

Trying to Make Peace with the Kudzu

Written by Alex Baer

Wednesday, 05 December 2012 17:40

Any quick sprint to round up news is getting tougher all the time -- the media insists on keeping us all tangled up in kudzu, stuffed full of manure, and kept in the dark. It's nearly enough to make one reach for the Roundup. (Here, we'll get sidetracked right away, to help give you an immediate flavor of the razor-sharp focus of the rest to come.)

So, *um*, why do the Scotts Miracle-Gro people have such a fixation on death? One look at their website is a cross between promises of horrific, hair-blazing nuclear Armageddon and folksy, trail-blazing, shucks-M'am, old-West wanted posters.

The copy might as well read, "Why, if you squint, you can almost see the cooling-tower shape in them thar souvenir spittoons, Sheriff," and then have it all signed like a love note, "Sincerely Yours, The Scotts Miracle-Death Cumpnee."

Or maybe, "Roses are red, and them violets bereft; please think of us when you think of death." I guess the old-West motiff is still every bit as romantic as us continuing to read books or watch movies and teevee shows all built up around the subject of grisly murders and gruesome deaths.

That's entertainment! You know, entertainment just like Rush Limbaugh's an entertainer. No difference there, really -- it's all the same goal: keep it red and raw and flowing freely in the streets, boys. *Give 'em as much red meat as they'll take.*

And everybody involved in the feeding end of the feeding frenzy gets millions and millions a year as some of our thanks from a deeply grateful nation. *And we all lived happily ever after, too.* Good luck drawing any serious dividing lines in all this carnage, exactly where it is that Hollywood and action figures stop and where it is that the morbidly-sincere military-industrial death-cult begins.

But, hey -- you've thought about all this before, being the sensitive and evolved person you are. See, I've still got my head stuck in some very cheesy sci-fi movies that I'm not real proud of, but I long ago swore off shows that splashed and drenched me in buckets of human blood.

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How did we get here? OK, I see it's time to change the channel again. [Poik.] *There.* You see, the intended, original direction was only to acknowledge the difficulty of finding real news while being clubbed over the head repeatedly by Duchess Kate's much-ballyhooed pregnancy.

You'd think peace had just broken out 'round the world, that we'd figured out cures for all diseases and poverty, and that the aliens had landed and were offering us the plans for renewable energy plants, no strings attached.

I mean, I wish the royal parents-to-be well -- but these two people have managed to achieve something that's replicated every single day, all around the world, and sometimes too often for this planet's population growth watchers to maintain their crinkled grins. It's something routinely achieved by people quite short on talent and skill -- especially after a hard winter. Power outages and office parties, too.

While no one's checking on pregnancy counts -- *I imagine we should be grateful for small favors in the news and from pollsters* -- there are about 490,000 births a day, which might lead to speculation on there being about that many new pregnancies around the world each and every day.

Let us hope the news media doesn't decide to alert us to all of them, or we'll never get the real headlines again, and you can definitely kiss goodbye the op-eds and baseball scores.

So, Bill and Kate -- congrats, and good luck. You and your offspring will continue to have all the advantages in the world, so you do not need my blessings on this one. *(But, hey, if you wouldn't mind springing for a pair of air tickets abroad, we'll be happy to bring something for the shower.)*

Meanwhile, here's another news flash accidentally unearthed while poking around for clues on why the media is no longer educating the public, and has totally abandoned its role as the People's watchdog: There are now *(yawn)* "pregnant Kate" statues up for sale.

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OK, everyone, Red Alert! □ Let's scrap that educational piece explaining why the "Fiscal Cliff" is a just a bogus, manufactured-for-Teevee, fictional drama by and for the billionaires -- let's get busy on this fascinating, scintillating statue story!

[Pregnant pause here. OK -- thanks for waiting for this very poor segue to take effect.]

And, while spoilsports in the 'States are still plotting a rewind of the Civil War along with their immediate secession, in the UK, some old laws there are being reshuffled and reshaped regarding the rules of royal succession.

Exiting is *male primogeniture*, in which male children are given preference to the throne. Simply put: This'll clear the way for Kate's kid to be king or queen. Also getting the royal bum's rush out the door is another prejudice: Soon, anyone in the lineup for a shot at the throne will be able to -- *wait for it* -- marry a Roman Catholic.

This is surely going to help The Pope fire up his new Twitter account. (If there can be such oddly-named things as Papal Bulls, will these papal electronic telegrams be called Holy Tweets?)

All pretty heady stuff, huh? *And you thought there was no real news going around anymore.*

And no, beyond getting tangled up in such headlines, I refuse to go any further down the rabbit hole than that, or the news-hunter-gatherer in me will give up, sit down, shrug, and become lost in the tale of a 5-pound, 14-inch tall aquamarine donated to the Smithsonian -- 10,363 carats of stunning clarity and beauty. Something nice to help set off The Hope Diamond, you know...

Then, there's the Nashville man who wants to built a full-size *Millennium Falcon* from *Star Wars* on his...

What am I saying?

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Problem is, in explaining this little problem I'm experiencing, I've sort of become part of it. Good thing I'm just a slouching dispenser of odds and ends, and no longer launching myself at actual news. Time to loosen my old workaday grip, and check out these enticing stories of genetic links to binge-drinking and to being fat and happy.

After all, as they say: One man's wheat is another man's chaff. Or poison. *Or kudzu.*

Philosophy helps, see, when you're flat broke -- otherwise, I'd be doing some deep research down at the bar right now, I suspect, and ordering something deep fried.

Death in a bottle: <http://www.scotts.com/smg/templates/index.jsp?pageUrl=roundupLanding>

Wiki by the numbers: http://wiki.answers.com/Q/How_many_babies_are_born_every_day_in_the_world

Pregnant statues: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-20604126>

Succession update: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-20600543>

Pope on Twitter: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-20581755>

and: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/magazine-20593916>

Dom Pedro aquamarine: http://www.washingtonpost.com/national/health-science/the-dom-pedro-aquamarines-long-and-winding-path-to-the-smithsonian/2012/12/02/53d6ef10-303a-11e2-a30e-5ca76eeec857_story.html?tid=ts_carousel

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The full-size *Falcon*: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/magazine-20536090>

Binge-drinking gene: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/health-20583113>

Fat-and-happy gene? <http://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2012/11/121120084725.htm>

Today's Bonus:

What-in-the-world: Real-time info on a number of oddball stats: <http://www.worldometers.info/>