

# CATCH MINNIE

by **Lupe Gehrenbeck**

*English translation by Carlos Eloy Castro*

MINNIE ENTERS. CLOSE THE DOOR BEHIND HER, BREATHING HEAVILY. SHE THROWS HER HANDBAG ON THE SIDE AND GOES FAST TO CLOSE THE CURTAIN AT THE WINDOW.

**MINNIE:**

I'd like to know what would this country be without Superman... without Batman or Spiderman... without Captain America and Wonder Woman... without the Hulk! Where would I be? By this time, I'd be wearing my orange jumpsuit, with deportation number and record...

And back in Caracas, not even in costume I'll be able to escape all the thugs on the loose, or the lines at the supermarket starting at dusk. Earning in *bolívares* and buying in dollars, with a two-week's salary you can barely afford one *kilo* of cheese, that is if you don't get mugged or kidnapped on the way... Can someone explain to me why is it that the hungry ones are supposed to stay on one side and cannot cross the line to where there's plenty of food?

MINNIE CRAWLS TOWARD HER HANDBAG, SEARCHES INSIDE SOMETHING TO SNACK. SHE HAS PLENTY OF SWEETS. SHE REMOVES HER MASK TO EAT.

**MINNIE:**

I knew the Hulk was brave. What I didn't know was that he wasn't Peruvian! I would like to see how he looks like on the inside though, if he has rocky muscles as well... He so *gringo*, so legal... and he didn't take his mask off. None of them took their masks off! Not even Batman, who's legal. All heroes! ... Invented by this movie-and-candy country. Now they can't turn the TV off on me.

How are they going to tell me that Minnie is illegal if they invented her? She was born here and lives here, in English; she's not a children's story, Minnie is the symbol of all American, she's use and habit, she's homeland, with all the weight of the Law!

Now they can't back out because what about all those people traveling here wanting to take a picture with Minnie on Times Square?

The world is in Times Square. There the only *gringos* are the policemen, the Hulk and the naked cowboy. Because the *cowgirls* are Mexican, you just have to look at them. From 40<sup>th</sup> to 47<sup>th</sup> street that is foreign territory: you will only see Chinese (click); Japanese (click, click); Spaniards and French people with their green Statue of Liberty of all sizes; Italian and Swedish tourists that “I Love NY”; the Yankees’ hat against the sun of Argentineans and Arabs; and a whole lot of heroic immigrants... with no papers.

All of us exercising our right to be Americans in Times Square, defending what we were taught to be: a product of that fantasy world where we all grew up no matter where, finding solace in that idea of happiness, freedom and justice from the cartoon past where we all come from, that made us all into people from our childhood dreams. It wasn’t easy to put Minnie Mouse behind bars in front of the entire world! People would have not allowed it. That’s why when the Hulk said that he wasn’t taking his mask off either, the policeman didn’t want to take the chance, because it meant having to deal with all the American Heroes united. Real heroes, now I know, they do exist. They saved my life.

MINNIE PUTS THE MASK BACK ON, GOES TO THE WINDOW, TO WATCH CAUTIOSLY THROUGH THE CURTAIN.

**MINNIE:**

But, what if they followed me? What if they know where I live? Now I’m alone!

MINNIE NOTICE NOBODY IS OUT THERE, TAKE OFF THE MASK AGAIN AND KISSES IT TENDERLY.

**MINNIE:**

Well, not all alone, no: downstairs lives the giant yellow bean wearing blue pants: the Dominican Minion with no papers from the 5<sup>th</sup> floor. She’s the one that got me into this. Gloria, she’s more generous than the *Virgen del Carmen*. Afterwards, I got Brian José into this, and he looks so cute as Spiderman, that he’s making more money than I do since he’s started!

MINNIE GOES TO PREPARE THE FOOD TO HER PET DONALD, A HAMSTER. SHE USES A KIDS KITCHEN SET.

**MINNIE:**

The thing is I know him without the costume. Brian José is not interested in the world’s problems, like Spiderman is. He doesn’t read

the newspaper like Mickey does, sitting in his comfy chair at the house-with-a-backyard. When he winks at me or when he rubs my nose, I know he is able to defend me from all mean cats of all sizes. What papers do I need at all to look for that happiness I was taught to when I was little?

When my mom bought me the Minnie costume for that carnival, she wasn't able to take off me never again. I would go to school in that costume, I would go to the park in it, I used to sleep on that costume until it tore apart... All my *piñatas* were Minnie!

Now that I finally made it to New York with my American dream and I can really be Minnie here in the north, they are going to take me to jail because of that?

SHE LOOKS INSIDE HER HANDBAG UNTIL SHE FINDS A LITTLE SAMPLE BOTTLE OF RUM.

**MINNIE:**

What I need is a bottle of rum to restore me back to the tropic! My legs are still shaking...

MINNIE DRINKS AND CAUGH. SHE GOES FOR A LITTLE GLASS. SHE FEELS CRITICIZED BY THE PUBLIC AND EXPLAIN.

**MINNIE:**

And don't you even start with that "Minnie doesn't drink" crap. You just have to take a look at how they drink on *The Gallopin' Gaucho*.

PROJECTION OF *The Gallopin' Gaucho*. From minute 0.58 to minute 2:00.

MINNIE FOLLOWS THE MOVEMENTS OF THE MINNIE OF THE MOVIE. SHE DRINKS IT ALL.

**MINNIE:**

And that was at the beginning of my career, just my second film.

MINNIE DANCE, IMITATING THE MINNIE IN THE FILM.

**MINNIE:**

Even the ostrich Mickey was riding to rescue me from the evil clutches of Pet the cat got drunk in that *cantina argentina*. I was dancing in an Argentine tavern... all hips to this side, hips to that side, a bra, a mane and all blinking... It's one of my sexiest films... that's why the cat got me.

MINNIE GOES TO GET MORE OF THE RUM. SHE THINKS OUTLAUD, HER BACK TO THE PUBLIC.

**MINNIE:**

And I have spent my life searching for that Mickey that's able to do for me what the Hulk did this afternoon. But I'm not going to get my hopes up. I know Spiderman has a thing with Wonder Woman. And she's more powerful than Barack Obama that girl: a perfect 36-24-36 wrapped by the American flag!

MINNIE LOOKS AT HERSELF IN THE MIRROR (FOURTH WALL)

**MINNIE:**

I don't lose hope though... Look at how Yolanda got her beau, despite the distance. She was over there and the beau over here, but that's what the Internet is for! The troubles came afterwards.

How are you going to marry a guy you met on the Internet without knowing whether or not his feet smell? I understand the situation in Venezuela only makes you want to run away, and the truth is: had it not been because of the beau, we would all still be ducking thugs over there in Caracas. The thing is now she doesn't know how to get rid of him. He's threatening her with reporting her for getting married for a green card and not for love. That beau is a bastard! And to think he was all blue-eyes and Hilfiger t-shirts... What good does it do him to have Yolanda next to him knowing she doesn't want him?

The beau says Yolanda deceived him, but the pictures he uploaded were all fake...

PROJECTION OF SEQUENCE OF PHOTOS OF THE BEAU, IN DIFFERENT LOCATIONS. MINNIE POINTS THE PHOTOS AS SHE SPEAKS.

**Minnie:**

... in Paris, sailing on a boat, on the Chinese wall, on a Kayak paddling over the Hudson... Are you sure that's not *photoshopped, mijita?*

Because that man hasn't taken Yolanda not even to Rockaway for an *arepa!* He'd only go from work to the couch in front of the TV. Who deceived whom? It's not like the beau is a Saint either. Ever since he bought himself that old used junk, the Car-magne, as its rival Yolanda calls it, he's got no money to do anything; nor free time; he's got less patience and more excuses: traffic over the bridge, construction in the tunnel, a flat tire, a ticket, the mechanic, the car used to overheat until one day Yolanda put some shoe polish over the passenger's

door handle... And the beau came home with his hands stained! And how was he going to clean that stain?

If he opened the passenger's door is because he's driving some other woman in the Car-magne. That's why Yolanda left him.

MINNIE CHECKS THE OUTSIDE THROUGH THE WINDOW GETTING COMFORTED BY NOTICING THERE IS NOBODY.

**MINNIE:**

Yolanda? She learned by heart all the questions from the marriage interview, name and birth date of the beau, when and where did they meet...

MINNIE IMITATES THE AMERICAN ACCENT OF THE IMMIGRATION OFFICER, YOLANDA HER SISTER AND HERSELF.

**MINNIE:**

*"I met him at an amusement park"*

Lie!

*"And did you give him your number that day?"*

*"Yes I did. But that doesn't mean I'm an easy woman..."*

We didn't come from a wealthy family but we did have a TV and a Betamax, moral standards and good manners. We saw all the Disney films; I loved those where Minnie appeared; I knew them by heart, and then I enrolled in an acting academy, because I wanted to sing and dance... I wanted to be famous and be on TV, but the country didn't let me. That's why I came to the Empire of Opportunities. Like the opportunity Yolanda gave me when she got married with the beau.

*"When did you meet again? Where did the beau live? When did you decide to get married? Did you live together before...?"*

*"As if!"*

They ask all those things, she got it from the Internet, like she got the beau; and the beau also learned his part:

*"Who was the witness? Were there rings? Where did you buy them? Was there a party? Where? Did you bring pictures? Did your family attend? Was there a honeymoon? When? Where? Where did you live afterwards? How many bedrooms and bathrooms... furniture...? Who bought them?"*

The beau bought them all of course; Yolanda didn't have a cent to her name, fresh off the boat as she was...

*"What color were the walls? Was there a carpet?"*

Yes, a dirty-colored carpet, obnoxious...

*“Air conditioning? Heat? Phones? What brand was the TV? Did you have cable? What show did you watch last night?”*

Easy. The beau is always watching the same sports channel...

*“What’s your husband’s favorite food?”*

Also easy: pizza and burgers, like all fat men...

*“Does your husband drink coffee? Does he put sugar or cream in it? Where do you keep the bathroom towels? And the dirty laundry? The trash? What day of the week does the garbage truck come?”*

There’s where the beau got it wrong, since he never does anything around...

*“Where do you buy the groceries? Do you go by yourself or with your husband? Where does your husband work? What days of the week? What times? What’s his salary?”*

And there’s where Yolanda got it wrong, because the beau is a liar. But it wasn’t serious because out of 100 questions they answered almost all of them right and she got green carded. And right behind her I came along with my tourist’s visa and my desire to be even more *gringa* than Minnie.

MINNIE DANCE TO THE RHYTHM OF SINATRA’S “I LOVE NY”. SHE TAKES DONALD’S FOOD AND APPROACHES THE CAGE WHICH IS COVERED WITH A NEWSPAPER. SHE UNCOVERS THE CAGE AND DISCOVER THE HAMPSTER IS NOT THERE.

**MINNIE:**

Donald! Donald! Where are you? Oh the stress! I was in a hurry this morning and left the cage open...

MINNIE LOOKS FOR A LANTERN IN HER HANDBAG FOR LOOKING FOR DONALD DOWN THE FURNITURE, THEN OVER THE LEGS OF SPECTATORS...

**MINNIE:**

In this city, with all those rats, anyone mistakes you and thinks you’re Donald like the Trump: a rat of the worst possible species, that got stuck on the first step of the evolutionary chain. That’s why his brain didn’t grow and has to conceal it with his *toupée*. The scary thing is that there are people applauding him.

Just like there are cops that kill you just for being black. And if you don’t have any money you can’t get sick, because not every body is first world in the first world. There are many worlds in the first

world. There are a lot more poor people here than I imagined. And they're not all immigrants; there is trailers from coast to coast of forgotten white people in this developed country.

Donald! Donald!

Yolanda criticizes me. She doesn't understand how I ended up choosing a rat as a pet. But with all the rats that live here in New York, it's only natural one wants to have a rat of one's own.

Donald, come!

SHE GOT TIRED, SITS DOWN AND THINKS.

**MINNIE:**

Poor thing, he must be starving.

Here you have a little treat! It has kale for iron and for the digestion!

Come and turn the little wheel around to amuse yourself!

I get you, Donald. Having to live locked up in that cage, when you could wander around freely, drinking water out of the hill puddles when you're thirsty... Living without a girlfriend and waiting for someone to give you things, like so many people do... turning that carousel around to keep you from going crazy... because hamsters can't drink booze or smoke a joint or have a *facebook* account...

MINNIE TAKES HER SHOES OFF.

**MINNIE:**

Even though being free puts you at the mercy of rat extermination campaigns –or the immigration services–, living locked up and trained is much worse. I get you, Donald. But I thought you loved me. At least we keep each other company.

MINNIE TAKES ONE OF HER GLOVES OFF.

**MINNIE:**

First, it had Rover the dog, do you guys remember? That later became independent and turned into Pluto, with his own cartoons. That's why I always tell Ramón Antonio, who doesn't speak English, that he should dress as Pluto that only barks, so he can get a gig.

MINNIE TAKES THE OTHER GLOVE OFF.

**MINNIE:**

And then I had the black and white cat, Figaro, who ended up becoming the cat in Disney's *Pinocchio*.

We animals in captivity as soon as we can we choose to be free.

MINNIE TAKES OFF HER DRESS.

**MINNIE:**

All of us: the bank tellers, the doormen and salespeople in stores, the taxi drivers and the doctors or engineers... anyone you ask works over-time for under-pay and would like to have their own business but taxes eat them up, as the laws, the banks and the governments do...

That's why when the dog tells the wild wolf to let himself be caught since he's going to be able to have food, a roof over his head and a blanket against the cold, the wolf says he prefers being free without having the collar mark around his neck even though he is hungry. It's not my invention; it is a fable from a Frenchman that my dad used to tell me.

MINNIE REMARKS THAT HER DRESS HAS A HOLE. SHE GOES FAST TO HER HANDBAG TO GET NEEDLE AND THREAD, AND SITS DOWN TO SEW.

**MINNIE:**

I know I have to improve my English, to be able to adapt better, to appear... or disappear... because migrating is like ceasing to being, right? I know it's a felony to be Rosita Valdez. That's why I wear a costume, and now they want to take it off of me? Noooo... they're going to have to kill me! We're one now. Minnie and I. I speak Minnie, I eat Minnie, I dream Minnie... who is Rosita Valdez? Who's going to take me to USCIS?

MINNIE ENDS SEWING THE DRESS AND GOES TO HANG IT.

**MINNIE:**

I know I have to improve my English, to correct the accent of what I am, to learn to pronounce the double u, THhheee, and Rrrrr... so no one will notice Rosita Valdez. Because Rosita Valdez is illegal, but no one can't arrest Minnie. Where are they going to deport her if she was born here?

SHE GOES TO PUT THE SEWING KIT BACK IN HER HANDBAG AND FIND A LITTLE MIRROR WHERE SHE STARES AT HERSELF.

**MINNIE:**



I am Rosita Valdez, you know me, you know I mean well, you can testify to that. I really am Rosita Valdez even though my name is Mafer Rodriguez. I exist, even though I have no papers.

MINNIE PUTS THE MIRROR BACK IN THE HANDBAG AND TAKES A LITTLE BRUSH. SHE SITS DOWN TO BRUSH HER MINNIE HEAD, KINDLY.

**MINNIE:**

I am the one spending 8 hours standing in the street, stuffed in foam rubber at 80 degrees in Summer when tourists abound, to make at least \$60 and have something to myself after paying the \$30 to rent the costume. Well that was before, because now I own what I am: for \$350 on sale on eBay! If not, it was like living on a borrowed life, right?

Now in just 5 or 6 hours I make more money than I used to make at the factory working overtime. Sometimes I get \$5 per picture, other times I get \$1 or just some coins, and some other times I get nothing. But then you complain. Because even though it's not mandatory people's got to understand that this is a job, or what do you think Minnie lives on? How does she buy groceries and pays the rent? When that woman told me she didn't ask for me to pose, I told her I didn't ask for her to take a picture either, she's the one who put the little girl next to me and click, click, click! Well now you pay! And the woman was like "No" and that's when the policeman came. Instead the naked girls with paint all over their bodies charge \$5 per picture. No comments, I won't get all feminist here. I've never been a feminist but I've never taken crap from Mickey either. You've all seen it...

PROJECTION OF Plane Crazy (kiss scene on the airplane).

**MINNIE:**

When Mickey steals a kiss or rubs me, holds me, I slap him in the face. And I was going to slap that policeman in the face as well because he wanted to take my mask off forcibly. And that's when the Hulk told him: "*you don't have the right to do this*". And the policeman looks at him with a smirk and tells him: "*who says that?*" And the Hulk, oh so dreamy, told him: "*the heroes of this country*", the heroes of this nation! Because there we were, all of us; even Robin, Batman's little friend. There are six and a half million Americans suffering from

depersonalization syndrome, even though they sometimes believe it's schizophrenia or obsessive compulsive disorder.

But amazingly, heroes and all, we have to take a whole lot more pictures than the naked women, without eating or drinking because then nobody wants to let you use their bathroom. And that's not an easy task to do: taking the costume off and putting it back on; not only because it's a time-consuming task but because it spoils the costume. That's why also having to deal with the police harassing us is just too much.

MINNIE CLEANS THE HEAD INSIDE; EVEN SPRAY SOME PERFUM IN IT.

**MINNIE:**

Since they tell tourists to not give us any money, the business is going down. And now they even want to pass a bill and a license to regularize us and keep us from harassing the tourists, when all we do is to give a better service to the city.

Or don't you remember when Times Square used to be pimps, whores and junkies' territory?

Now it's fantasyland!

DOOR RINGS. MINNIE FREAKS. SHE PUTS HER HEAD ON BEFORE GOING TO THE DOOR. DOOR RINGS AGAIN. SHE TREMBLES.

**MINNIE:**

*Who is it?*

**MAN: (OFF)**

*Domino's Pizza.*

**MINNIE:**

*I don't eat pizza...*

**MAN: (OFF)**

*Are you sure? It says 345 East, 145 Street. Apartment 7G...*

**MINNIE:**

*This is it... but I didn't order any pizza...*

**MAN: (OFF)**

*You don't want the pizza then?*

**MINNIE:**

*Try the 7E... they eat a lot of pizza...*

**MAN: (OFF)**

*Ok...*

MINNIE RUNS TO HER HANDBAG AND GET HER CEL PHONE. SHE CALLS AND LEAVE A MESSAGE.

**MINNIE:**

Yolanda, it's Minnie. I had a problem at Times Square and I think they're looking for me. Please call me, I'm... I don't know... I don't know if Rosita Valdez or Mafer Rodriguez is in trouble.

DOOR RINGS AGAIN.

**MINNIE:**

*Yes?*

**MAN: (OFF)**

*Listen, they didn't order any pizza in 7F, nor in 7E... the delivery order says apartment 7G, are you sure you don't want the pizza?*

**MINNIE:**

*I am positive. I don't eat pizza. I don't eat burgers. I am a vegetarian. Thank you.*

**MAN: (OFF)**

*What do you want me to do with this pizza then?*

**MINNIE:**

*I don't know. (PAUSA) Do you want me to call the police?*

PAUSE, MINNIE TREMBLES.

**MAN: (OFF)**

*Have a good one.*

**MINNIE:**

*You too.*

MINNIE FAINTS.

**MINNIE:**

Don't despair, Minnie. It's worth it. Think about yesterday and how you made \$200. Don't forget that you come from Maracaibo, you know those 100 degrees in the shadow all too well. That's why the ones bearing the heat of the restaurant kitchens in New York and the foam rubber of the Disney characters we come all from south of the border. The Americans are not used to these temperatures.

MINNIE GOES TO THE WINDOW TO CHECK IF THE DELIVERY BOY IS GONE. THEN SHE TAKES THE HEAD OFF.

**MINNIE:**

That's why so many immigrants go to Florida or California looking for the heat...

SHE GETS A YOGA PAD, AN AIRPLANE PILLOW AND BLANKET, AND PREPARES A SPOT TO REST.

**MINNIE:**

But in *Disneyland* those dollars have a Mickey face as if it was a farm, and Disney characters serve you at the post office.

It is true that there are no dangers in Disneyland but how much money do you get out of those 40,000 people visiting daily the "happiest place of earth", paying \$99 each adult and \$93 each child? Nobody makes over \$1500 monthly at the most!

And don't you forget that's not a real city but an amusement park in Anaheim, Orange County. And it's not like *The OC*, TV's Orange County either, like Beverly Hills next to the sea where everyone is blonde and rich.

In Anaheim the white Republicans live on the east Hills, but to the west, on the Flatlands, is where the majority of Latino and poor people live, with terrible salaries. They're precisely those who make the park and the hotels work, the ones nobody see because they're stuffed in foam rubber, or behind the restaurant kitchens' stoves, or making the beds when the tourists go out for a stroll.

MINNIE PUTS HER DRESS BACK ON.

**MINNIE:**

In the Flatlands they eat tortilla and beans, but out of the 127 municipality councilmen, only 3 of them are Hispanic. Do you remember when the police killed those two unarmed Latinos alleged criminals on the back...? All the riots, the looting, the rage...? Well let's hope Times Square does not go out in flames if they keep the harassment.

MINNIE PUTS HER SHOES BACK ON.

**MINNIE:**

Do you know what it's like to come to this country with a passport belonging to a John Doe having the looks of a José Gómez exuding Ecuador on every breath? And what he had to pay because those passports don't come cheap. It took him years to save the money. But that Brian José is smart... As soon as he got on the plane he grabbed the *New York Times*. Who would have thought he didn't speak

English? New York Times English! From page one until the plane landed. The rest was easy as everyone knows. *Chicken or pasta? Pasta. Coffee or tea? Coffee, please.* South of the border we all drink coffee.

With such bad luck that he ran into that pretty girl... and he had to look the other way, because he couldn't risk speaking Spanish, being who he was, with his alluring smile and his tall tales, the storyteller... no matter he liked the girl that much. He says that the migration cost him the Love. But it doesn't seem like it because there is very much excited with Wonder Woman, who loves him like only Dominican women know.

Just imagine him, with his 4 feet 11, it's hard to picture as a John Doe, with his toasted skin and night eyes. The poor guy was sweating the entire flight until he passed all controls at JFK... there someone was waiting for him at the exit, to take the passport off and sell it to another Ecuadorian willing to sweat the entire trip, eager to make it here in the north. It's not an easy thing to be someone in Times Square. Batman and Robin also have their story. As does Captain America... And all the others I don't know about, but that know all too well how to live on hope... that's why we all came to New York.

MINNIE PUTS THE HEAD ON, TAKES HER HANDBAG AND GOES TO BED, ALL DRESSED, READY TO RUN JUST IN CASE.

**MINNIE:**

In the end, Disney makes more money with the parks than with the movies. They make the movies to later promote the characters at the parks, and we promote the movies for free.

I know it's early but I can't go back to Times Square to work... and after all, I deserve the warrior's rest. Surely Batman and Robin are also taking their nap... and Superman... and Wonder Woman with Spiderman... and Captain America...

MINNIE FALLS ASLEEP.

HER CEL PHONE RINGS. SHE WAKES UP IN PANIC.

**MINNIE:**

Yolanda? Oh, no. *I thought it was my sister, how are you Hulk...? I didn't have the time to thank you... What? ... Yes, I am all right, thank you... Bueno, a delivery boy knocked on my door and I thought it was the police... He is gone... The store in 46 and Broadway? ... Yes, yes, of course, it is a source of inspiration, that store... I am lost, what has to do the Syrians emigrates with us?... Ah, ok, now they are ashamed and tolerant and everybody wants his immigrant at home... jajajajajaja...*

*yes, it is a good circumstance... Of course I am interested! When is the interview?... Now?????... No, no, it is okay, I can go... Oh, thank you, Hulk... Yes, of course, we can meet after the interview... this is your number, right? Great... Mira, listen, don't mistake me with all the Minnies that are in the store, I am the one with the purple eyeshadow... Oh, you have noticed... See you, then... Chao... Y gracias.*

MINNIE HANGS UP, WRAPS UP THE YOGA PAD ETC, FIX HER LOOK AND HEADS TO THE DOOR.

**MINNIE:**

Who said it had to be Mickey? Nobody saw that wedding on the screen. If Spiderman is no good for me, why not the Hulk? Let's see if it's true this is the country of opportunities. I do believe in getting your green card for love.

Donald, don't you come out! Remember there's an operating rat extermination around the corner!

And please, don't tell anyone that Minnie lives on 145<sup>th</sup> street or that she was born in Maracaibo!

**THE END.**

*Lupe Gehrenbeck*

*Paris, September 14, 2015*