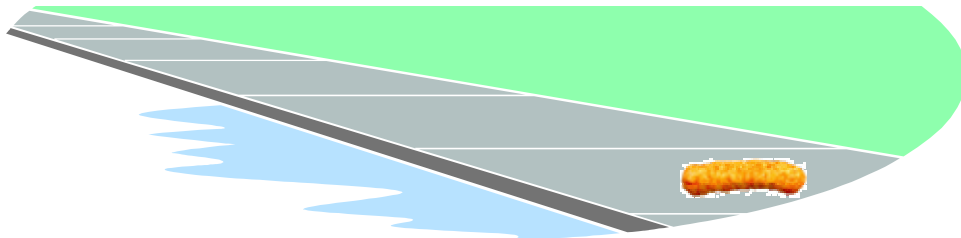




On a cold winter day in the city of Minneapolis, a little brown sparrow hopped around looking for food and tried to keep warm. He hopped up on top of the bush in which he lived, but all he saw was a dirty napkin stuck in the bushes

tangled branches. He hopped up onto a wall, but all he saw were some cigarette butts piled up against a lamp post. He hopped up into the bare branches of a tree where a broken old string of Christmas lights dangled in the wind.

The little brown sparrow looked down at the sidewalk in hopes that someone might have dropped something he could eat. As he looked down the sidewalk, way off toward the corner of Hennepin Avenue and Second Street, he spotted a big orange cheese puff.

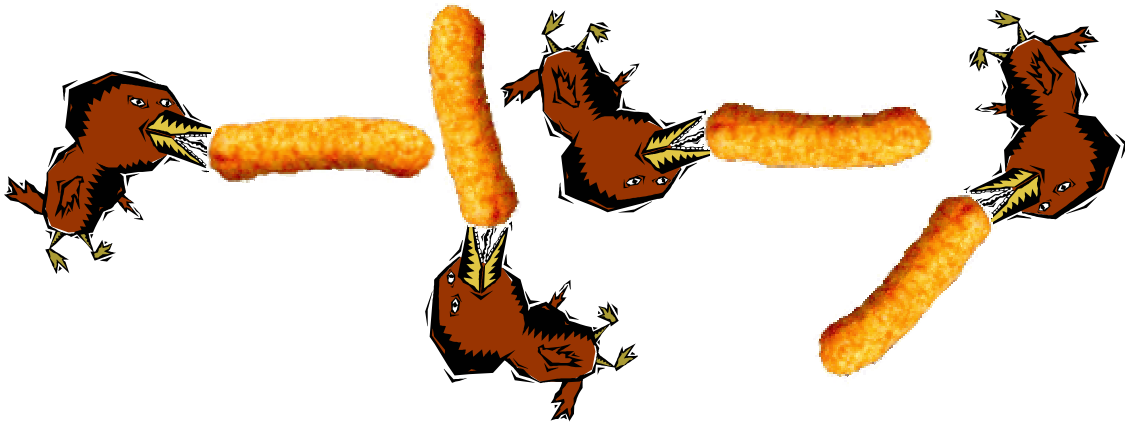


What a lucky day, thought the sparrow. He gave a cheerful little chirp and flew quickly over to where the big orange cheese puff lay.

When he got there, he realized that the cheese puff was huge! It was nearly as big as he was. What a feast, he thought.



Quickly, the little brown sparrow pecked into one end of the big orange cheese puff and tried to fly away.



But the cheese puff was so big that the little sparrow couldn't keep his balance. He flew sideways and upside down, and finally he tumbled back down to the sidewalk. Just then, someone came walking around the corner and the little brown sparrow had to hop quickly out of the way to avoid being stepped on.

Once the person passed by, the little brown sparrow hopped back down to the sidewalk where the big orange cheese puff lay. Once again he pecked into it and tried to fly away. But, once again, he ended up tumbling back down to the sidewalk. The cheese puff was just too big, and the sparrow was just too small.

Then the little brown sparrow got a big idea. He would peck the big orange cheese puff in half. That way he could manage to get it back to his bush in two trips. He flew down to the sidewalk once again and started pecking at the big orange cheese puff, but soon another person came along and the little brown sparrow had to jump out of the way once again.



Each time the little brown sparrow tried to peck the big orange cheese puff in two, someone would come walking along and the sparrow would jump out of the way. Finally, the little brown sparrow gave up trying to peck the cheese puff in two and sat on a newspaper box to think.

Well, thought the little brown sparrow, if I can't fly away with it, perhaps I can walk away with it.

The little brown sparrow hopped down to the big orange cheese puff, picked it up in his beak and walked back toward his home in the bush with the tangled branches. It took much longer to walk than to fly. By the time he got home to the bush with the tangled branches, the little brown sparrow was so tired that he dropped the big orange cheese puff and fell fast asleep.

What the little brown sparrow didn't know was that while he was walking along Second Street, in front of the tall apartment building called the Pinnacle, a photographer happened to see him and took a picture of him walking with the big orange cheese puff in his beak. Now, this photographer just happened to work for the Star Tribune newspaper and, as luck would have it, there wasn't much news that day. So the photographer's editor (who was usually a very grumpy old man with little interest in pictures of birds, even if they were carrying big orange cheese puffs) decided to publish the picture on the front page. And so, while the little brown sparrow slept, the whole city of Minneapolis saw his picture in the newspaper. He was famous.



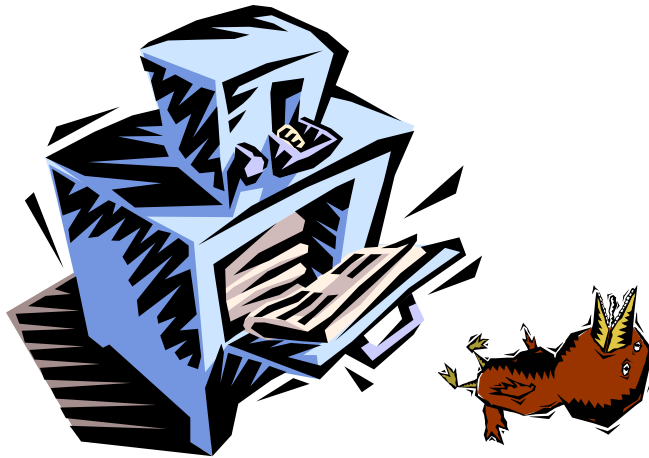
But, being famous doesn't stop bad things from happening. That night while the little brown sparrow slept, while he was becoming famous all over the city, a winter storm blew in across lake Minnetonka. It blew snow through downtown Minneapolis, past the tall buildings and right over the Mississippi River. The snow came down on Nicollet Island and it came down on the bush with the tangled branches where the little brown sparrow slept. And the snow buried the big orange cheese puff right where the little brown sparrow had dropped it.



When the little brown sparrow awoke in the morning, everything was quiet and covered with a blanket of fresh white snow. The little brown sparrow was hungry and he began looking around for his big orange cheese puff. But he couldn't find it anywhere. He hopped around frantically pecking and scratching at the snow, but the big orange cheese puff was nowhere to be found. Then suddenly, he spotted it. Up the street, near the corner where he had found it, his big orange cheese puff was being carried away by another little brown sparrow. Someone was stealing his cheese puff! He flew toward the thief only to fly right into the glass window of the newspaper box and fell painfully back into the snow.

The little brown sparrow looked up and realized that there was no thief stealing his big orange cheese puff. It was a picture of him, carrying the big orange cheese puff, printed on the front page of the Star Tribune newspaper.

He had crashed into the newspaper box.



Quite sad now that he had lost his big orange cheese puff and bonked his head as well, the little brown sparrow walked slowly back toward his bush, hungry, tired, cold and sore.

But as he walked toward his bush, he saw a group of people walking toward him. They had open bags of cheese puffs in their hands. They also carried copies of the newspaper with his picture.

The little brown sparrow jumped to get out of their way. They turned and pointed at him and chattered excitedly in that funny way that people sometimes do. They were watching him and so he quickly flew over them, back to the bush with the tangled branches where he could hide. When he got there, scattered all around in the fresh snow were dozens of cheese puffs. The people had come out to feed the famous sparrow they saw in the newspaper. None of the cheese puffs were as big as the big orange cheese puff

he had lost, but that was okay. The little brown sparrow was able to quickly snatch up the cheese puffs one at a time and pile them into a hole in the bush where he lived.

Now the little brown sparrow had a big pile of orange cheese puffs which lasted him for many days.

Throughout the rest of the winter, people came to his bush from time to time and scattered more cheese puffs for him. Sometimes they would wait with their cameras to take his picture. And someone taped a copy of his picture from the newspaper to a nearby lamp post so everyone would know: this was the home of the little brown sparrow who found the big orange cheese puff.

When spring came to Minneapolis the people stopped coming to scatter cheese puffs for the little brown sparrow. The little brown sparrow flew off to find a place to build a nest. And when the last of the snow melted from around the bush with the tangled branches, before the big rain came to wash everything clean, there on the ground was a great big orange glob. That was where the big orange cheese puff had been hidden in the snow all winter long and where it had melted along with the snow.



The end.