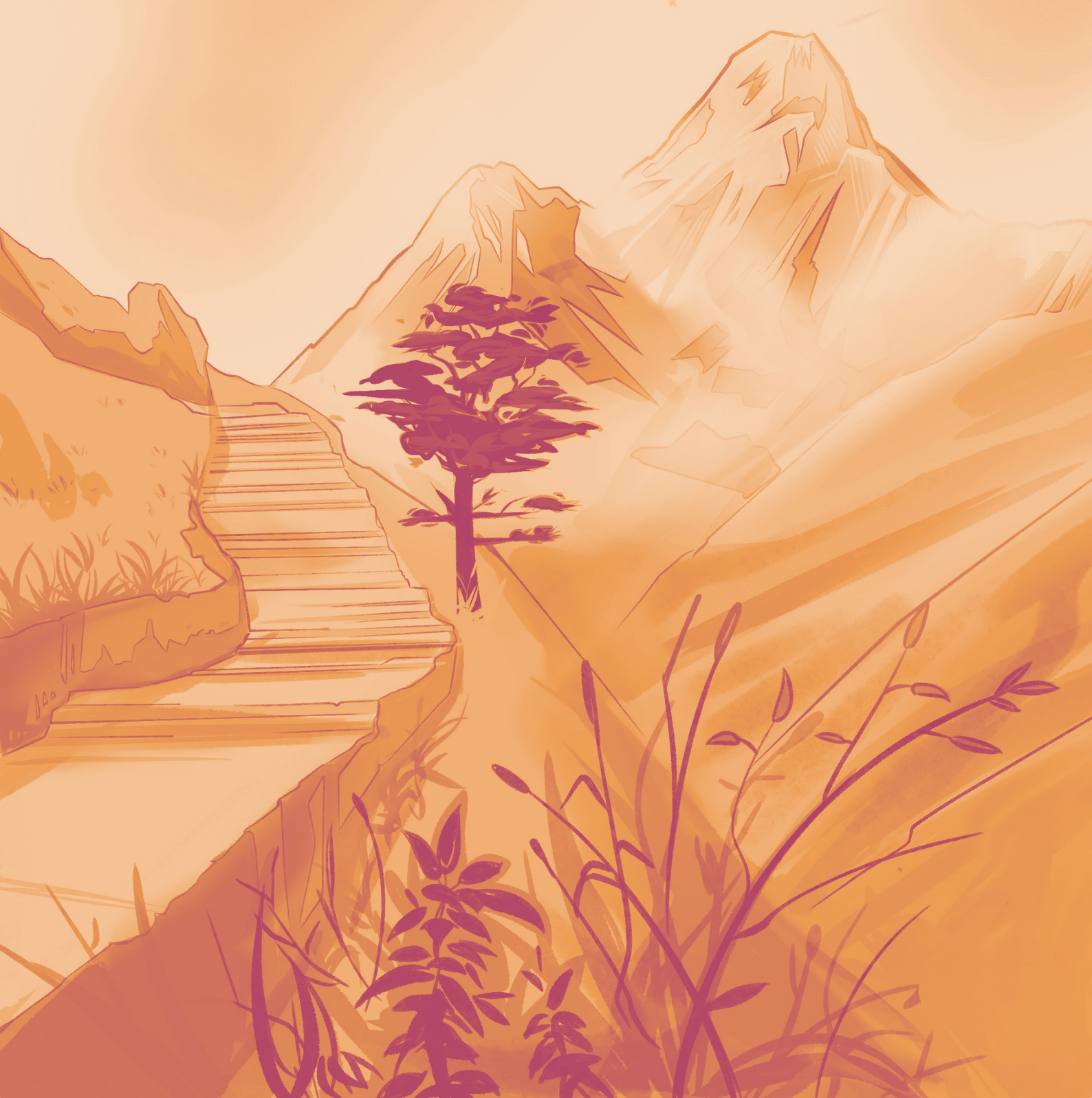


# ENGAGE





# Story 5 Pema

## Chhokpa Gurung

### My Childhood Story

Dolpa District (Karnali Province)  
Currently: Jorpati, Kathmandu

#### Introduction to My Childhood

This is the story of my childhood. A story of happiness, sadness, and love at the same time. This is also a story of a tragic loss that changed my life forever. I was born in the spring of 2064 at home. I spent my earliest years in the village of Ku, which has very few people and houses. Ku village is in a remote, far northwestern region of Nepal, in the Dolpa District, very close to Tibet. It is a place where the cultures, languages, and traditions are more Tibetan than Nepali.

#### Living in Ku Village

At the time, there was no electricity, plumbing, or motorized vehicles of any kind, and the overall population was—and still is—very low. Our simple house is made of rocks, stones, mud, and cow dung, with a flat roof and two windows. We are proud to own our house, which was built by our parents. The house has three floors, and we keep our animals on the ground floor.

#### My Responsibilities as a Child

As the eldest child, my brother had many responsibilities and worked with my mother. He had to take care of our mother and two sisters. When I grew up, I was allowed to take the goats higher up into the mountains. I used to walk many miles away from home, looking for a place with plenty of grass so that our goats could eat. It was sometimes difficult hiking to the high rocks, as goats could get lost or be killed by snow leopards and wolves. I also got tired many times, yet I found the journey exciting. When the weather was pleasant, I enjoyed the flowers in the spring, and during the winter, I played with the snow.

#### My Mother’s Role and My Tasks

My mum’s job as a herder was to make sure that the goats came home with full stomachs and none of them got lost or killed. I also had to collect wooden sticks for our fire, which I put in a large basket that I carried on my back. When I

came home at 4 p.m., I had another task: I had to fetch water with my sister. I liked hanging out with my sister because she was interesting and also more adventurous.

#### Family Time and Storytelling

As night began to fall, my mother would start telling us stories, and I was the best listener among all the siblings. My mother was my favorite storyteller. My family members used to go to the farm without eating anything in the morning, but I was the one who stayed home, cooking food. The best thing that I was in charge of was taking care of the house and our animals. Sometimes, I felt feeble and lonely at home, but I focused on my duties because my mother taught me to be very dedicated.

#### A Beautiful Family Moment

Years later, the most beautiful thing that happened was that my brother got married, and we were very glad to see a new family member joining us. I was the smallest in my family, so I was treated like a princess. I received love, care, affection, and everything I needed.

#### Not Only About Happiness

This is not only a story about happiness. It is also about sadness—such sadness that is the worst thing that ever happened in my life. I can’t remember how old I was, but suddenly, my mum got ill. There were no hospitals available for treatment; the only treatment she could get was simple medicine for her pain. We loved her so much, but when she was in pain, our love didn’t make her better. For me, in the end, nothing could make her normal again. We had nothing to help her; the only thing we could do was stay around her.

#### The Day My Mother Passed Away

One day, early in the morning, I woke up and looked at my mother. She was smiling at me. I cooked some soup for her and went near her. I said, “Ama,” but she could not reply. After a few minutes, my brother started shouting and crying, and my sister took me away from her. But I ran to her and cried like a baby. I sat with her and told her how much I loved her. I held her tight and cuddled her like a baby. I bowed my head down and cried like a bird chirping in a deep jungle.

#### Coping with the Loss

The next day, I walked through the front door

into my mother’s room. I wondered if my mother was in the room and if I could say, “Mum, I am hungry.” I was realizing the value of the loss, of losing my mum, day by day. I cried day and night with so much sadness and tears. I remember when I was little, I used to spend an hour sleeping on her lap. That was my favorite place. Closing Thoughts

Some children do not even know what it feels like to be without a mother, and they do not understand the value of having one. My message is to love your mother and respect any effort she makes to help you grow up. When we lose her, we never find someone like her in our lives.

