

The tale of the lost pig

By [Lady Alyssa Gray of Essex](#)

Like the time you lost your best friend's favourite pig, and the lengths you went to to get it back.

Would this be the Pearl-shod Pig of the Steam Baron Encephalus Jones? Or the Possessed Pig of ArchDiocese Plenipotentiary Sylvester Turnip?

It was neither. Oh how little things can be blown into grandiose proportions! Funnily enough, that's exactly what happened to Sally Speigler's silly little pig. What a fuss that stupid snorter made!

Cookie gentlemen? These are my world famous, triple-choc double dipped tall house cookies.

You know this was all back when CyberSwine Technology was all the rage. I was finishing my Postdoc at Oxford at the time and was boarding in the same college as Sally. Sally was still recovering from the nervous breakdown she'd suffered after her entire thesis was printed as a four-page article in PseudoScience, (the highest impact factored journal this side of Alpha-Centauri Prime) by her ex-boyfriend.

Sally had spent the summer on her farm in Jacksonville and had just returned, passionate about the work being done on Pig Gene Therapy. The race to produce the first pig with completely human-compatible organs was on and Sally thought she might be able to win it. She'd be dating a guy from CalTech who was working on Nano Tech and she thought she'd figured out a way to speed up pig gene sequencing which was advancing but at a snail's pace.

And was that due to the nigh-plague level infestations of ear-enhanced mice that was giving the research a bad name?

Well it was partly due to those damn mice. They had such darn good hearing - they could hear when you opened a packet of crisps and suddenly, there they would appear. And they would just sit and look at you like a dog does. I don't know what it was about those super-enhanced ears of theirs but it caused an enormous divergence in their behaviour - made them far less timid and way more arrogant! Oddly, many of them gained an interest in rock music....

... and that's how they came to slow down the progress being made in identifying the swine genetic makeup. You see, many of the postgrads who were working in labs across the country would listen to youth radio, which has a high content of hard rock, as you would know. After the breakout from Manchester Rodent Laboratories, those darn mice started showing up and hanging around in labs across the country. It wasn't just gene sequencing that suffered. Journals left, right and centre were forced to slow down their publication rates because they simply could not fill the issues. It was a dark day for science.

And this is of course where Sally's plan came into action. She had realised that collaboration between Nanotechs and the SwineSequencers could develop a method that circumvented the need for processing in labs. By injecting nanoprobe directly into the pigs, they could wander around inside taking photos, and making notes and then send the results via satellite feed directly into the computer network, bypassing lab processing entirely.

But everyone knows that pigs make extremely unreliable researchers - they are incredibly vain animals, and refuse completely to acknowledge any value in another's theory. Networked together so

that they could not deny another's research - why, that would be a recipe for disaster!

Networking Pigs

Yes, but what my good friend seems to have forgotten is that there are only a handful of pig names, and that pigs will happily plagiarise anything they see. So all you need to do is ensure that every pig in the network has the same name, and they will all insist that the groups' work is solely their own efforts, and so work singlemindedly towards the desired end. Not gentlemanly, but what can be expected of an animal we import from Wales?

Both of you fine gentlemen know far more about pig research than I and I bow to your superiority. You will now certainly see how I got myself into such a dither with Sally's stupid swine. I did not understand the intricacies of her work nor the politics of working with pigs. The latter I learned in far more detail when seconded to work for the UN but that's another tale.

All I knew was that I had a job to do and I thought I would be able to do it - Sally had taken a long weekend trip away with her beau and had asked me to check in on her pig and make sure he was fed while she was away. To be, frankly, I had my mind on other things - I was soon to be finished and was planning my application for a position in a research group located in the Bahamas. I was concentrating on the selection criteria and I blame the ridiculous question number 17: Have you or do you intend to ever raise white rhinos in captivity? My speciality was dark and dreary swamps in northern outer Mongolia. I hardly saw the relevance, especially when the job was Senior Advisor to the President of the Centre for Lumpy Fluids.

I should have noticed as soon as I entered her lab. Even now, I kick myself at my absent-mindedness. I entered what was usually a gently noisy place filled with the distinct hum of information being collected, written down and transferred. That day it was deadly silent. My thoughts were elsewhere and all I felt was relief - usually I was slightly nauseated by the electromagnetic radiation of the information transfer across the network, between the pigs. I looked around for George, Sally's main piggish subject. He was in the pen in the corner where he normally was but that day he had replaced his constant sneer with a leering grin. Still, I did not think this was odd!! Naively I walked into his trap.

The end.

— *Peter Cobcroft* 08/06/2005 16:10

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