



THE CHAMBER OF PIGGY WONDERS

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He does everything differently. His colleagues sitting on either side of him have the innards of the pig lying before them in one big fold – still connected like they had been when they had served the animal during its lifetime. When a customer asks for a particular organ, the butcher shoves his hand deep into the innards, groping around and searching, shaking off the bloody loops before pulling out the kidney, or the liver, or lungs, or the heart. He picks up the piece he has retrieved, looks questioningly at the customer, who nods. A sharp knife then slices off what the client wants from the unwanted, and the remainder plops like a drowsy blood bag back into its original position.

But the butcher in front of whose stall I stand and gawk, evidently loves the overview. The bowels, the ears, the front half of the head, the knuckles, the nose, the belly fat, the gastric sac, the diaphragm,

and not least *Doh snam*, the divine sausages of blood and pork fat which the Khasi people love so much, are neatly pinned next to each other on the sheet-metal wall of his little stall. I imagine that the master wants to explain to his customers the exact use that the particular body portion had been the pig, or how to deal with the piece properly in the kitchen. I am reminded of the didactic panels that had once been common in schools – and also of the images of the chambers of curiosities. Also, of course, about the saying about the pig, in which everything is supposed to be good. The sight of such a beautiful exhibition makes you gladly believe that there must be something true in that, after all.

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Translated from German by Gunvanthi Balaram.

