

New scam

What's fun and ironic is that we can also use AI to research these scams. Using Grok AI, I typed in, "Is there a scam for authors that appears to be from Harper Collins?" Here's what it gave me in about five seconds:

"Yes, there have been multiple reports of scams targeting authors by individuals or entities impersonating HarperCollins staff or claiming affiliation with the publisher. These scams often involve fraudulent offers for book contracts or publishing services, typically requesting upfront payments or sensitive financial information from authors. Here are key details based on available information:

"Nature of the Scam: Scammers pose as HarperCollins editors, literary agents, or representatives, offering book deals or acquisition contracts. They may use fake email addresses (e.g., replacing letters like 'l' with the number '1' in "HarperCollins") or unofficial domains like Gmail instead of legitimate HarperCollins email addresses (@harpercollins.com or @harpercollins.co.uk). Common tactics include:

- Requesting payment for services like 'developmental editing,' 'content editing,' or 'background checks' to proceed with a publishing deal.

- Asking for bank account details, supposedly for sending advances, but using the information to drain funds.

- Claiming to represent HarperCollins or its imprints, sometimes using stolen logos, staff names, or photos to appear legitimate. (https://www.reddit.com/r/books/comments/ukce58/fraudster_impersonates_harpercollins_editorial/)(<https://www.thebookseller.com/news/fraudster-impersonates-harpercollins-editorial-director-and-offers-book-contracts>)(<https://writerbeware.blog/2020/08/28/alert-scammers-impersonating-major-publishing-houses/>)

"Specific Cases:

- In 2022, a fraudster impersonated HarperCollins editorial director Phoebe Morgan, using a fake email (HARPERCO11INS.COM) to offer book contracts.

The scam was identified due to the suspicious email domain and HarperCollins' statement that they never request payments from authors for publication. (https://www.reddit.com/r/books/comments/ukce58/fraudster_impersonates_harpercollins_editorial/) (<https://www.thebookseller.com/news/fraudster-impersonates-harpercollins-editorial-director-and-offers-book-contracts>)

- Another scam involved 'Editor's Press and Media,' a Philippines-based operation falsely claiming to work with HarperCollins, demanding fees for re-publishing or editing services that never materialized. (<https://writerbeware.blog/2020/08/28/alert-scammers-impersonating-major-publishing-houses/>)

- In 2023, HarperCollins Australia reported scammers targeting authors with fake acquisition offers, requesting payments or financial details and using fraudulent letters with HarperCollins logos. (<https://www.harpercollins.com.au/publishing-fraud-alert/>)

- A 2024 report highlighted a fake job offer scam claiming to be from HarperCollins, asking candidates to purchase equipment upfront with promises of reimbursement via fake checks. (https://www.reddit.com/r/Scams/comments/1ejz0b5/harper_collins_wfh_scam/)

“HarperCollins' Response: HarperCollins has issued multiple fraud alerts, emphasizing:

- They do not charge authors for manuscript submission, publication, or related services.

- They do not partner with third-party companies for editorial or marketing services targeting unpublished or self-published authors.

- Official communications use only @harpercollins.com or @harpercollins.co.uk email addresses.

- Authors should report suspicious contacts to fraudUK@harpercollins.co.uk (for UK) or local authorities and avoid sharing money or personal details. [] (<https://www.harpercollins.com.au/publishing-fraud-alert/>) [] (<https://corporate.harpercollins.co.uk/getting-published/publishing-fraud-alert/>)

“Red Flags to Watch For:

- Unsolicited offers, especially if you haven't submitted to HarperCollins or a contest they sponsor. (https://www.reddit.com/r/selfpublish/comments/15s1um5/does_harpercollins_buy_book_rights_from_people_or/)
- Requests for upfront fees for publishing, editing, or other services. Legitimate publishers like HarperCollins pay authors advances, not the other way around. (https://www.reddit.com/r/books/comments/ukce58/fraudster_impersonates_harpercollins_editorial/) (<https://www.penandglory.com/post/too-good-to-be-true-9-signs-of-a-publishing-scam>)
- Emails from non-official domains (e.g., Gmail or fake domains like harpercollins.com). (<https://www.thebookseller.com/news/fraudster-impersonates-harpercollins-editorial-director-and-offers-book-contracts>) (<https://writerbeware.blog/2020/08/28/alert-scammers-impersonating-major-publishing-houses/>)
- Poor grammar, typos, or unprofessional communication, uncommon for a major publisher. (<https://writerbeware.blog/2020/08/28/alert-scammers-impersonating-major-publishing-houses/>)
- Pressure to act quickly or pay fees to secure a deal. (<https://www.penandglory.com/post/too-good-to-be-true-9-signs-of-a-publishing-scam>)

“Protecting Yourself:

- Verify any contact by checking email domains and contacting HarperCollins directly through official channels.
- Do not click links, open attachments, or send money in response to unsolicited offers. (<https://corporate.harpercollins.co.uk/getting-published/publishing-fraud-alert/>)
- Report suspected scams to HarperCollins (fraudUK@harpercollins.co.uk for UK) or authorities like Action Fraud. (<https://corporate.harpercollins.co.uk/getting-published/publishing-fraud-alert/>)

- Research the publishing process: Legitimate publishers, including HarperCollins, typically work through literary agents and do not charge authors upfront. (<https://writerbeware.blog/2020/08/28/alert-scammers-impersonating-major-publishing-houses/>) (<https://www.penandglory.com/post/too-good-to-be-true-9-signs-of-a-publishing-scam>)

“Context: These scams are part of a broader trend targeting aspiring authors, often exploiting their desire for publication. Other major publishers like Penguin Random House and Macmillan have also been impersonated. The rise of such scams, particularly from regions like the Philippines, has been noted by industry watchdogs like Writer Beware. (<https://writerbeware.blog/2024/03/15/the-impersonation-list/>) (<https://writerbeware.blog/2020/08/28/alert-scammers-impersonating-major-publishing-houses/>) (<https://writerbeware.blog/2024/03/15/the-impersonation-list/>)

“If you’ve received a suspicious offer claiming to be from HarperCollins, contact them directly to verify and report it to your local fraud authorities. Always be cautious of unsolicited publishing offers, and remember that in traditional publishing, money flows to the author, not away from them. (https://www.reddit.com/r/books/comments/ukce58/fraudster_impersonates_harpercollins_editorial/)”

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I guess it’s still true that if something looks too good to be true, it probably is. Knowing how the publishing industry works and that there’s no easy path to success goes a long way toward protecting yourself.

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NOTE: *Website gal here, I noticed that the links to report scams listed above were for Australia and the UK. I looked on Harper Collins’ American site and found this link that gives fraud advice for us here in the States:*

<https://www.harpercollins.com/pages/fraudalert>