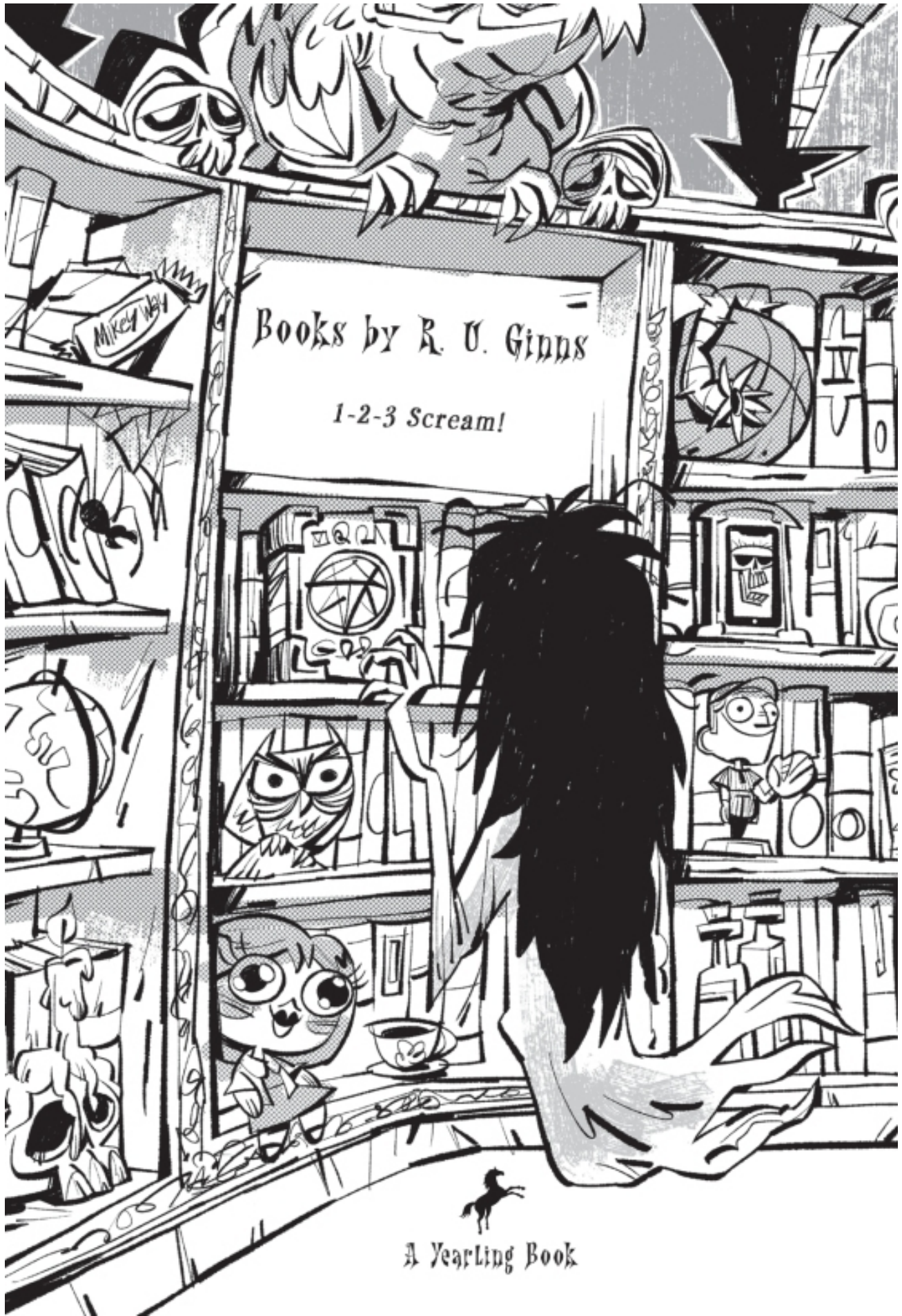


1-2-3 SCREAM!



R.V. Ginns ✖ Illustrations by J. Espila



A Yearling Book



123 SCREAM!

R.J. Ginns

Illustrations by
J. Espila

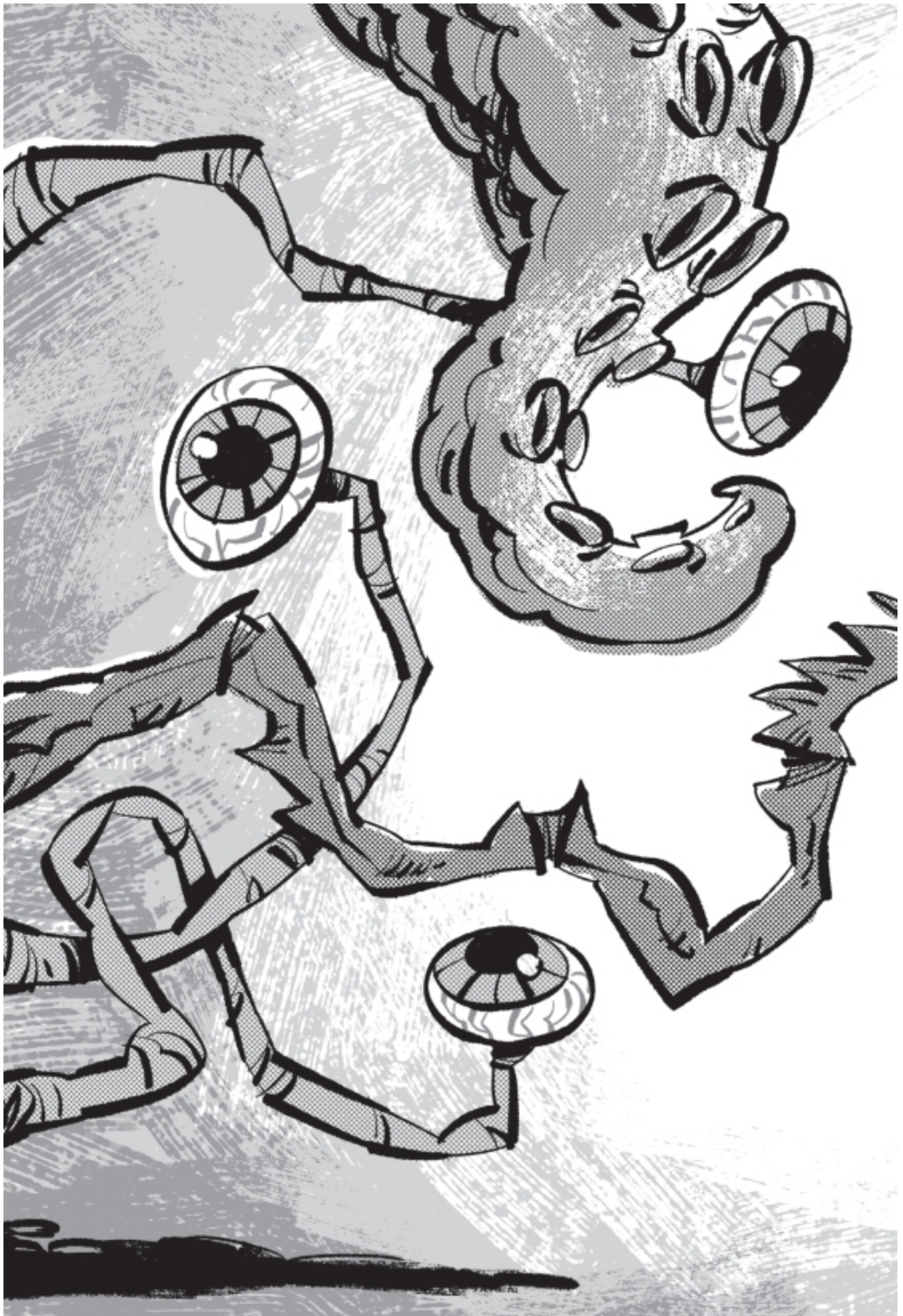


This book is dedicated to anyone reckless enough to read it.

-R. U. Gibbs


For my wonderful daughter, Marina, who has supervised every single one of the illustrations in this book. And for the doctors Laura, Marta, Silvia, Guiomar, and Miguel Ángel of the pediatric oncology team at the Hospital Materno-Infantil, Malaga (Spain), who saved her life and the lives of our entire family.

-J. Espila

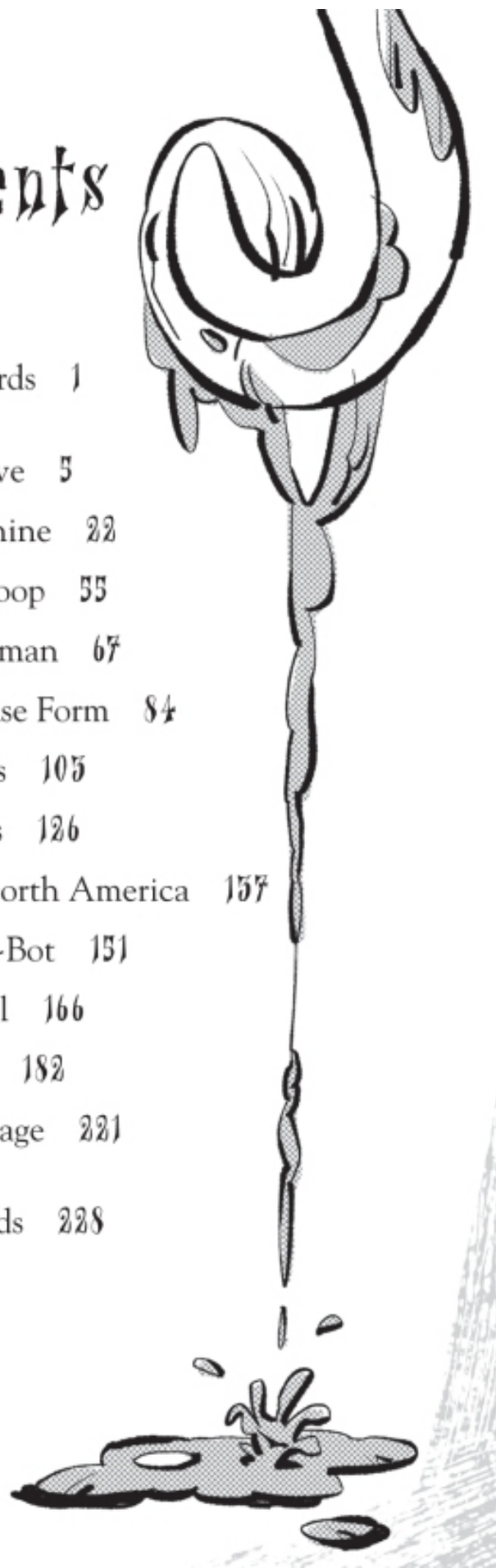




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Four Words

Everywhere I go, readers ask me, “R. U. Ginns?”

I have to admit it’s a very good question.

Almost always, my answer is “Yes.”

I *am* R. U. Ginns, the author of these stories. I am the person who, day after day, night after night, tapped with one finger at my keyboard to create the words you are now reading.

I usually use my index finger. I raise it high above my head and bring it down, with three or four quick taps in a row. Then I stop and I look around. It’s important to know if anyone, or anything, is watching. People. Librarians. Birds.

When I am writing in a coffee shop, or in a bus station, or on the floor in the potato chip aisle at a grocery store, my tap-tap-tapping is enough to scare away most people.



Sometimes, when I'm writing in a library, librarians come over and ask me to type "a little quieter, please."

I don't like it when people tell me which words I should type.

A, little, quieter, and please are four perfectly good words. But I shouldn't have to stop writing *my* words and switch to typing something else just because someone asked me to, even if one of those words is *please*.

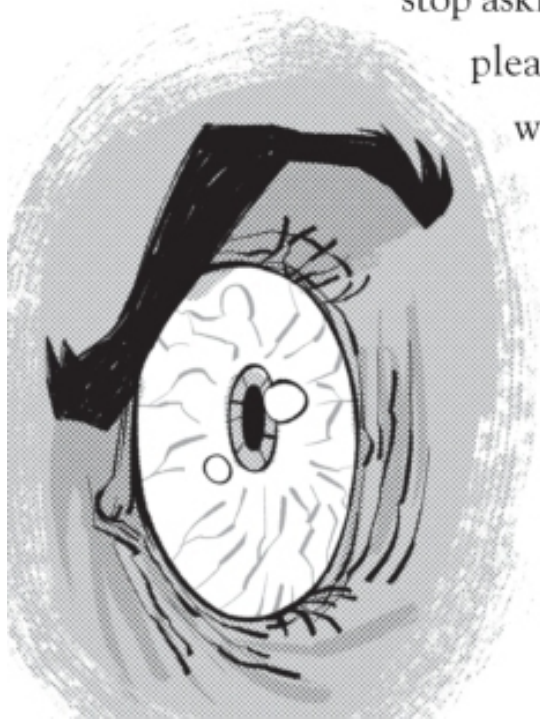
I must keep writing my stories.

I cannot stop.

So instead of answering them, I give those librarians my *super-evil glare*. I frown; then I slowly raise one eyebrow and look into their eyes for a long time without blinking. This is the best way to let everyone know that I must keep writing.

When librarians see a *super-evil glare*, they usually stop asking authors to type "a little quieter, please." They almost never ask me what I am writing. And they *never, ever* ask me to consider leaving because it is midnight and the library closed many hours ago.

I only wish my *super-evil glare* worked on birds. But no, it doesn't. Nothing is powerful



enough to scare away crows, or finches, or pelicans. That is why you should *think twice before you go outside!*

So yes. I am the person who typed every letter of every word of every sentence in this book. I tapped and tapped, and when my fingers began to hurt too much, I finished the last story by typing with my *elbows*. Do you know how hard it is to type a whole story with just elbows? Can you imagine how many times I had to go back and fix all the mistakes?

When you type with elbows, it can take a half hour to type just *four words*.

Now.

I.

Am.

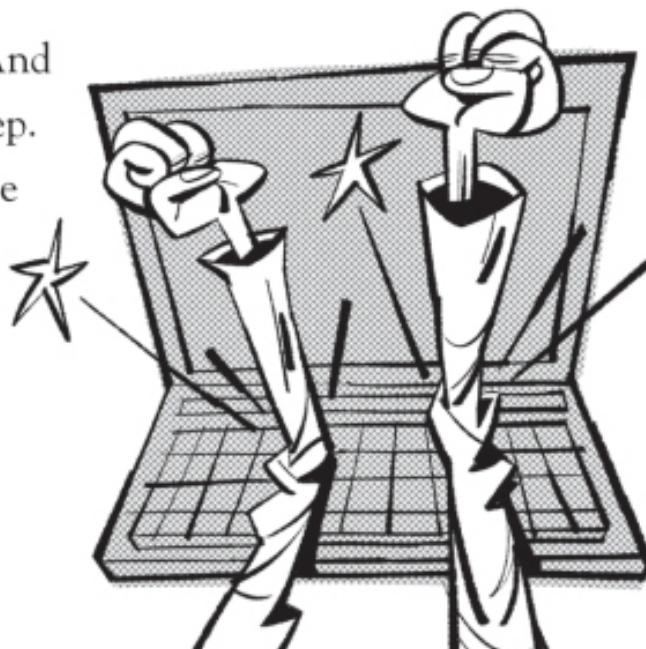
Tired.

No four words have ever been more true.

I have typed and tapped and elbowed one hundred thousand, nine hundred and forty-six letters, and I am exhausted.

I am so very tired. And yet, I am not able to sleep.

How could anyone sleep after writing these stories? How could anyone sleep after learning what I have learned?



Every now and then, when I'm not writing, I have to leave my heavily reinforced and booby-trapped living space for some reason—like to go shopping. I drink a lot of lemon tea and I'm a big fan of saltwater taffy, so my supplies run out often. It was during these expeditions when I learned about all the people and events in this terrible collection. And there is no doubt in my mind:

EVERYTHING IN THIS BOOK IS TRUE.

One hundred percent true. That's why I had to write it all down.

I've changed most of the names in these stories for *your* safety. But don't feel too safe. I know I don't.

Now you are in on the secret.

I hope my book brings you hours of fun and guidance. Guidance that might help you avoid the fates that befall the poor subjects of these tales. I hope you find the stories *hilarifying*. I hope you are able to sleep after reading them. Or not.

And now that you have read my foreword, you are ready to read another four words:

One . . .

Two . . .

Three . . .

Scream!

