



The Golden Pig

Lingyok's parents are pig farmers, but Lingyok has different dreams. Will he ever be able to escape the pigs and chase his dreams?



The Golden Pig
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Let's Read

 **The Asia Foundation**



When Lingyok got home from school one evening, he saw that Buba was in the yard weaving a bamboo perungo to carry piglets. Aama was feeding the pigs. As soon as his father saw Lingyok, he broke the good news, “Our sow has given birth to piglets, my son!” But Lingyok pretended not to hear. He went to his room, which was right above the pigsty.



Buba was a pig farmer. He gathered piglets from the village and sold them at the weekly haat market. Later in the evening, Buba took Lingyok to fetch piglets from the old phedangma, the village's religious leader. One by one, they placed the little pigs in the perungos.



The phedangma and Lingyok stacked a few perungos for Buba to carry. Handing the last perungo to Lingyok, the old phedangma said, "Well done, Lingyok! Make yourself a better pig trader than your father, son!" Lingyok did not like the old phedangma's blessings, and he looked to Buba for an answer. "Don't mind him! The old man is just joking!" Buba said to Lingyok, and pushed him to move along.



That night, the piglets were kept in Lingyok's room. Lingyok kneeled in the corner of his room doing homework. The piglets started squealing. Below him, the mother sow, missing her piglets, began to scream in distress. Lingyok couldn't do his homework and he couldn't sleep.



When Lingyok woke up the next morning, Aama was grinding pig fodder in a millstone. Buba had already left for the haat market. Seeing Lingyok, Aama said, "I need help with the pigs today. Don't go to school, do you hear me?" But Lingyok didn't say anything. He just stood in front of Aama, rubbing the sleep from his eyes.



Lingyok went to the forest near his house and gathered dry leaves and greens for the pigs in a doko bigger than himself.



Then he dumped all the leaves on top of the mother sow. Considering his job done, Lingyok ran to his room.



Lingyok thought he would eat and then go to school. But in the kitchen Aama was stirring a large pot of food for the pigs. Lingyok saw that all the other pots and pans were empty. "I am going to school," he announced.



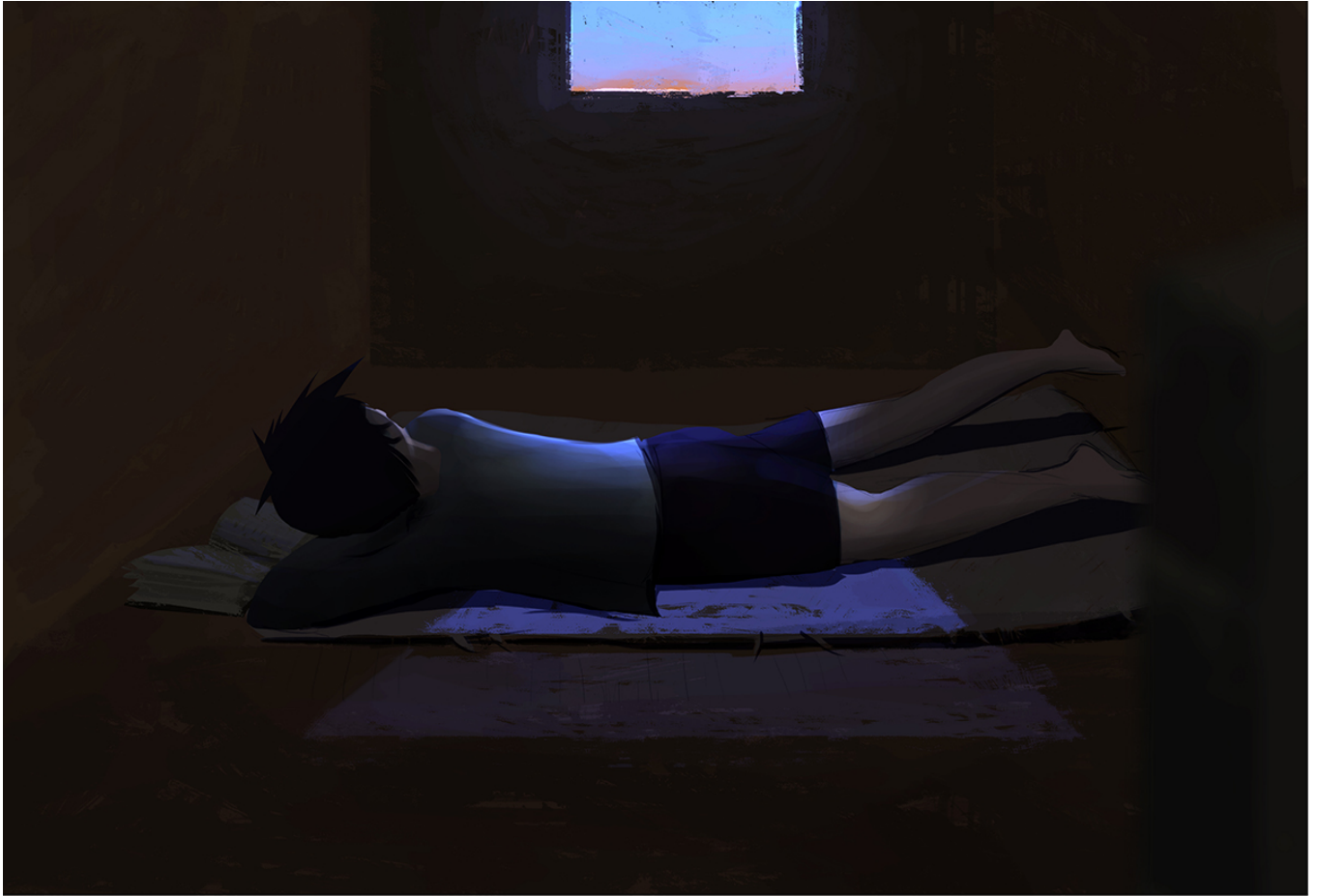
"Oh, is that so?" Aama said to him, her voice high with sarcasm. "Then eat this pig fodder and go! Didn't you hear me asking you not to go to school today?" Aama shouted. Lingyok left for school on an empty stomach.



Lingyok was in seventh grade. Lingyok managed to stay awake for the first few classes. But, sleepless from the night before, he fell sound asleep at his desk in the social studies class. A student complained to the teacher. "Hey, Jhingyok!" The social studies teacher shouted in Lingyok's ear. "Get up!" Everyone laughed.



Lingyok in the Limbu language means creation. But the social studies teacher always teased him and called him Jhingyok because it rhymed. The teacher grabbed Lingyok by both his ears. He lifted him up to his feet and slapped him across the face. “Son of a pig!” The teacher shouted right in Lingyok’s ear, “always sleeping!” Once again, everyone laughed. Although awake now, Lingyok kept his eyes closed in shame.



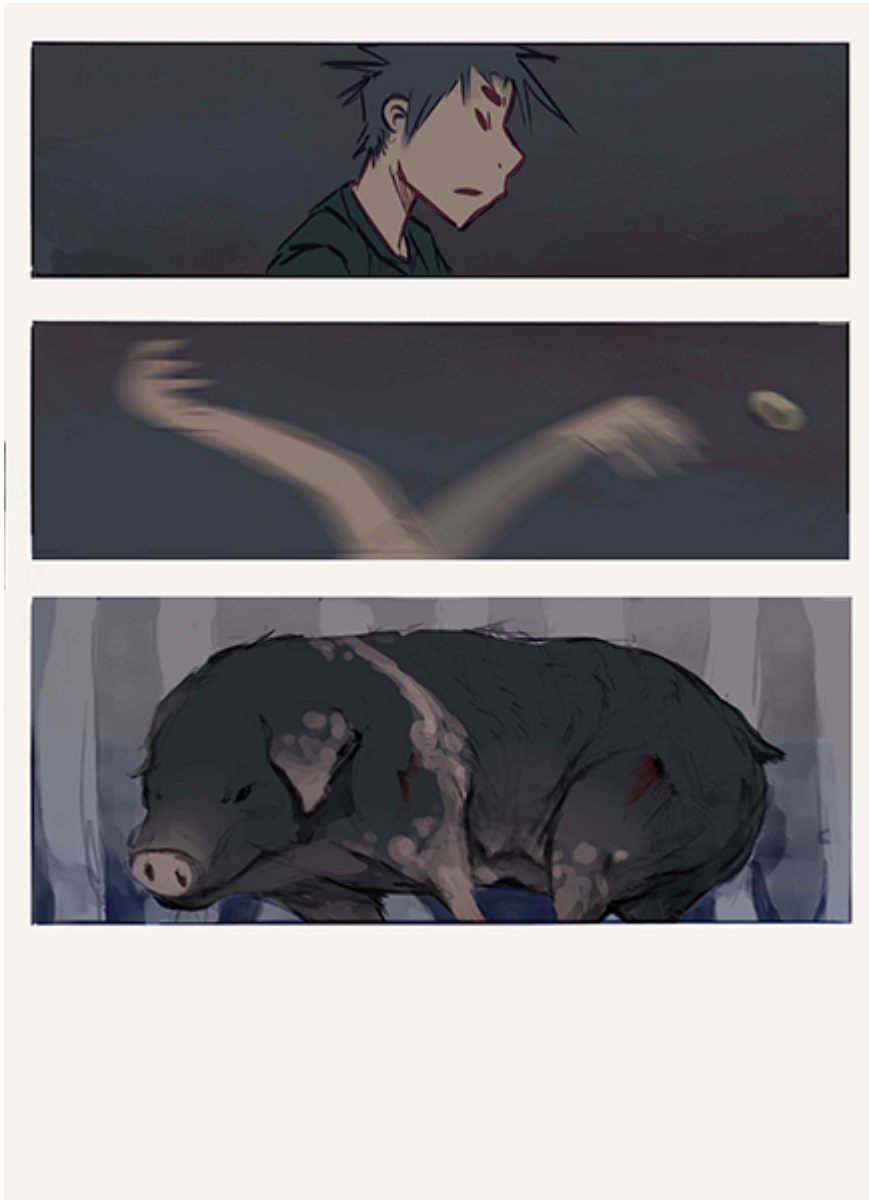
That evening, the teacher's abuse and his friends' laughter kept playing in Lingyok's ears. He laid on his notebooks and listened to the piglets squealing in the pigsty below his room.



The next day, he left for school but he never made it to class. Instead, he spent the day doodling on a big rock in the pine forest above his school. When he heard the school bell ring, he was surprised he had missed the whole day. Every day after that, Lingyok would leave home to go to school but he would never make it to school.



It was Lingyok's job to feed the piglets every morning. The piglets were getting bigger. Some were patterned, some were black, and one was gold.



One morning, the mother sow and Lingyok got into a fight. The sow had dug several stones out of the walls of the pigsty. Lingyok hit her with a stone. The little pigs squealed in fear. The mother sow leapt at Lingyok.



"Lingyok!" Aama screamed as she ran towards the pigsty. "Why did you hurt the mother sow?" Aama chased Lingyok, threatening to hit him. "That monster is destroying my room!" Lingyok screamed. He took his bookbag and ran toward school.



But like every day before, Lingyok only went as far as the big rock. This time he drew the mother sow, but in the form of a pig monster. Suddenly, the sky rumbled. Lightning struck!



Just then, from the corner of his eye, he saw something move.



When he turned around, it was a giant, wild pig! In a panic, Lingyok ran toward school. The pig followed him.



The wild pig and Lingyok ran into the classroom together. The social studies teacher jumped in fright. A commotion broke out. But the wild pig didn't do anything to anyone. It just sat quietly in the front of the classroom.



Lingyok suddenly remembered that he had left his bookbag at the rock. He left the classroom. The pig left with him; it walked in front. Intrigued, the teacher and the students followed Lingyok. After a while, Lingyok left them and ran toward the forest.



"Lingyok!" someone called his name. The forest shook. Lingyok peered out from the small cave where he had been hiding. He saw that it was his social studies teacher. Scared to confront him, Lingyok ran home.



When Lingyok reached home, the old phedangma was chanting from the Mundhum. Buba was seated next to him with the golden pig in his arms, and Aama was beside him. She looked ill. "Because you hit the mother sow... you nearly killed me....." Aama said. Lingyok was shocked. He hadn't realized how important the mother sow was. Right then, his social studies teacher appeared outside the door.



"He has not been to school for over three weeks now," the teacher informed Lingyok's parents. His parents were confused. "Why haven't you been going to school?" Buba asked Lingyok. Lingyok was silent. The old phedangma interrupted, "Maybe he wants to be a pig farmer!" Lingyok stared at the old phedangma. Aama spoke, "Don't stare at the phedangma. Tell us where you have been!" Lingyok did not speak. "Will you tell them or should I...?" The teacher raised his finger in warning. Suddenly, Lingyok broke his silence. "Am I the son of a pig?" he asked his teacher. "And a Jhingyok, too?!" He started crying. No one said a word..



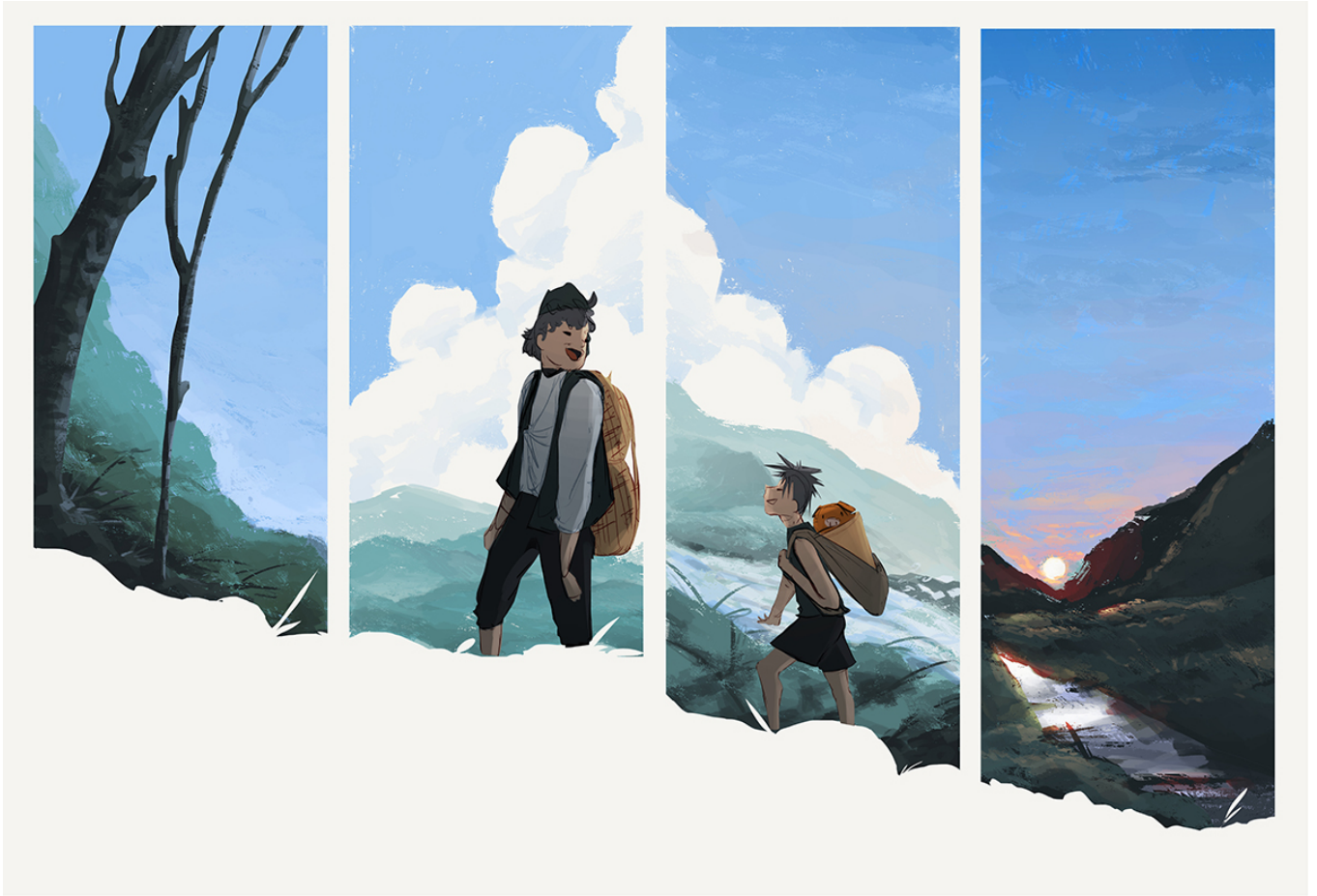
Later, Lingyok scattered the soaked contents of his bookbag out in the yard to dry. But everything had become useless.



Winter break began. During school holidays, it was Lingyok's job to take the pigs out to graze. The piglets twisted their bodies in the barren fields. They looked like they were dancing. Lingyok held the golden pig. He wanted to kiss the golden pig, but it smelled so he pushed it away.



The next morning, Lingyok was drawing on the wall of his room. Suddenly a small ray of sunlight shone on the wall. The light was coming in from the cracks that the mother sow had made. When Lingyok looked out of the crack, he saw Buba weaving a perungo in the yard.



A few days later, Aama and Buba carried the piglets by their legs and placed them in several perungos. The mother sow cried with her mouth facing the sky. Carrying the piglets, Buba and Lingyok left for the haat market. This Panchami holiday, the haat market was in the highlands. It took them an entire day to reach the market. They crossed many hills, rivers, and streams to get to the market. It was Lingyok's first time traveling so far. He was thrilled.



The Panchami haat market was filled with piglets. For a moment, Lingyok thought he was in a pigs' world. Buba and Lingyok sold their piglets in no time. They went to a small town some distance from the haat market. There, Buba bought Lingyok new books, notebooks, and a colorful bag. "No matter what anyone says, you don't have to be a pig farmer like me, Lingyok," Buba said. "Please start going back to school, okay?"



Back home, Buba built a new room for Lingyok in the northern corner of the house. He furnished the room with a new bed, a chair, and a desk.



Winter was coming to an end. Buba separated the golden piglet from the mother sow and put it in a cage. Lingyok felt sorry for the lonely piglet and brought him to his bed. The golden piglet started sleeping with Lingyok.



Winter break ended and school resumed. There was a painting competition and Lingyok participated. Some students drew cows, others painted the sun rising above the mountains. Some paintings had rhododendrons blooming under white mountains. Some students drew dancing peacocks, while others painted the national flag.



Then there was the painting that Lingyok made. This time his friends and teachers did not laugh at him. They stood in front of him and clapped.



Wonderful Words
Buba - father
Aama - mother
perungo - A small bamboo basket that is used to carry small animals and food
haat - a weekly market
phedangma - A religious leader in the Limbu culture. Limbu are indigenous people living in eastern Nepal.
doko - A large, cone-shaped basket with an open top that is used to carry chopped wood and fodder for animals
Mundhum - An ancient religious scripture and folk literature of the Limbu people, often passed down orally
Panchami - A lucky day

on the Hindu calendar

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