

Saving America

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Sophie Hope

Our anti-hero is Mr. Ambani, a rupee trillionaire living in New Orleans. This worn out old expat was exiled after the collapse of the Indian biotech industry. It had been a glorious decade of industrial warfare between the great nations of India and China, but India had lost out to the big guns and their economy was now on RED RED RED RED alert. Ambani was forced to join the mass exodus of talented techno-freaks and set sail for the desolate millennial wasteland of America. A once obscenely powerful nation, America had become a hippy, organic backwater; an absolute triumph in ignorance. This septic isle, too bankrupt to enjoy the life-giving resources of Asia's genetic engineering trade, was not Ambani's first choice for setting up a new home. If he wanted to live a few more chemically-enhanced years he would have to keep a very low profile.

He was a sick, sad old man wallowing in the fading glamour of India's Jazz Age. The thing was, Ambani was already dying but he didn't know it yet. And there were some people in this backward territory who didn't think America needed another Indian spiritual capitalist on their shores.

Ambani spent his dark final days in his exclusive pad a royal blue shipping container, modest by trillionaire standards, called The Lone Star Grunden. When the wind blew east, his Indian jazz met the scraggy ears of some downtrodden sticklers in the New Orleans hinterland. One balmy, star-cladded night the notes caught in the earwax of two quick-witted knights of adventure: Usama Fayyad

and Mark Cuban. Sat cross-legged by a campfire that flickered in the blacks of their tired eyes, these two feral comrades had been planning to murder Ambani in his sleeping quarters for some time now. Having got wind of the jazz, they knew the time had come. Cuban pulled out a sweat stained red envelope that had been tucked into the pocket of his worn out jeans since their last rendezvous with the chief. He tore it open. The contents confirmed their mission. They were at last ready to rid their country of this biotechnological growth in the country's unsullied soil. America was one of the last places in the world that hadn't been infected by India's extreme scientific enhancements.

Now they knew where he lived there was no satisfying their blood lust for Ambani. They leapt onto their BMX's and cycled to The Lone Star Grunden.

A ladder running up its left hand side was their entrance. The container was open at the top and they leapt in, not breathing, not making a sound. Ambani was dancing with himself, eyes shut in a trance-like state, swaying to the Indian jazz he was playing at top volume. Inspiration for mass control? The silly old fool had certainly hypnotised himself. Dappled light played on the office carpet tiles he danced on. Ambani believed so strongly in his own empire that he couldn't see his enemies approach.

One less tech nerd the better thought the biotech-bashing duo. Fayyad was getting excited, lurching on the cusp of their battle charge: 'I love hunting' he whispers.

'Let's just get this right', says Cuban. 'I'm not defending democracy here. This isn't a crusade. We're just getting rid of one guy.'

Fayyad was itching with murderous intent: 'Yeah, yeah. Keeping our children safe.' He points the poison-soaked arrow at the spine of their oblivious victim. Their choice of weapon was inspired. They would kill Ambani with a lethal concoction of his own genetically-modified invention and their favourite natural high.

The deed was done. Death won. The killers scramble back into the car park. Discarding their bicycles they run towards a waiting car, its doors already swung open. They drive the Mercedes furiously back to their base, the 'Forbidden Moon'. They were trembling with adrenaline, power and glory, certain they would become future role models for America's youth.

The sun started to shine as Fayyad put his foot down.

This story was written during the Science Museum's *Listening Post* short story workshops with Tony White, Science Museum writer in residence for summer 2008. Fragments of text from the following sources were cut-up and remixed by the author to create a completely new story:

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The World's First Collaborative Sentence,
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Sophie Hope,

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Unpublished, 27.06.08

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Sophie Hope's work inspects the uncertain relationships between art and society. This involves establishing how to declare her politics through her practice; rethinking what it means to be paid to be critical and devising tactics to challenge notions of authorship. Since co-founding the curatorial partnership B+B in 2000, Sophie has gone on to pursue her independent practice. She also writes, teaches and facilitates workshops, dealing with issues of public art, the politics of socially engaged art and curating as critical practice.