

*On the Streets of*

# *New York*

*A poetic tour of the city*



**B**  
**I**  
**G**  
**P**  
**I**  
**C**  
**T**  
**U**  
**R**  
**E**  
**P**  
**R**  
**E**  
**S**

*Sarah Kay  
Ryan Johnson*

**COVER  
NOT FINAL**

**ENDS**

**Imprint**

**Title**

## **Introduction to the city**

## City Words

Some days this is a city of nouns.  
crosswalk dogpoop taxi bus  
puddle staircase subway rat  
trash tree bicycle building building  
tourist neighbor vendor  
playground

Sometimes the city is all verb:  
walking looking  
honking barking  
working lurking  
raining running  
riding rushing  
meeting seeing  
missing kissing  
going going

Adjective Day too:  
sweaty breezy smelly loud  
hungry busy early crowded  
late awake and sometimes, even,  
if you can believe it: quiet





## *City Weather*

The first blizzard of the year is a fine time to discover that everyone in your neighborhood apparently owns a sled, Or knows how to build one out of cafeteria trays and garbage can lids, every hill now flooded with bright mittens thrown in the air like wedding bouquets.

## Central Park

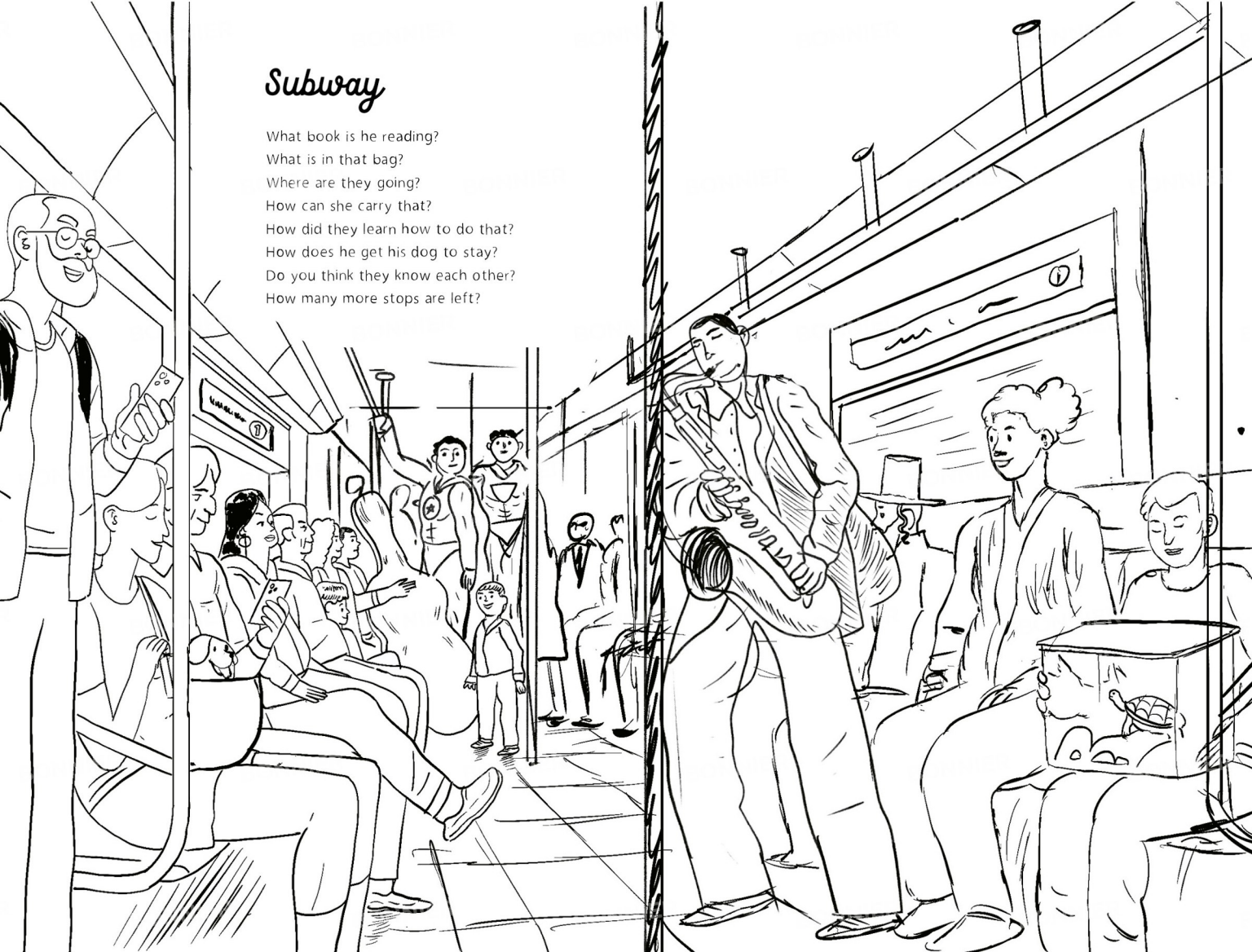
Sometimes I walk through Central Park  
with my arms outstretched and say,  
Wow! Did you know there is a park here?  
And so centrally located!  
It is a joke for an audience of only fireflies,  
who do not laugh, but do, I think,  
deserve a performance of their own from time to time,  
after all the shows they put on.

There are four-digit numbers on every lamppost in the park  
and if you both know how it works,  
you can tell someone where to find you  
using only lampposts as your guide.  
The city is full of secrets and codes,  
never-ending ways to find who or what you are looking for.



# Subway

What book is he reading?  
What is in that bag?  
Where are they going?  
How can she carry that?  
How did they learn how to do that?  
How does he get his dog to stay?  
Do you think they know each other?  
How many more stops are left?

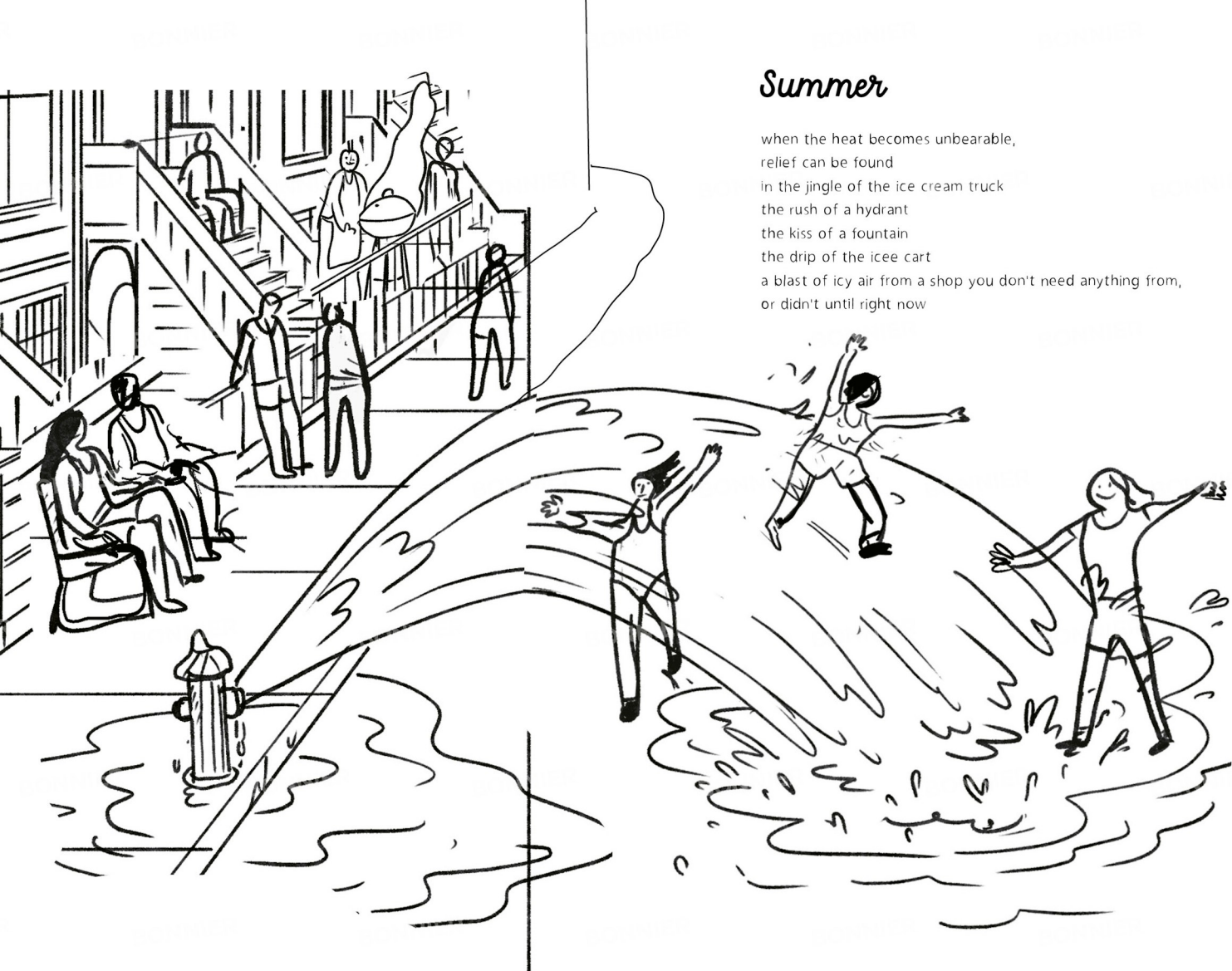




# *Thunderstorm*

Because I know my neighborhood so well,  
even when I get caught in a thunderstorm  
with no umbrella or coat, I can still  
avoid getting drenched on my way home  
by zigging and zagging from awning to scaffold.

And my neighborhood knows me back:  
the postman who waves when he drops off the mail,  
the cat at the bodega who lets me pet her,  
the waitress at my favorite restaurant who remembers  
which dish I love.



## Summer

when the heat becomes unbearable,  
relief can be found  
in the jingle of the ice cream truck  
the rush of a hydrant  
the kiss of a fountain  
the drip of the icee cart  
a blast of icy air from a shop you don't need anything from,  
or didn't until right now

## *We Get Where We Need to Go*

we get where we need to go  
by bike or by skateboard,  
by taxi, by subway, by bus,  
by bridge or by tunnel or by ferry,  
in strollers, on shoulders, by wheelchair, by foot.  
Escalators, elevators, ramps, and stairs.  
There are maps & memories to help us,  
crosswalks & traffic lights, signs & instructions,  
& somebody to ask for directions  
if you get turned around.





## *Times Square*

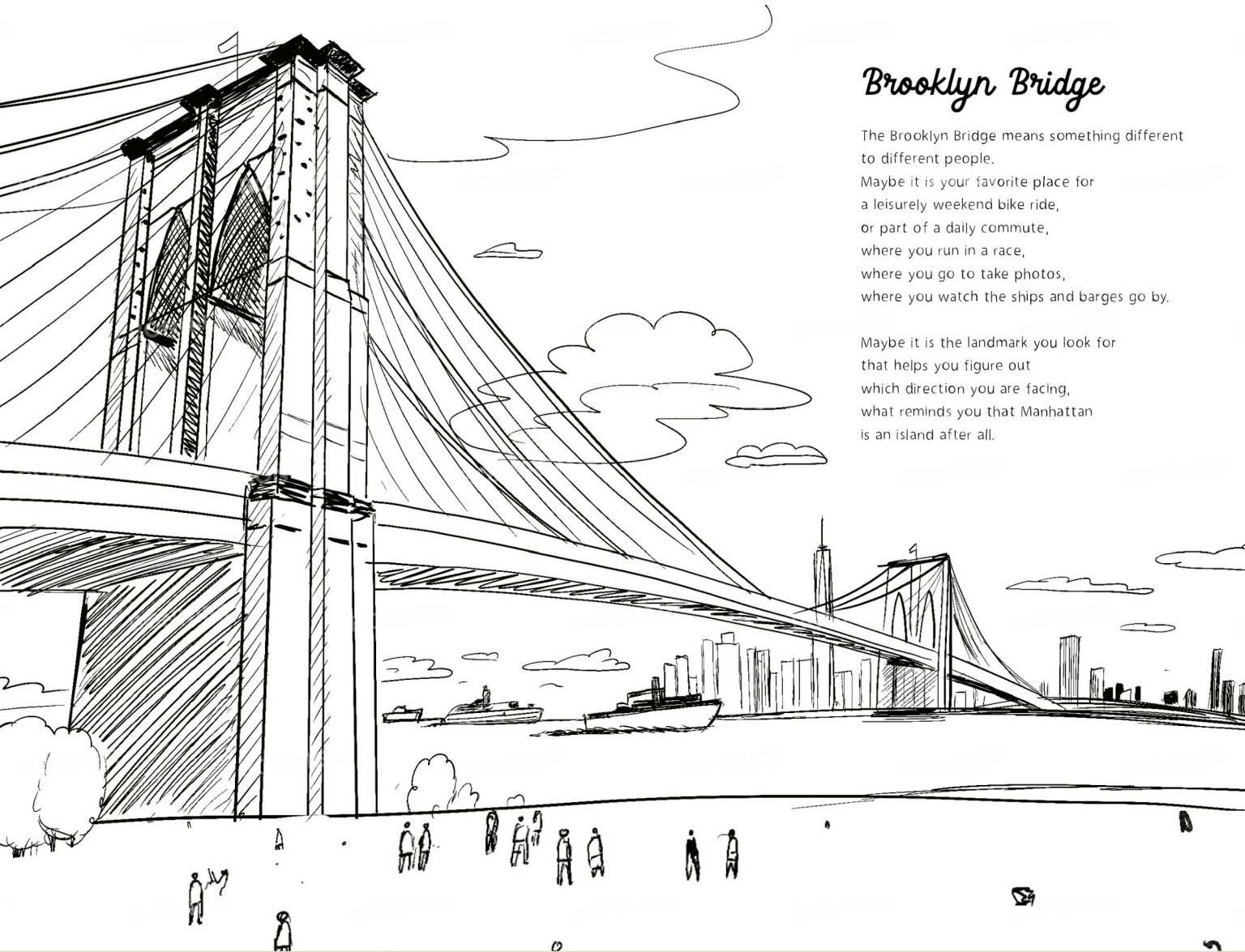
There is something to see in every direction.

Look up: at the billboards, bright lights, & marquees,

Look in: at the audiences, the crew, the diners, the waitstaff,

Look out! for the tourists and mascots and commuters,

the buskers and promoters, the artists and vendors.



## Brooklyn Bridge

The Brooklyn Bridge means something different to different people.

Maybe it is your favorite place for a leisurely weekend bike ride, or part of a daily commute, where you run in a race, where you go to take photos, where you watch the ships and barges go by.

Maybe it is the landmark you look for that helps you figure out which direction you are facing, what reminds you that Manhattan is an island after all.

## *Botanical Garden*

When you have a few hours to spare,  
you can trade in the traffic lights  
for trees and flowers, plants and vines,  
at the Botanic Garden in the Bronx:  
a perfect place to lose track of time and  
do a little wandering  
where the air is sometimes wet & bright  
with petals & sweet to sniff

## *Food Stalls*

How about a bagel with cream cheese & lox?  
Or a bacon egg & cheese on a roll,  
or dim sum or roasted nuts or a hotdog from a cart,  
or maybe a pretzel, or maybe kabob,  
some apples from the farmer's market,  
a soft serve or shaved ice,  
a black and white cookie, a slice of pizza?  
Sometimes I don't even realize I'm hungry until  
the city tells my nose that I am.

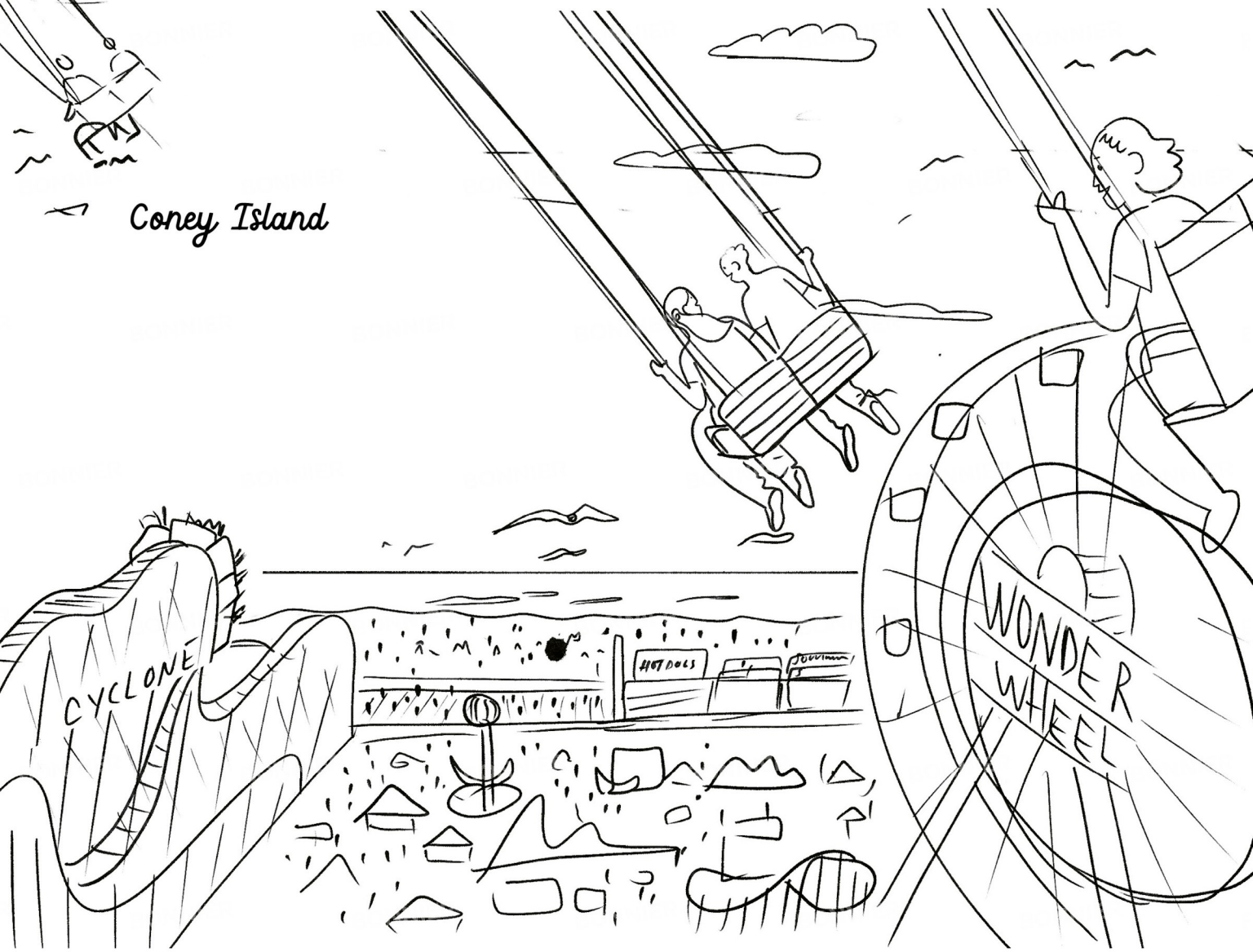
# Queens

In Queens, there are more accents and languages spoken than anywhere else in the world.

Every city block becomes its own orchestra—where you can hear sounds you've never heard before in harmony with voices that sound like home.



Coney Island



# *Parade Day*

If a street is cleared of cars it might be  
for a parade or a street fair or a block party  
which is a perfect opportunity for snacks  
and smells and marching bands and flags and banners  
and the best outfits you've ever seen.  
The whole city seems to march with the beat of drums.

# *The Museum of Natural History*



## *Statue of Liberty*

On the ferry to Staten Island,  
you can wave at the Statue of Liberty!  
Great copper lady, who has seen  
so many boats arrive and depart,  
who has seen so many generations of New Yorkers  
and newcomers and visitors,  
and now, she has seen you too.

## *Grand Central Station*

Meet me at the Whispering Walls  
in the tunnels of Grand Central Station,  
and I will speak softly into the tile,  
so the arch can carry my voice above the heads  
of the rushing travelers, over the rumble of trains,  
and deliver my secret to your ears.

# *Skyline*

If you leave the city but turn back to look  
you can see its silhouette  
like it has been cut out of paper & held up to the light.  
from here, it looks like it would fit if you opened your fingers,  
all that city in the palm of your hand.



## MAP SHOWING POEM LOCATIONS

# ENDPAPERS