

July 5, 1987

I'M A STRANGER HERE MYSELF

Willful Thompsonn lived in the Polish district of New York City. He was the proud possessor of a push cart; his only possession aside from a wart. From 8:00 to 4:52 every day he would be at his push cart (except for Thursdays, as he was religious) peddling goat's-milk cheese. Every half-hour he would move his curbside push cart to the opposite curb for the hell of it.

One day while Willful was pushing back his cuticles, a large red ball (perhaps three feet in diameter) fell from a high-rise and landed several yards away from his push cart. It bounced along the city street, then rolled to a stop close to some garbage cans. Willful paid it no mind, as he knew it had nothing to do with this story.

"One pound of goat's-milk cheese, please," a kindly voice suddenly said.

"Finally," Willful said to himself, "Someone wants to buy my cheese. I must be dreaming!"

Then Willful saw ten giant music sheets of "Staying Alive" disco-dancing along the opposite curb and realized he was dreaming after all.

Then Willful felt hot breath in his face, and decided it wasn't his own. He opened his eyes to find himself in his crib, and a shiny-clothed man with vaseline in his eyebrows standing over him.

"Willful Thompsonn?" the man said.

"Speaking," said Willful with a gulp.

"That's all I wanted to know," the shiny man said, and proceeded to ransack Willful's nursery. He gathered up everything—the fuzzy marshmallows, the prickly rubber duckies, the cold rectal thermometers, the

crusty hankies, the hollow dippity-do duddly-dimplers...he even took the second "n" from Willful's last name. Then he began to swat his perturbed victim harshly with a baseball bat once autographed by a Yankee.

The shiny man quietly exited the nursery in a holy manner, dragging his plunder behind him.

Being night and all, he did not notice the pushcart as he skipped out of the lobby. He merely skipped off into the darkness until I could no longer see him. As for the pushcart...it still proudly displays its goat's-milk cheese at curbside to this very day, moving itself to the opposite curb every half-hour.

Steve Kelly