Gyrle (n.) - Boy or girl

by Steven J. Kolbe

Is it better to have a boy or a girl? That's not a rhetorical question. I'm really asking. When I was four, I used to wedge myself in between the wall and refrigerator and yell out, “Help! I'm stuck!” It was my mom's least favorite game. Meanwhile, half a country away, my wife-to-be was stomping the life out of a loaf of bread because her parents refused to get her a treat at the grocery store. So in my mind, as long as it's our kid, it's going to be a toss-up.

Following her older sister's lead, Susan decided not to find out the baby's gender—and I agreed. Some are baffled by this decision. Others are excited for us. And then still others seem positively affronted. They were going to tell us some gender-specific bit of advice, and now they can't. “Well, do you have names picked out at least?” they ask. “We do, but they're a secret.” To this they reply a weak, “Oh,” and walk somberly away. This is by far the rarest bunch—so rare that I'm not even sure why I included them at all, but I did include them. So there.

I suppose I included them because of their unrelenting curiosity. We were all curious when my nephew was on the way. Our niece, Katie, was pining away for a little sister. She would listen intently to her mama's tummy, decode what she heard, and then relate it to us: “Grazie told me she is a gore,” Katie announced. *Grazie* was our nephew's tummy name. And *gore* was Katie-speak for “girl.” Obviously.

We were all baffled when Teddy proved himself very much a boy some weeks later. But none so much as Katie. “Why did he tell me he was a gore, Daddy?” she asked.

Without missing a beat, Matthew explained that brothers can be tricksters.

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Perhaps it wasn't that Teddy tricked her. Maybe she just confused the message. In my reading I recently came across a Middle English word, *gyrle,* which could mean either a girl or a boy. Maybe in some primordial, womb language, Teddy was just trying to say, “I'm here, I'm a little person, and I can't wait to meet you!”

Boy or gore, Katie or Teddy, we'll be happy either way, so what's the point of shaking the box? In a few months we'll be receiving the great gift, and I don't see how we could possibly improve upon it. Also, by the way *our* little trickster has been stomping on Susan's bladder the second she sits down, I'm not sure there's any way we'll be ready.