with him this week on the issues/potential strategies you and I discussed yesterday,” Ness wrote Weinstein that day in April. She promised that a fuller and more formal dossier was forthcoming. The message made two things clear: that the research was meant to complement a larger effort, involving players other than Palladino’s firm; and that the dossier was just an opening salvo.



Rich McHugh and I kept raising the idea of doing further reporting on the Weinstein story, and Greenberg kept telling us to focus on other things. Greenberg was our boss. The conversations were becoming awkward. But after the call with Auletta, it was becoming clear that we had secured more hard evidence than anyone had before, about a story that had stayed buried for decades.

“What do we do?” I asked McHugh. We were huddled on the margins of the newsroom.

“I don’t know,” he replied. “I think if you go to Greenberg—he told you to put the story on the back burner...”

“He didn’t order us to stop,” I said, wearily. “He said we could meet again about it.”

“Okay,” McHugh said, skeptical.

“But maybe it’s strategic to be armed with as much as possible before that meeting,” I conceded.

“That’s my inclination,” he said. “Let’s just get on with it.”

We agreed to shore up our reporting. We’d return with a bullet-proof body of evidence, and ask for forgiveness, not permission. Calls could be done quietly. But we debated how to keep our on-camera interviews going without running afoul of Greenberg.



The next day, McHugh motioned me over to his computer. “We have a green light on shooting for, what, three, four stories?” We were working on several about addiction, and the one about Dow Chemical and Shell seeding California farmlands with toxic waste. “You think you can schedule these Weinstein interviews around those shoots?” he asked.

“Well, yeah. But they’d be marked as Weinstein interviews anyway,” I said.

“Not necessarily,” he said. “We add interviews that come up suddenly onto existing travel all the time. And we can label them anything we want.”

There were limits to how much we could hide the work. The subject of any new interviews would still be revealed on detailed expense reports. But we could avoid calling attention to the matter with leadership.

On his monitor, McHugh navigated to a networked drive on an NBC server. He scrolled through a list of directories containing our stories. Then he took the Weinstein files out of a folder titled "MEDIA MOGUL" and dropped them into a different one. I looked at the screen and laughed. The folder he'd chosen, named after the California waste story, was labeled "POISON VALLEY."

CHAPTER III

PART II: WHITE WHALE

