



### *Full Text*

## **WHY THE COW'S SKIN IS LOOSE ON THE NECK**

Our story today, “Why the Cow’s Skin is Loose on the Neck”, comes from the book, *Philippine Popular Tales* by Dean S. Fansler, and read for us by Ma. Rossana Z. Maglalang. The story was originally narrated in English by Francisco M. Africa.

“Why,” said Antonio to his grandfather one day, “does our thumb stand separate from the other fingers?”

“That is only so in our days,” replied old Julian. “In the days of long ago the fingers of our ancestors stood together in the same position. One day one of these fingers, the one we call the little finger, became very hungry, and he asked the finger next to him to give him some food.

“ ‘O brother!’ said the Ring-Finger in reply, ‘I am hungry also; but where shall we get food?’

“ ‘Heaven is merciful,’ put in the Middle-Finger, trying to comfort his two brothers; ‘Heaven will give us some.’

“ ‘But, Brother Middle-Finger,’ protested the Forefinger, ‘what if Heaven gives us no food?’

“ ‘Well, then,’ interposed the Thumb, ‘let us steal!’

“ ‘Steal!’ echoed the Forefinger, not at all pleased by the advice that had just been given. ‘Mr. Thumb knows better than to do that, I hope!’

“ ‘That is bad policy, Mr. Thumb,’ concluded the other three unanimously. ‘Your idea is against morality, against God, against yourself, against everybody. Our conscience will not permit us to steal.’

“ ‘Oh, no, no!’ returned Thumb angrily, ‘you are greatly mistaken, my friends! Haven’t you sense enough even to know how foolish you are to oppose my plan? Do you call my scheme bad policy,—to save your lives and mine?’

“ ‘Ay, if that be your plan,’ said the other four fingers, ‘you can go your own way. As for us, we would rather starve and die than steal.’ Then the four virtuous brothers drove Thumb in shame out of their community, and would have nothing more to do with him.

“So that is why,” concluded old Julian, “we see our thumbs separated from the other four fingers. He was a thief; and the other four, who were honest, did not care to live with him. And it is because Little-Finger did not have enough to eat, that we see him lean and weak these days.”

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Source: Dean S. Fansler, *Filipino Popular Tales*. Lancaster, PA. and New York: American Folklore Society and G. E. Stechert and Co., 1921. Available from Project Gutenberg.

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#### *In English*

The Monkey and the Turtle  
Sun and Moon  
Sagacious Marcela  
The Story of our Fingers  
Why the Cow’s Skin is Loose on the Neck  
The Lost Neck

#### *In Filipino*

Ang Pagong at ang Matsing  
Ang mga Paglalakbay ni Juan  
Ang Pinagmulan ng Daigdig (Si Malakas at si Maganda)  
Ang Unang Unggoy  
Ang Alamat ng Palay  
Ang Pinagmulan ng Lamok  
Kung Paano Yumaman si Jackyo

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