WILLY THE ELF – written by Keith Davidson - keith@keithdavidson.com
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PAGE ONE - 6 PANELS

PANEL 1 -Cloudy and grey.
A wide aerial shot of a red convertible driving on a backwoods road through forested countryside toward a tiny town in the distance. We're too far away to see it's a boarded-up ghost town. We're also too far away to see him clearly, but the driver, **CHRIS** (the narrator, age 26), wears a black suit, white dress shirt unbuttoned at the top, and loosened conservative tie. In the back seat is a row of 6 red gas cans.

CAPTION: *December 1975*.

CAPTION: I remember when Wilton was a happy little town.

PANEL 2
The car passes a faded, worn sign reading: WELCOME TO WILTON as it approaches the edge of town.

CAPTION: People from all over the state would visit.

CAPTION: Today, you won't even find it on a map.

PANEL 3
Chris drives down the 2 block-long main street of a ghost town -- faded storefronts with peeling paint have CLOSED and OUT OF BUSINESS signs in their windows... buildings are boarded up. Not a person or car in sight.

CAPTION: The town died back in the mid sixties.

CAPTION: The contamination was mostly to blame.

CAPTION: …Mostly.

PANEL 4
He drives past the movie theater with a rusted marquee: "KEEP YOUR CHILDREN CLOSE!" (a few letters are missing). In the distance we see a hint of the ruins of SANTA-LAND that he's driving to.

CAPTION: Instead of boarding it up, they should have burned it to the ground…

CAPTION: …And sown the ashes with salt.

MORE…

PAGE 1 (CONT'D)

PANEL 5
An OTS shot through the windshield as the car approaches the run-down entrance to the long-abandoned SANTA-LAND. We only see pieces/hints (definitely not the name on the gate).

CAPTION: The town wasn't just contaminated...

CAPTION: ...it was damned.

PANEL 6
High angle looking down past part of the big SANTA-LAND sign (not recognizable yet) above the gate at Chris looking up at it as he steps out of his car.

CAPTION: And it all started right here...

PAGE TURN

PAGE TWO – 4 PANELS (1 huge + 3 small ones along the bottom)

PANEL 1
We finally get a good look at the ruins of SANTA-LAND. It's like an old EC comic -- eerie, grey, dismal. We're looking past Chris as he stands in front of the big slightly twisted rusted iron gate between 2 giant candy canes, with a big, weather-worn SANTA-LAND sign at the top.

The gate is what is most important for this panel, but past the gate are the ruins of SANTA'S WORKSHOP (a Bavarian or Swiss style building decorated for Christmas). Right in front of the building, so kids could sit in it to have their picture taken, is a dilapidated sleigh with two animatronic reindeer (creepy because time has taken a toll).

There's what's left of a PETTING ZOO... an ENCHANTED FOREST with fairy tale characters... a TRAIN RIDE... etc. If there's not enough room to show all these, maybe names on the big signpost of giant arrows would help.

CAPTION: ...in Santa-Land.

PANEL 2
Close on one of the horrific-looking reindeer. Dark empty eye sockets. Molting fur.

CAPTION: Looking at it now...

PANEL 3
The 3-D elf on the ELF SCHOOL sign is decayed and frightening looking.

CAPTION: ...It's hard to believe it was once a magical place.

PANEL 4
Close-up of Chris, remembering back.

CAPTION: The whole town came out for the grand opening...

PAGE THREE – 5 PANELS (1 big + a triptych below it + a caption along the bottom)

PANEL 1 - It's now **1955**.
It's the exact same view as panel 1 of page 2, only everything is new and brightly coloured, and the sun is shining -- this is the grand opening of SANTA-LAND, a small, low-budget theme park created with love. Chris is in the same spot, but now 6 years old. His brother, **DANNY** (4), is beside him. Plus, a crowd of excited kids and some parents.

The big SANTA-LAND sign supported by two giant candy canes looks impressive. The ornate wrought-iron gate between them is open, and a big red ribbon is starting to be cut with huge scissors held by **KARL**, a big, bearded man dressed as Father Christmas, but in a luxurious blue robe (which he always wears). Next to Karl is his teenage son, **WILLY**, a little person (dwarf) dressed as an elf. They're both beaming with happiness. A newsman is filming it with a 1955 camera on a tripod.

Past the entrance lies a brightly colored Santa's village with a handful of "elves" waiting to greet the first visitors. SANTA'S WORKSHOP looks quaint, and the two identical animatronic reindeer harnessed to the sleigh out front look realistic and in great shape.

CAPTION: It was July 10, 1955.

CAPTION: Exactly one week before Walt Disney opened Disneyland, Scandinavian immigrant Karl Klaus opened Santa-Land.

THIS BOTTOM TIER IS A TRIPTYCH -- A SINGLE IMAGE CUT INTO 3 SECTIONS:
(1) Children watch in wonder as... (2) Willy in the sleigh works his controller... (3) that makes the reindeer move. There are gutters between the panels. So it's…

LEFT PANEL
Chris + Danny are at the front of a gathering of children looking at the middle panel.

CAPTION (near Chris): I was six years old.

CAPTION (near Danny): My brother Danny had just turned four.

MIDDLE PANEL
Willy is in the sleigh manipulating a controller with an antenna in his hand as he watches something in the next panel. His dialogue balloon crosses into that panel.

CAPTION: I remember us watching Karl's adopted dwarf son, Willy, work the animatronic reindeer he built.

WILLY: See, kids? They're trying… But they can't fly until Christmas Eve!

SFX: BEEPS from the controller.

MORE...

PAGE THREE – CONTINUED

RIGHT PANEL
The two animatronic reindeer tied to the sleigh are now rearing up on their hind legs, their eyes lit up. The crowd is delighted. Karl beams with pride.

CAPTION: He may have been a genius with robotics…

CAPTION: …but even Willy couldn't make animatronic reindeer fly.

PANEL 5
is just a sentence running along the bottom of the page, white letters on black.

CAPTION: After five years of success, things began to go wrong. Horribly wrong…

PAGE TURN

PAGE FOUR – 5 PANELS

PANEL 1 - It's now **1960**.
We're looking past some bizarrely deformed baby animal in the outdoor PETTING ZOO at a handful of people on the other side of a low white picket fence, all staring in horror. At the front are Chris (now **11**), pointing at the animal, Danny (now **9**), and their MOTHER, holding her hand over her mouth. We don't get a good look at the animal. It could even be in siloutette, if that's effective.

CAPTION: Animals were born deformed...

CHRIS: Mom…what is that?

PANEL 2
Willy and worried-looking elves watch an ambulance leave the park.

CAPTION: Staff began falling ill...

AN ELF: Did you see? He was throwing up blood. (small letters in a big balloon)

PANEL 3
TWO MEN in coveralls and masks (they don't have the budget for HAZMAT suits, plus it's 1960) take readings with Geiger-counter-like devices. Man #1's device CLICKS and has a slightly glowing light as he holds it over the oversize WISHING WELL. Made of rocks, the opening is about 5' across, with a distinctive bucket on a wound rope and a handle.

In the background, Man #2 is near their truck marked COUNTY HEALTH DEPT. His device isn't glowing or clicking.

MAN 1: Uh… Got something, Fred…

SFX: CLICK CLICK CLICK (not loud yet)

CAPTION: An investigation revealed that the previous owners of the property, Crandall Chemicals--

MORE...

PAGE FOUR – CONTINUED

PANEL 4
In a cavern, Man #1 takes a reading of barrels with a skull-and-crossbones, labelled CRANDALL CHEMICALS, that are leaking green ooze into a stream. The light on his device is glowing brightly now, and the ticking is louder.

Behind him, the Wishing Well's distinctive bucket is on its side on the ground, the still-attached rope extending up through a hole in the rock ceiling. Next to it is a ladder that disappears up the hole. Further back, Man #2 takes a flash picture of rows and rows of barrels extending deeper into the darkness of the cave system.

CAPTION: --had stored toxic waste in the caves under the park.

SFX: ...CLICK...CLICK...CLICK... (louder than previous panel)

CAPTION: And when the barrels leaked, it didn't just contaminate Santa-Land, it contaminated the town's drinking water.

PANEL 5
Big snowflakes drift down on Karl and Willy watching, devastated, as the SHERIFF snaps a big lock onto heavy chains that now lock the wrought iron gate. Across the SANTA-LAND sign is a CONDEMNED banner. A bunch of kids are watching, sad. Standing between Chris and **JOSH** (their much rougher friend), Danny is crying.

CAPTION: Santa-Land closed its gates for the last time on Christmas Eve, 1960.

SHERIFF: I'm awful sorry, Karl.

SFX: CLICK

CAPTION: Two months later, an even bigger tragedy struck...