**Last Place**

by Rananda Rich

Bertie, in seventh place, wondered how his garden and IT servers at home were holding up against irritating bugs.

First-placed Adam, meanwhile, realised he loved Evelyn. ‘This magnificent prize,’ he announced to disappointed supporters, ‘becomes a punishment if I win.’

Bryony, second, choked up when she was disqualified two weeks later. Tearfully, she said: ‘I am delighted to be pregnant.’

The remaining five candidates completed the invasive medical round. Oncology doctors removed the malignant lump from Dylan’s testicles, though this removed him from the running too.

Harry failed the psychological tests, causing a furore about mental wellness discrimination.

Three contestants remained, including Bertie.

The six-month endurance round took place on the surface of Hawaii’s volcanos.

Jenny was eliminated one month in when she failed to properly seal her survival dome.

Two candidates emerged intact in mind, body, and capability from the ordeal, according to Jim, or paradise, according to Bertie. Jim’s unfortunate comment sealed the winner.

‘Where aptitude is the same, attitude makes the difference at altitude,’ the press release read.

Bertie commented, ‘As the first citizen chosen to live on Mars, I look forward to pest-free gardening and unlimited space for my IT servers.’

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