

NEWS

A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Slaughterhouse

by Laura Goldman · August 01, 2010

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While driving down an isolated highway through South Dakota prairieland in mid-July, a couple spotted a stray running around in the middle of the road. The good Samaritans stopped and, after a bit of a struggle, managed to scoop the lost animal into their van, where it promptly fell asleep for 10 hours.

The stray was a 6-week-old piglet. There wasn't a farm or building in sight.

Lanore Hahn, a sculpture artist and photographer, and Derek Pritzl, her musician boyfriend, were returning home from a cross-country tour when they took a wrong turn and made the fateful encounter with the piglet, who they named Kim Gordon in honor of Sonic Youth's bass player. As Kim Gordon snoozed, the couple stopped at three farms farther along the road, trying to figure out where the piglet could have come from. The answers were all the same: There were no pig facilities in the area.

Hahn contacted the local animal control authority, which dispatched an officer. After examining Kim Gordon and noting her severe sunburn and the road rash on her belly, chin and back, the officer deduced that the piglet had probably fallen from the back of a transport truck. If the couple were to turn the young pig over to authorities, the officer told them, it would most likely be shot.

No way, thought Hahn, an animal lover whose boyfriend's band's logo — that she designed — happens to be a pig. The couple took the piglet back home to Wisconsin. Hahn took good care of Kim Gordon by introducing her to solid foods, treating her rash, and giving her a whole lotta love.

Last week Hahn found a permanent new home for the piglet at Farm Sanctuary in Watkins Glen, NY. There Kim Gordon will join other rescued pigs that, like her, were found along highways after they fell off transport trucks.

Pigs not only suffer in overcrowded and confined factory farms, but also in the trucks that deliver them to slaughterhouses. In addition to falling off the trucks, during Midwestern winters they often freeze to the sides, while in summertime in the South they die from heat stroke or dehydration. According to industry statistics, more than 1 million pigs die each year on their way to slaughterhouses. (Given the egregious conditions awaiting them there, dying en route may sadly be a blessing.)

Kim Gordon is one very fortunate little oinkster. Farm Sanctuary's National Shelter Director Susie Coston said the piglet's future looks bright. "She is well on her way to recovery and will become an ambassador for other factory farm pigs who suffer every day in hot, overcrowded transport trucks on their way to finishing facilities and slaughterhouses across the country. Her life on the road is over, but here, she will always be a rock star."

I think the real rock stars are Hahn and Pritzl. Instead of just rockin' down the highway, they went out of their way to rescue the piglet, help nurse her back to health and find her a safe forever home. I wish that just a fraction of their compassion could somehow rub off on factory farm operators.

Photo credit: [Farm Sanctuary](#)



Laura Goldman is an award-winning writer and longtime animal advocate who lives in the Los Angeles area with two pit bull mix pound pups.