

Title: Sunken Mattress

The mattress sank, the watch ticked, Sundaram sighed. The watch continued to tick. Looking down, he tapped his watch again, it had only been 30 seconds. Since the interview, he had counted the painstaking minutes until the letter's arrival. Every minute, the walls seemed to inch closer and closer, until they seemed to crush him. Applications were piled atop his desk in ad-hoc towers, and on the singular clean space on his desk lay a photo of his family. His wife and kids joyfully smiling into the camera. Cold tendrils of fear gripped his heart at the sight, and vivid images of struggle filled his mind. Empty plates. Barren rooms. Tattered clothes. He wanted to improve on his former lifestyle for both him and his family, and he was worried he would never feel the same sense of professionalism again. Memories of his stable job, his happy family and everything in between hung above his head. His future, his dream was mere metres away, yet he seemed to almost fear it. He checked his watch again, tapping it. Only 30 seconds had passed.

A knock sounded from the door, and an unblemished white envelope slid through the gap. It was such a plain envelope, especially for what it contained. After all, it was *the* letter, the one that would inscribe not only his future, but that of his family. He slowly pushed himself off the mattress, stumbled across the room, and snatched the envelope. At that moment, the paper seemed far heavier than it should be. Sitting down, he read the front of the letter: *13 Beason Lane*. To his ears, his watch seemed to tick faster, and he checked again. Briskly, he tore off the envelope cover, and trembling fingers pulled out the letter. The words were clear, "*Dear Mr Sun Rama, we regret to inform you that you were **not selected** for your applied position.*" He stiffly sat back onto his mattress, setting the letter down. *Rejection? Rejection. I was*

*rejected*. He simply sat for a moment. And then another. He could not, would not, feel anything. Suddenly, a wave of emotions engulfed him. He was drowning in anger, in frustration, in confusion, in sadness. Apart from his clenched fists, he sat oddly still, staring at the photo of his family. A flurry of self-hatred pierced through his heart, knowing that he had gambled away the meagre security his family had in the vain search of a dream. He had failed them. He had failed himself.

Sundaram tapped his watch, looking down to realise that the glass was scratched and rough, a far cry from the pristine state he'd received it. The sight confused him for a moment. *What had happened?* It was then he was confronted with reality. He happened. He had done this. The thought struck him like a hurricane. It was the lack of qualification, the wrong skill set, the delusion that a dream could become reality at breakneck speed. Clearly he was wrong about that last one. Unconsciously he brought his fingers to his watch before stopping himself. He wouldn't repeat his mistakes. Bringing him back to the present, a single question hung in the air, *Why?* In his impatience for the future, he had tapped his watch so much it had eroded the glass, blurring it with scars. In his desire to chase his Australian dreams, to chase the prosperity that he wanted for his family, he had pushed himself unceasingly forward. So unceasingly in fact, that he had neglected the small things - those details that, in the end, cost him his dream.