

Ulnuf



Luther led his donkey, Ulnuf, into the sleepy village square and tethered her to a hitching post in front of the old, tumbledown cantina. As Ulnuf browsed on the hibiscus groundcover, Luther quietly slipped on inflatable yellow pants and a wire mesh shirt festooned with shrimp-shaped spangles. The change of clothes instantly altered his persona from easy-going itinerant to *The Great Lutherski, Master of Gravity!* “Laaaadies and gentlemen,” he declaimed, straightening his adobe hat and tie, “step right up and witness the amaaaazing Ulnuf, the Levitating Donkey!” As Luther continued his spiel, Ulnuf readied herself for the street theater by applying bright brown mascara to her eyelashes and hooves. Intrigued by Luther’s exhortations, a few curious townspeople approached him. “A mere ten pesos,” continued Luther, “allows you to see this rare Nubian quadruped defy the laws of gravity, a sight that you’ll talk about for the rest of your lives!” When the crowd numbered two dozen, Luther doffed his hat and brandished it at the onlookers. As soon as each had plunked a ten-peso coin into the hat, he untied Ulnuf from the post and led her into the middle of the village square. Luther always feared this moment because it was the most likely time someone might question why the donkey was hitched to a heavy cart. But, so far, no one ever had. And no one did this time, either. When he was satisfied with Ulnuf’s location, Luther waved his arms theatrically over her and chanted “Aaaaaaabraca-donkey!” At the same time, he slipped behind the cart and slightly moved one of the heavy boxes to the back. Immediately, the careful balance was negated, the cart tipped backwards, and Ulnuf was yanked proportionally upwards. As one, the crowd gasped. Several applauded. Luther bowed. And poor Ulnuf brayed forlornly, for she never could get used to this absence of ground underhoof. Once the spectators had dispersed, Luther shoved the box back towards the front of the cart, balance was restored, and Ulnuf was mercifully reunited with the ground. But then, a scruffy young tatterdemalion who had watched the act from afar ambled up to Luther and said, “I get it. The cart acts like a fulcrum. You hoodwinked ’em! Wait’ll I tell my pa – he’s the sheriff!” However, before the youngster could spill the beans, Ulnuf again demonstrated why she wasn’t just the amazing levitating donkey, but an amazingly carnivorous one, too!