

# My Latest Failure

*by* Steven John Horay

Everybody is awaiting my losers' acceptance speech.

Jason, the obnoxious host, thrusts his microphone against my nose.

I try to take one last breath but it's too late; everything just spills out.

'Ever since I was a little baby. . . in my . . . in my mother's belly, I dreamt of being a famous singer. I did! Listen! Listen! I did! Even when I was inside her womb, hanging upside down, my tiny lips pressed onto my tiny thumb, I knew it was a microphone . . . I swear, I used to sing and wiggle my shoulders, and I'd spin too, and I'd sing . . . I did, I did! And you might not believe me . . . the people at home . . . but I'm so upset that . . . that . . . that I haven't got the chance to perform again and, and-'

Jason, already bored, jerks the microphone away as tears start running down my face. 'Wouldn't you like to take this opportunity to wish Muktar good luck?' He asks, incredulous, arching his brows as though surprised by my selfishness; surprised that I can't accept the final vote as final confirmation of my eviction.

'After all it is Muktar who will advance.'

'I can't . . . I can't,' I squirm out. 'I'm upset . . . ' but Jason has already removed the microphone again and gold and silver confetti is falling across the stage, showering everybody, and the theme music is playing and bright lights are flashing and the audience is applauding, and Muktar is saluting the audience; the standing, clapping, appreciative audience, and I can even hear them chanting:

'Muktar! Muktar! Muktar!'

Jon-Quentin, one of the dance analysts, hugs Muktar and congratulates him and Marcos and Kimberly and Dwayne Starr are embracing him too and I feel left out until a hand lands on my bottom and I twist around to find Jeremy from make-up loitering close behind me, too close, as usual, and he's started performing all these stupid upset motions with his fingers beneath his eyes like

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he's going to cry and trying to make me smile in his usual dramatic fashion which just makes the tears come even harder. 'Get off me Jeremy' I'm sobbing 'Get off me.' But Jeremy doesn't listen and he's tucked his fingers under my chin and is raising my head now, massaging my cheeks and smiling, encouraging me to smile too, trying to uplift me because soon I'll be going home again, back to my miserable life in Wolverhampton, but I can't take it and push out from Jeremy's grasp and sprint towards the black curtain but it gives down the middle and I stumble forwards falling . . . falling, until there's nothing left but cold hard concrete.

And me, still lying here, pretending to be dead.

