L'Histoire de la Rose Blanche

by Shrubbery_Girl

Summary

The Darcy family has shaped English history for centuries, but underneath the glamour, there are terrible secrets waiting to be unveiled. An age-old mystery is about to be unravelled when Mr Darcy finds out who Elizabeth Bennet really is.

Notes

If you know this story from DWG, it's still the same.

L'Histoire de la Rose Blanche,

Or,

The Darcy Conspiracy.

Galloping Insanity in 13 Parts

I

As long as Norman kings have ruled on English soil, Darcies have given them allegiance. When the first Norman king, the powerful and decidedly not illegitimate Duke of Normandy, claimed the picturesque island just northwest of Calais for his own, it was his half-brother, Baudouin, duc de l'Arcy, who was his most trusted advisor and who was most intimate to his king’s most secret affairs, not that any of those would have been extra-marital. When the first English queen, Mathilde, had trouble establishing her reign, it was her trusted right hand, Odo, comte d'Arcy, who was at her side day and night, or whenever Geoffrey of Anjou's prying eyes would not be on
them. When the cerebrally challenged Richard Lionheart began travelling to the south for health and recreation, it was Ranulf, vicomte d'Arcy-l'Arcy who was in charge of keeping all the motel vouchers in order. When Henry Bolingbroke deposed his cousin Richard, Vincent d'Arcy-l'Arcy-D'Arcy, 2nd Marquis of Glastonbury, naturally and justly refused to side with the son of a man who had married his mistress, and sided with the Yorkists. It was MyLord Percival D'Arcy who cradled the dying King Richard in his arms on the ill-fated fields of Roderick Bosworth, whilst his brother, Sir Edmond D'Arcy swore false allegiance to the pretender, Henry ‘Pants on Fire’ Tudor.

Their unwise assessment of the outcome of the Wars of the Roses brought about the downfall of the scheming dynasty of Darcies. For some reason or other, they henceforth always got the short end of the stick. Lord Darcy, the keeper of Pontefract Castle, fell from grace in 1536, when he would rather hand the castle over to the rebels than have it destroyed, and was subsequently relieved of his earthly shell. Sir Eugene de Darcy's stout refusal of adapting to the Puritan ‘round’ way of styling his hair brought him no luck in 1649. Eustace Darcy found out, to his own misfortune, that he suffered from sea-sickness, and drowned in the cold Hebridean Sea, just off the coast of Skye.

II

A little over fifty years later, Fitzwilliam l'Arcy Darcy, his great-grandson, shut his bedroom door at Netherfield Park with a decided bang and stormed down the stairs in search of his host. He finally found him in the billiard room. The sight of the green table evoked primal urges inherited from his forefathers within his once noble blood, but he suppressed them and maintained an even face.

‘I must ride over to Longbourn, Charles. ‘tis urgent.’

‘What, have Miss Elizabeth's fine eyes bewitched you so totally as to forget all your honour and your promises to -’

‘tis nothing like that, Charles. ‘tis my cousin, the Colonel. He sent me an express with urgent information regarding Mr Bennet. ‘tis about the secret.’

‘Well, in that case, I shall come along.’

III

‘… so you can well imagine my surprise, Mr Bennet,’ Mr Darcy concluded, ‘when I learnt, today, that James Tyrell's bloodline was not extinct - that, in fact, his direct heir in the male line was living in the very county I am currently residing in -’

‘Is that so?’ Mr Bennet asked, not betraying any interest.

‘Let me be more blunt, Mr Bennet,’ Mr Darcy said. ‘I know that your name is not really Bennet. I know that it is Collins-Tyrell. I know that you are the last of the Tyrells and keeper of a secret so profound it could shatter the very pillars of our time.’

‘Mr Darcy, this is simply absurd -’ Mr Bennet began, but Mr Darcy interrupted him at once.

‘I know this, Master Tyrell, because it is a secret I also share.’

After a dramatic pause, Mr Darcy drew from his breast pocket a Latin bible, which opened at the psalms, revealing between its pages a pressed white rose.

Mr Bennet sat stunned for a moment, then stood up from his chair, knelt before Mr Darcy and kissed his signet ring.
‘My liege,’ he muttered. ‘How long have my fathers and I waited for your return, sir! How have I hoped to meet you ere I die!’

Mr Darcy looked confused. ‘tis not I, Master Tyrell, who is your rightful liege. I am merely his guardian. There is no need to kiss my jewellery.’

IV

When Elizabeth Bennet was called into her father's study, she was not a little confused upon meeting Mr Darcy there, sporting a great-coat of velvet that was embroidered with white roses, accompanied by Mr Bingley, clad in a similar garment. This was, however, nothing compared to her surprise upon seeing her father in a coat of the very same material. The three men were earnestly studying her family's bible, examining and - or so it appeared - cross-referencing dates.

‘Sir?’ she said tentatively, ‘if my presence is unwelcome at the moment, I can come back later.’

‘No, no,’ her father muttered. ‘Please stay.’

‘Elizabeth Rose Blanche Tyrell Bennet, born 29th February, 1798,’ Mr Darcy read out, ‘tis she who is the White Rose Reborn of which the prophecy tells us?’

‘On a day that cannot be,
Born of Tyrell, born is she,
Wed to fils de l'Arcy grand
Pure, demure and innocent.
Rose Reborn of proudest white
Servant to the King of Right,
Shall bring back to Anglia,
roi et foi et gloria,’ quoted Mr Bingley dreamily, ‘or so the old crone of Pontefract Castle prophesied.’

‘My daughter,’ Mr Bennet said gravely, ‘I have called you to me because it was time that you learned the greatest secret of your ancestry - a secret that could destroy this country as we know it. Please listen carefully whilst I explain everything, and you shall understand why it is your duty to marry Mr Darcy.’

V

‘You cannot be serious!’ Elizabeth exclaimed when her father had finished his tale. ‘I simply refuse to believe that I must marry Mr Darcy because of some old superstition! I do not even like him! Besides, is he not already married to Mr Bingley's sister?’

‘Ah, well,’ Mr Darcy said, ‘it so happens that the Darcies have been exempt from the rule of monogamy ever since they were granted a dispense in 1491 that was never revoked. As shall be princes in the tower twain, such shall be the number of wives thine - ‘tis a motto that we have adhered to strictly ever since the days of Lord Hugo d'Arcy-d'Arcy, may he rest in peace.’

‘Very well,’ Mr Bennet said and rubbed his hands. ‘Now that that is settled, let me call for Father O'Hara to perform the rite.’

‘A papist?’ Elizabeth shrieked. ‘You want a papist to marry me?’

‘I will not be wed in any but the true faith,’ Mr Darcy said stiffly. ‘‘tis the faith of my fathers ever since Teoderic dër Ars, may he rest in peace, was converted by St Willibrord in 702.’
‘You’re a papist?’ Elizabeth asked.

‘Of course,’ Mr Darcy answered. ‘The Darcies never allowed the usurper Henry to assume supremacy over their faith. Now, our good Queen Mary, she was of the right mind - although a pretender as well. It was most unlucky that Wilfred D’Arcy, may he rest in peace, had to be beheaded by her after his unfortunate and rather clumsy attempt to restore the rightful monarchy.’

‘I will not be married by a papist, to another papist,’ Elizabeth said firmly. ‘I have long since promised myself that only the deepest Protestantism would induce me into matrimony.’

‘I fear you have no choice, Elizabeth,’ said her father. ‘If you do not do this, our family will be totally and utterly ruined, since we will have broken promises given by our forefathers many years ago to the forefathers of this young man. The bloodlines must finally be mixed, as was foretold by the crone of old.’

‘Very well then,’ Elizabeth said and stamped her dainty foot, ‘but I shall not like it!’

VI

‘Mrs Fitzwilliam Darcy, Miss Elizabeth Bennet,’ Mr Darcy introduced the two ladies. ‘Mrs Darcy and I have been married for six months. Miss Bennet and I have been engaged since yesterday.’

‘Please, do call me Carrie,’ Mrs Darcy said and extended her hand to Elizabeth. ‘It is an honour to finally meet you. I regret not having had the chance earlier, but my condition unfortunately prevented me from going out much. Well, you will know how it is very soon.’

‘I'm sorry?’ Elizabeth said, confused.

‘Oh, I'm so excited!’ Mrs Darcy exclaimed. ‘I've always wanted a large family, and when Fitzie told me you two had become engaged, I knew instantaneously we should be very good friends - I suppose we shall even be sisters, in a way.’

‘Well, I'll leave you ladies to discuss everything,’ Mr Darcy said. ‘I'm sure there must be a lot of things you want to talk about. I'll see if Master Tyrell mayhap has some brandy to offer me. ‘tis a mightily fine opportunity to discuss the wedding settlements.’

‘Is he not the best of men?’ Mrs Darcy asked as soon as her husband had left the room. ‘I am hopelessly in love with him - but why am I telling you, you surely must be feeling the same! Does he not strike you as particularly fine in looks as well?’

‘Mrs Darcy,’ Elizabeth began, but she was interrupted immediately.

‘It's Carrie, Lizzy dear.’

‘Well, Carrie - do you not find this situation absurd? I cannot marry your husband. He is married to you already. This is ridiculous.’

‘Oh, nonsense,’ Mrs Darcy said decidedly. ‘I cannot see why we should not all be very happy. ‘tis a long-time Darcy tradition and has worked splendidly so far. Why, Susanna and Lady Gertrud de l’Arcy, may their souls rest in peace, the wives of Wilbur Wotherington de l'Arcy, may his soul rest in peace, even got married on the same day. They gave birth to sixteen children between them and were the best of friends for over fifty years. I do not see why it should be any different with us.’

VII
Father O'Hara was sceptic at first when he was approached by Messrs Bennet and Darcy, but upon being shown the pressed rose in Mr Darcy's bible, had eagerly offered his assistance in joining the happy couple, and to make a special reference to the groom's first wife in his sermon. The wedding took place a mere three weeks after the engagement, and some hours later, Elizabeth found herself in a carriage on the Great North Road.

'Are you quite sure that this is the way we have to take to Derbyshire?' she asked her husband whilst the first Mrs Darcy was making use of the commodities of a shrubbery situated near the Great North Road just outside Peterborough.

'Oh, but we are not going to Derbyshire,' Mr Darcy said. 'We will spend the night with some old friends of mine near Nottingham and then we shall continue on to Pontefract Castle.'

'Pontefract?' shrieked Elizabeth, who was of course well versed with the bloody history of England. 'But it has been a ruin these past 150 years at least!'

'Aye, so it is,' Mr Darcy said. 'twas there that Bernard Darcy, may he rest in peace, died in 1644, and his son Martin Darcy-de Darcy, may he rest in peace, followed him two days later.'

'We are going to stay in a ruin?' Elizabeth asked.

'Not in,' Mr Darcy replied cryptically, 'under.'

The first Mrs Darcy climbed back into the carriage and it rumbled on northward, until, around dusk, it finally left the Great North Road in the direction of Edminstowe.

'Are we going to stay at Thoresby Hall?' Elizabeth asked, for she was of course well-versed in English geography.

'No, not quite,' Mr Darcy said evasively. 'My friends prefer an, uhm, more outdoorsy way of living.'

VIII

'An oak?' Elizabeth asked. 'Your friends are living in an oak? You want to spend our wedding night in a tree?'

'Well, it worked for Sir Milton and Lady Barbara de l'Arcy-Darcy, may they rest in peace,' Mr Darcy said. 'Lady Barbara de l'Arcy-Darcy, may she rest in peace, gave birth to Malcolm Montague Darcy-de Darcy, may he rest in peace, a mere six-and-a-half months later, and he was the fattest boy ever to be born in all of Yorkshire.'

'I beg your pardon, Mrs Darcy,' said Mr Darcy's friend, who had been introduced to Elizabeth as Robert Hoodlesford-Faraway, the 17th Earl of Huntingdon, 'but this is not just any oak. This is Major Oak. My forefathers have slept in it since 1291. Guy Hoodlesford, the 6th Earl, was particularly fond of it. He always slept in the North branches. We have you quartered in the South-East, however, with Carrie, on my wife's branch. We are a wee bit crowded at the moment, since Marion's parents and her sisters and her cousin Richard have come to stay, but I am quite sure we shall get along splendidly.'

'Oh, did you hear that?' the first Mrs Darcy asked excitedly. 'We'll be staying on Marion's branch! It's the best in the whole tree. Where are you sleeping, Marion?'

'I thought I would share with you, if you do not mind,' the Countess of Huntingdon said. 'We had to put Richard on the Northern guest branch alone, for he snores, and I'd prefer not to share the other guest branch with my sisters, they giggle all the time. And if Fitzie is sharing with Robert,
they'll be up talking half the night, so -'

‘Of course you will share with us!’ Mrs Darcy said. ‘There is so much I have to tell you. You would not believe -’

IX

‘So, Lizzy,’ the Earl began when they had sat down for dinner on one of the central branches, ‘you do not mind if I call you Lizzy, do you? So, Fitzie here tells me your father is the last heir of Master Tyrell? How terribly exciting! I bet you must be so proud of your family, having kept the secret for centuries.’

‘Uh,’ said Elizabeth, unsure of what was expected of her. ‘I suppose I must.’

‘It is alright,’ the Earl said and winked at her. ‘You can talk freely. We are all in the brotherhood.’

His wife shot him a nasty glance.

‘Siblinghood, I should say,’ the Earl amended himself. ‘I would not dare to propose that we do not have equal rights for our male and female members. Well, we would not have our Grand Master be a lady. But apart from that - of course, we have not entrusted any of our lady members with the ultimate secret codes necessary to open - that is, unless Fitzie here has been blabbing to Carrie. But otherwise, we’re very much for equality here.’

‘Quite so,’ said Mr Darcy. ‘We venerate women and their ability to create life. In a purely platonic way, of course. My great-uncle, for example, Sir Barnabas de Darcy, may his soul rest in peace, wrote a treatise once -'

Elizabeth let the sounds of conversation ebb over her. She had no idea how on earth she had ended up in this place of all places, with these people - half-mad papists, after all! - of all people. Their secrets were almost as complicated as her husband's family tree, and she was not sure whether she liked the first Mrs Darcy at all. Another thing that she was only slowly getting to terms with was the fact that, however ludicrous Mr Darcy's secret society was, her father, most coincidentally, seemed to be involved in it as well, and, what was worse, seemed to regard Mr Darcy as the superior instance. Mr Darcy was another object of her musings. How had she got married to him? Why had she not refused him? There had been three weeks during which to utter a complaint, to ask her aunt and uncle for help or to simply refuse to go on with the proceedings. Yet, in spite of her misgivings, she had opted to do nothing, apart from bemoaning her fate. It was as if Mr Darcy had some magical hold over her - as if there were some greater forces at work that wanted her to get married to Mr Darcy at all cost and even contrary to her own wishes.

She wondered why anyone would want her to be married to Mr Darcy. What ultimate goal could it serve? After all, the man already had a wife - a pregnant wife too - so it was not as if she was saving him from the horrible fate of bachelorhood. And it could not be for her own good, for she heartily detested the man, and did not see herself being happy with him in the future. The only one who had ever offered a reason why they should be married was her father, and his story was downright ludicrous. Elizabeth had chosen to disregard it and refused to believe it, but still, she could not get rid of it. What if her father and Mr Darcy were right? Would it change anything about this marriage?

X

The story she had been told had begun in 1483. While remembered by most as the year in which the Ivangorod was built, for the Darcy family it was the year they had gone into hiding. Darcies still made an appearance in public, of course - certain standards have to be maintained - but for the
first time in their history, the bulk of their activities was conducted underground. The first Darcy ever to grow a conscience and a backbone, Mylord Percival D'Arcy had refused to do what is easy and swim with the crowd, and instead had decided to do what was right. Not all Darcies followed his example, many choosing to adapt their forefather's more opportunistic, comfortable ways, but some did, and those who did, lived to be guardians of a terrible and powerful secrets.

At the centre of the story, as is usually the case, was a pretty young boy born to be King. Edward V was but 13 when his father died. While this was as good an age to get married as any, his immediate family was nevertheless concerned whether it was not perhaps a trifle too young to steer the fortunes of an entire country at war. Especially his uncle Dick, a kind and caring man, was much worried about his nephew's welfare and that of Edward's brother Richard. England had found herself, as she was wont to do in those times, as a country beset by warfare and bloody murder and Uncle Dick felt that the untrustworthy Lancastrians might do away with the young king at any moment. As an interim measure, the two princes were brought to comfortable lodgings in their family's old homestead, a larger stone mansion overlooking the River Thames, where armed guards would ensure their protection.

Some have reported falsely that the Princes did not fare well in their secure housing, or were not allowed to leave it. This claim is incorrect and should be disregarded, given that the claimants could only profit from alleging that the Princes died in the Tower. What is true is that several attempts on the Princes' lives were made, but the assassin was most certainly not Uncle Dick, but rather a hired murderer paid by England's Biggest Liar. Realising that neither he nor his brother were safe in the Tower any more, Edward V begged his Uncle Dick to reign in his stead and to let him and little Richard move to some place quiet in the country until he was old enough to lead armies and have people executed and build castles and strongholds and what other things monarchs usually do to make time pass.

Uncle Dick most unwillingly agreed, for his nephews' sake, and accepted the kingship. The Princes were moved to a safe house in the country and Uncle Dick himself helped spread the rumours that they were dead at his own hand by such simple measures as burying two caskets under a loose floorboard with great noise, or cackling madly whenever they were mentioned. He paid most dearly for his helping nature, for not two years had passed before he was slain by History's Number One Lying Person when he refused to give up the secret of his nephews' whereabouts.

The Cheater, as he was known back then, ascended to the throne, choosing to ignore the fact that with Edward V, a rightful Plantagenet heir was still alive and kicking. Edward never had heirs, his wife having deserted him when he was rumoured to be missing, and choosing to live in sin with the Kings of France. His brother Richard, however, fathered thirteen sons by his wife, the Countess of Norfolk, who had gone into hiding with him, later forging records that would claim she had died at the tender age of eight. It was thus ensured that the Plantagenet bloodline would continue, in secret, at Pontefract castle in Yorkshire, where Uncle Dick's right-hand man, Mylord Percival D'Arcy, and James Tyrell had relocated the Princes in secret.

When the news of Uncle Dick's horrible death at the hands of The Trickster was known, James Tyrell and Mylord Percival D'Arcy parted ways, agreeing never to meet again on this earth, but to both bequest the secret of England's true kingship to the generations to come until such a time as it could be revealed.

None of the Pretenders ever knew where the true Kings were hidden even though they knew of their continuing existence and threat to their usurpers' claims. Henry VIII came painfully close to the truth when he went to investigate why Lord Darcy had decided to give Pontefract castle up to the rebels in 1537 rather than risk its being damaged or cut off from provisions during a prolonged siege, but Lord Darcy remained steadfast to his family's honour and took the secret with him to his
traitor's grave.

Elizabeth was still musing about these outrageous claims when she was back on the road to Pontefract the next day. The carriage was rumbling along, making her feel slightly nauseous. Caroline needed the journey interrupted ever-so-often and it took them a long time to get to Pontefract. The moon was full that night which enabled them to continue after dark. They reached Pontefract long after nightfall, in the dead of the night. By then, Elizabeth was so tired that she was ready to believe her husband’s outrageous tales if it meant that there was a bed waiting for her in the secret lair at Pontefract.

Her first sight of Pontefract was a severe disappointment. She had known, from her extensive perusal of the tomes in her father's library, that the castle had fallen into disrepair after having besieged thrice during the Civil Wars, but that there was not much more than the old motte and bailey still standing, she had not known. The moon threw the moulding stones into sharp relief and Elizabeth doubted that she would find a place to sleep that night that was not damp and moss-infested. She had clearly over-rated her husband's sanity.

‘Ah, isn't she a beauty?’ Caroline said and sighed, getting out of the carriage. ‘I always say she looks prettiest in the moonlight.’

‘Who?’ Elizabeth asked, confused.

‘Why, the castle of course!’ Caroline said with a deep, guttural laugh. ‘You must know that everyone refers to her as ‘she’ ever since the days of Lord Ingbert D'Arcy, may his soul rest in peace, composed the ode, To My Lady Pontefract, Or, In Defence Of Those Northern Walls, back in 1687. A great poet, he was. Married to Sarah and Emily D'Arcy-D'Arcy, may their souls rest in peace.’

‘Home, sweet home,’ Mr Darcy said, now exiting the carriage as well. ‘Ah, 'tis good to be back. The Darcy soul longs for Pontefract ever since the days of the first Sir Theodore de Darcy-Darcy, may his soul rest in peace, who spent his whole life here, and happy he was.’

‘Was he not dragged from here and burnt to death on Tower Hill on the grounds of practising witchcraft and supporting the counter-reformation in 1535?’ the first Mrs Darcy interjected.

‘Oh, right, there was that,’ Mr Darcy agreed. ‘But before that, he was very happy.’

In that moment, an elderly lady came out of the ruins from behind a pillar, waving to them all. 'It's Mrs Reynolds!' Caroline exclaimed, running towards her.

'Now, now, Mrs D, should you be running?' the elderly lady chided, but then beamed at the sight of Elizabeth.

'Now, who have we here?' she asked. 'Is this the new Mrs Darcy you wrote about, Master?'

'Indeed, she is,' Mr Darcy answered proudly. 'She is the White Rose Reborn. Her father, Master Tyrell, gave her to me.'

Mrs Reynolds clapped her hands in excitement. 'You must be waiting for my tour, Mrs D,' she said. 'Come, come, I must show you everything!'
'The what?' Elizabeth exclaimed.

'The billiard table on which all Darcies have been conceived since the days of Angelos de Darcy-Darcy, may his soul rest in peace,' Mrs Reynolds explained. 'The son of the first Sir Theodore de Darcy-Darcy, may his soul rest in peace, you must know. He was cursed by the Harlot Queen Anne back in 1534, when he refused to acknowledge her claims. She said, **and may thou not have heirs lest they be conceived on a table of grass, where grown man hunt balls with sticks - she meant to be clever, you must know, Mrs D, for back then, billiard did not exist, but the first wife of Sir Theodore de Darcy-Darcy, may his soul rest in peace, Lady Christine de Darcy-Darcy-Darcy, may her soul rest in peace, was quite ingenious and simply invented the game. She had little Angelos de Darcy-Darcy, may his soul rest in peace, a little over nine months later. Such a strapping boy!'

'And ever since then -' Elizabeth began, unable to fully grasp the concept.

'Ever since then the Darcies have begot and given birth to their heirs on this table, and seen to it that it never fell out of repair,' Mrs Reynolds said proudly. 'This is still the original felt from 1534, would you believe it, Mrs D?'

'Easily,' Elizabeth said, clapping her hand to her mouth.

'Well, I suppose the Master shall be along any minute now,' Mrs Reynolds said. 'I'll leave you to yourself, in case you want to freshen up.'

'Here?' Elizabeth asked again.

'Lovely, is it not?' Mrs Reynolds said, looking around the gloomy dungeon. 'I've always said that the bridal chambers are the prettiest part of all of Pontefract – apart from Tim's rooms, of course, that is.'

Elizabeth thought it best not to ask and instead tried to wash herself at the old copper basin pointed out by Mrs Reynolds.

XIII

A couple of days later, Elizabeth and Caroline were sitting in a particularly mossy cavern embroidering a moth-eaten piece of red satin with the Rose of York, when Mrs Reynolds stormed into the room, aflutter with excitement.

'It's Master Tyrell! He's come to Pontefract!' she shrieked. 'Both keepers united at Pontefract again! The days of our secrecy will be over for good!'

'My father?' Elizabeth asked. She had no particular desire to see the man who had forced her to marry into this insanity.

'My daughter!' Mr Bennet exclaimed. 'Such an honour has been granted to us! We are to have an audience.'

As if on cue, several footmen in old-fashioned liveries appeared on the doorstep behind Mr Bennet and Mr Darcy, and ushered Elizabeth and her father into a room she had not previously entered. Situated in a corner of the cellars, it had the luxury of actual daylight through hole-shaped windows that had been dug in the ground. In the middle of the room, on an ornately carved, worm-eaten wooden throne, an old man with a pronounced forehead was sitting.

'The York forehead!' Mr Bennet muttered, awestruck, before he knelt before the man.
'My liege,' he stuttered, kissing the ring that was offered to him.

'Very well, very well,' the old man said, not particularly interested. 'Anything else?'

'One question, my liege,' Mr Bennet said, trembling. 'I have never been informed – by what kingly name may we call you?'

The man considered the question for some time. Finally, he said, 'there are some who call me Tim.'

'King Tim,' Mr Bennet began again. 'My liege. Dare we hope – has the time of our secrecy finally passed – will you allow yourself to be crowned king, now that the House of Hanover – Usurpers, all of them! - is failing?'

'Oh, right,' Tim said. 'I've been meaning to tell you. I've decided I don't want to be king after all. That son Caroline is carrying – he can be king. Call him Victor, after my first wife, will you?'

'But what if it's a girl?' Elizabeth asked.

'Dear me, they told me you were clever,' Tim said. 'We'll call him Victoria, you nitwit!'

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