For children everywhere
who want to make the world a better place
(sorry to put this burden on you so young)

First published in Great Britain in 2020 by
PICCADILLY PRESS
80–81 Wimpole St, London W1G 9RE
www.piccadillypress.co.uk
Owned by Bonnier Books
Sveavägen 56, Stockholm, Sweden

Text copyright © Konnie Huq and James Kay 2020
Illustrations copyright © Rikin Parekh 2020

Interior designed by Suzanne Cooper

All rights reserved.
No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored or transmitted in any form
or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying or otherwise,
without the prior written permission of the publisher.

The right of Konnie Huq and James Kay to be identified as author, and of Rikin Parekh
to be identified as illustrator of this work has been asserted by them
in accordance with the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988

This is a work of fiction. Names, places, events and incidents are either the products
of the author's imagination or used fictitiously. Any resemblance to actual persons,
living or dead, is purely coincidental.

A CIP catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

ISBN: 9781848128118
also available as an ebook and audio

1

Printed in Latvia

Piccadilly Press is an imprint of Bonnier Books UK
www.bonnierbooks.co.uk

FEARLESS Fairy Tales

By Konnie Huq & James Kay
Illustrated by Rikin Parekh

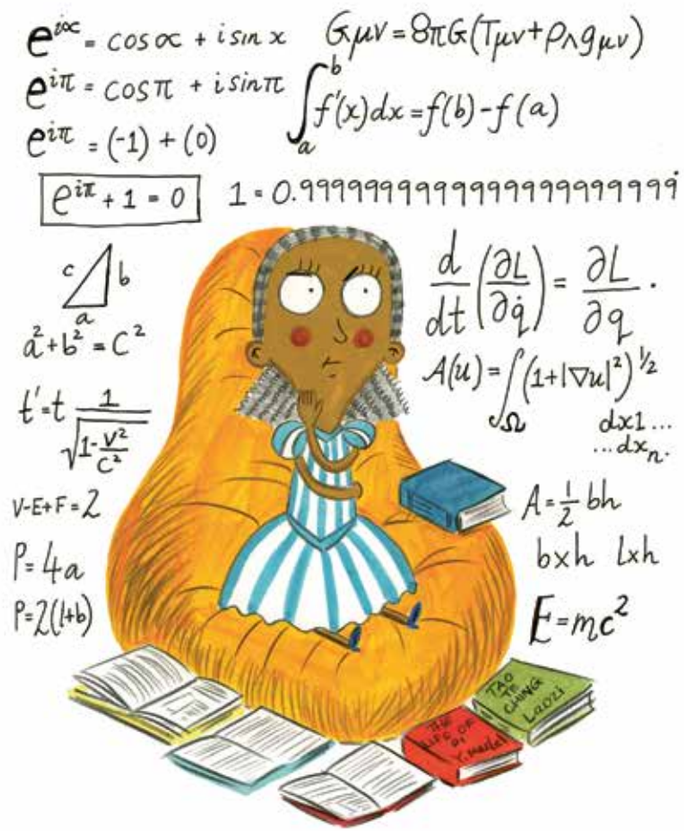
Piccadilly PRESS

IMPORTANT NOTE

Due to the risk of paper cuts,
please do not use pages of this book to wipe your bottom
when you run out of toilet paper.

Contents

Sleeping Brainy	1
Mouldysocks and the Three Bears	12
Rap-Unzel	23
Trumplestiltskin	34
Lil' Red Riding in the Hood	44
Jack and the Baked Beanstalk	52
The Princess and the Snog	63
The Boy Who Cried Wool	68
Princess and the Peashooter	77
Robin Hoodlum and his Not-So-Merry Men	89
Gretel and Hansel	98
Spinocchio	108
Snow White and the Five-a-Side Football Team	120
The Three Little Pugs	128
The Pickled Mermaid	132
The Gingerbread Kid	138
Cinderella and the Comfy Old Trainer	153



Sleeping Brainy

Oona was a very brainy princess. She could count to seventeen million and do her forty-eight times table backwards. (She could do it forward too, mind you, but she found that a little too easy.) She knew Einstein's theory of relativity[1] inside out and was even working on a new and improved version. To say Oona was *quite* clever was an understatement – like saying Rapunzel's hair was *quite* long. The truth is, Oona was a flipping genius!

[1] A very important maths thing to do with space and time and, well, everything.

Oona already knew exactly what she wanted to be when she grew up, and it most certainly was *not* a princess. She couldn't imagine who in their right mind would want to spend their days tiara shopping or leafing through *Vanity Fairy Tale* magazine or cutting ribbons and declaring buildings open. What a waste of time – not to mention ribbon. 'No, thank you very much,' she thought. 'Being a princess sounds absolutely rubbish. When I grow up, I'm going to be Chancellor of the Exchequer'.[2]

Oona already had much better ideas than the current chancellor, Neville Tightwad, who kept getting all his sums wrong, leaving the country with a massive deficit.[3] 'Twenty take away two does not equal ninety trillion and

[2] The person in charge of all the money and sums for the whole country.
[3] When the country owes lots of money.

three,' sighed Oona as Mr Tightwad announced the figures in his latest budget.[4] But her father, the king, wouldn't hear a word of it. 'Being Chancellor of the Exchequer is far too difficult a job for a girl,' he snapped. 'Princesses can't solve equations or do algebra.[5] Tell you what, here's a grand[6] – go and buy yourself a sparkly new tiara.'

One day, while the king was busy posing for his official royal portrait, Oona sneaked into his counting house and counted all his money. She spent all day doing the sums to calculate exactly how much cash was needed to pay the country's bills. (She also calculated that it took her three quills, eleven inkpots and 322 sheets of paper to do these sums, but that's beside the point.) Just as she was on the brink of saving the entire kingdom three hundred and fifty million pounds a week, a voice boomed out from behind her: 'Oona, dear, does my bottom look big in this?'

[4] A plan to make sure you always have enough money.
[5] A sort of maths involving letters as well as numbers.
[6] A thousand pounds.

The king was standing in the doorway, clutching a rather unflattering portrait under his arm. When he saw Oona's sums spread out all over the floor, his face turned so purple that Oona was worried the portrait artist would have to completely redo the painting. 'Enough is enough, young lady!' boomed the beetroot-faced king. 'This is the final straw! I'm hiring you a royal tutor! You are going to learn all the things that princesses ought to learn, like waving nicely and smiling and sewing and receiving floral bouquets and cutting ribbons and walking elegantly on ten-inch-high heels. *Not* doing complex calculations!'

'But that's not fair!' cried Oona, tears stinging her eyes.

'And I'm banning counting throughout the kingdom just to make a point!' declared the king. 'It will be high treason, punishable by three hundred years in prison!'

So Ms Phyllis Snootfest was hired after she spotted a job advertisement for 'the most boring princessing tutor in the land'. Every morning, afternoon and night, Ms Snootfest would force Oona to do silly exercises like walking on cobbles in glass slippers with the entire

Encyclopedia Britannica[7] balanced on her head to maintain perfect princess posture. Oona didn't want to carry the books on her head; she wanted to read them (even though she had already read every volume twenty times and was currently in the middle of writing an early version of Wikipedia.)[8]

Oona's despair had almost reached boiling point[9] when she conjured up a cunning plan from thin air, the way geniuses generally do. She remembered a bedtime story the king had once told her about a princess who pricked her finger on a spinning wheel and fell asleep for a hundred years. She decided she would pretend to do the exact same thing during her own sewing lesson! That way, Oona would be able to sneak into the counting house at night while everyone else was asleep and do as many sums as she liked without being sentenced to 300 years in prison. Oona was delighted with her cunning plan and set about putting it into action by pinching a bottle of fake blood from the royal jester's quarters and practising her pretend snoring.

Oona was all set for the big day when troubling news reached the palace: nobody in the kingdom was able to get to sleep, no matter how hard they tried. Lying down didn't work. Closing their eyes didn't work. Comfy pillows didn't make the slightest bit of difference. Everybody in the kingdom was wandering around in their pyjamas, yawning and baggy-eyed.Even Phyllis Snootfest couldn't doze off, and she usually bored herself to sleep.

7 About thirty large books crammed full of general knowledge.
8 A similar thing to the *Encyclopedia Britannica*, but much bigger and on the internet, which hadn't been invented yet.
9 Usually the temperature at which a liquid becomes a gas but, in this case, it means the point at which Oona could bear it no longer.

The king was so tired that he didn't have the energy to fathom the answer to such a complex problem. He decided to sleep on it – but of course he couldn't. Oona – being a genius – took all of three minutes to work out what was going on. (Well, thirty seconds, actually, but it took two minutes to sneak the bottle of fake blood back to the jester's quarters and half a minute to get the king's attention.) 'Daddy, I know the answer!'

The king rolled his baggy eyes. 'Don't be ridiculous, Oona! Why would a little girl know the answer to anything? Don't bother me again until I've sorted out this blasted situation,' he yelled (through a yawn).

A day went by. And another. And another. Until eventually no one in the entire kingdom had slept for a hundred days.

Oona was extremely tired too. She was even more tired than the time a pea rolled under her extra thick, duck-feather-lined memory-foam mattress, causing her to toss and turn all night long. She was even more tired than the time she woke up from a nightmare in which she'd kissed her pet frog Ribbit and to her absolute horror he turned into a prince! But, most of all, she was tired of the king not listening to her.

Things in the kingdom had gone from terrible to terrible-er.

The sleep-deprived chancellor, Neville Tightwad, was making more mistakes than ever and the kingdom was quickly running out of cash. The king knew it was time to sort out this insomnia[10] inducing situation once and for all. But maybe just after he'd had a little nap . . . 'Oh dear,' sighed the king when he remembered he couldn't nap. 'I can't even manage one wink, never mind forty of the blighters.'

The king summoned the royal astronomer to look into the stars to see if he could find an answer . . . but all he could find were stars. If only he'd spotted a shooting star, he could have made a wish that people would sleep again. But, alas, he did not. Useless.

[10] When you can't sleep.

The king then summoned the chief royal scientist to do an experiment and . . . it worked! The king jumped for joy! The chief royal scientist jumped for joy! Everyone jumped for joy! And then they realised that the experiment had nothing to do with sleeping, and just proved that copper wire burns with a bright blue-green flame. Useless.

So the king summoned the royal jester, who told a joke. 'What do you call an Italian with a rubber toe?' the jester asked. 'Roberto!' he cried in an Italian accent. 'Rubber toe! Roberto! Ha ha ha ha!' Nobody laughed. Except the jester. Perhaps they were too tired or perhaps it was just a bad joke. Either way – useless.

The king's despair had now reached boiling point.[11] Exhausted, a laughing stock and a broken man, the king summoned Oona to ask for her help. 'You see, Daddy, it's really quite simple,' said Oona faster than the speed of light.[12] 'When you banned counting, nobody could count sheep to get to sleep, so that's why everyone is so tired.' Oona tried very hard not to look too pleased with herself, but she couldn't help but smile.

'Oh,' said the king. 'That really was quite simple.

[11] Remember? Usually the temperature at which a liquid becomes a gas, but, in this case, the point at which the King could bear it no longer.
[12] The fastest speed possible in the entire universe (30,000,000 metres per second).

So at last the problem was solved. The king lifted the counting ban, the nation took a very long nap and Oona was voted number-one top princess of all time by *Vanity Fairy Tale* magazine. All the eligible suitors in the kingdom queued up to meet her, but she didn't have time for suitors – she had much too much studying to do. Plus, Ribbit wanted to play leapfrog.

The king apologised to his daughter. 'I've been a bad king and a bad father. From now on you can use the counting house whenever you need peace and quiet to do your sums.' He then ordered the chief royal scientist to invent the calculator to help Neville Tightwad with his sums. He ordered the royal cook to prepare a celebratory feast, including a generous serving of humble pie[13] for His Majesty. And finally he ordered the royal jester to stop telling bad jokes. The celebrations continued till the stars came out and at last everyone fell asleep. Ahh! Finally!

Years later, when Oona was a grown-up, she became the first ever woman to be appointed Chancellor of the Exchequer. On day one in the job Oona decreed that maths and science would both be compulsory subjects in the national curriculum[14] for all primary school children. Oona became the country's most successful chancellor in history, turning Neville Tightwad's mess into a prospering economy.[15]

Oona also went on to improve upon the chief royal scientist's calculator by inventing the computer.[16] And then the internet. And then her favourite website Wikipedia, which, you may remember, she had started writing when she was just a young princess.

'Ah,' sighed Oona, as she finally put her feet up. 'All in a good nine thousand six hundred and eighteen days' work.'

[13] What you eat when you're sorry.
[14] The list of what children in a kingdom should study.
[15] When the country has lots of money and a bright future.
[16] In the real world, the first person to realise that calculators were capable of so much more than just number crunching was a very clever woman called Ada Lovelace. Today over three billion people use computers and the internet, and half of them are women.