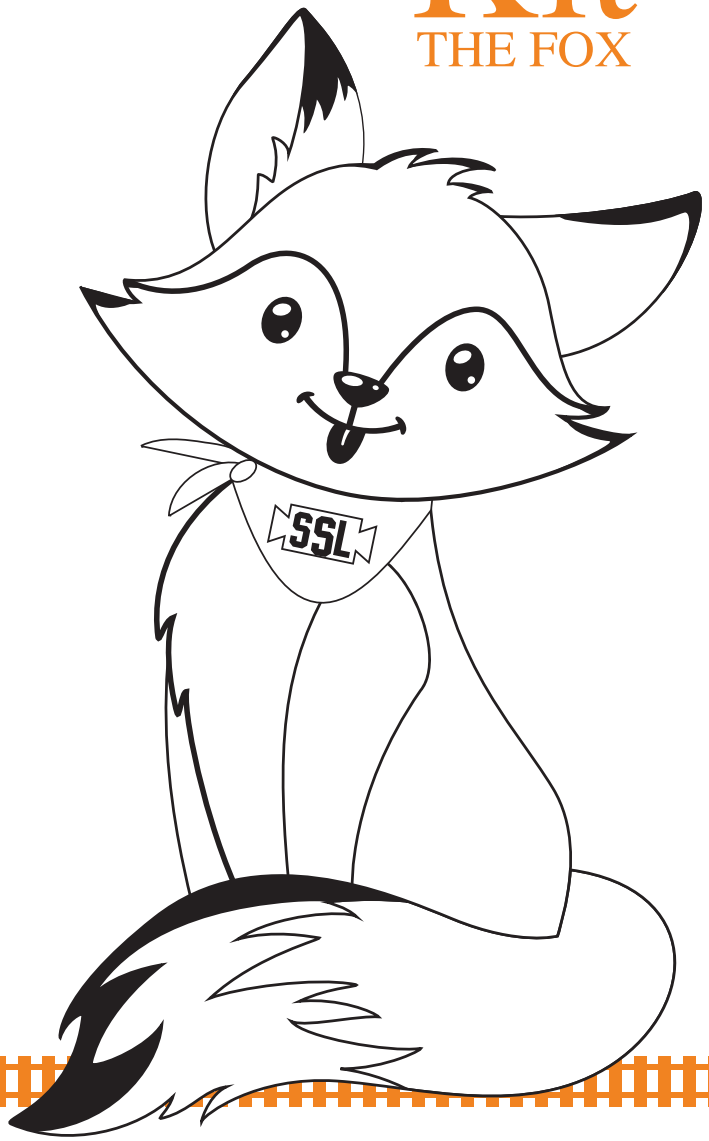
Kit

AND THE SOUTH SHORE LINE

SOUTH SHORE LINE®

Kit
THE FOX

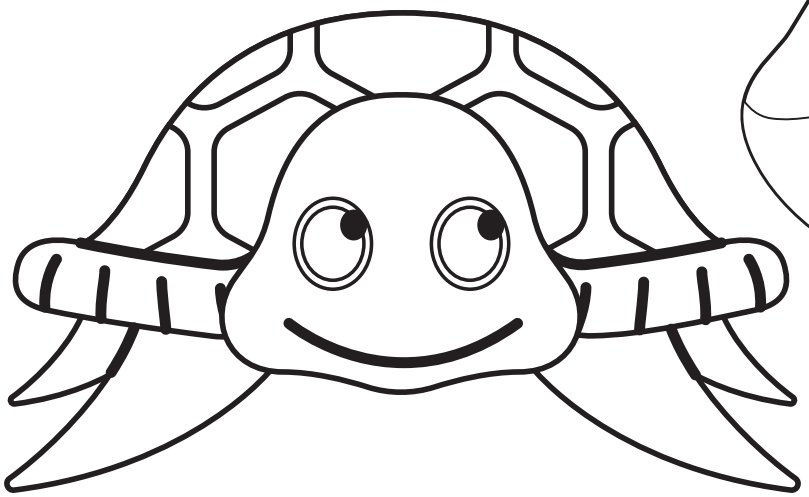


Nash
THE SQUIRREL

Rex
THE HAWK

Flower
THE BUNNY

Tobey
THE TURTLE



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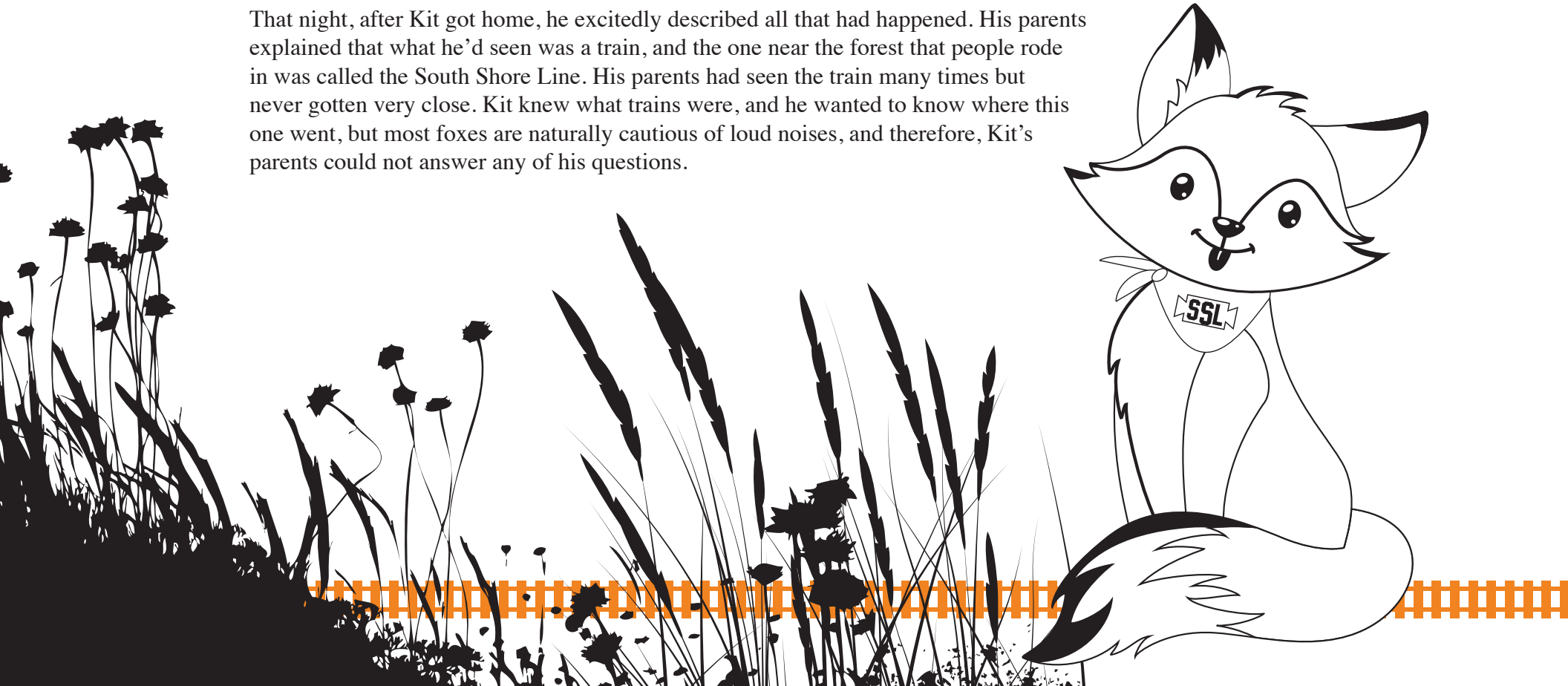
Deep in the Indiana Dunes, there lives a young red fox named Kit. He and his three siblings were born in the middle of winter to their loving mother and father. Being the most curious and brave of all the little cubs, Kit was the first to leave the den once it was safe and the first to explore on his own when the weather got warm.

One evening, while following a particularly spectacular trail, Kit stumbled upon something at the edge of the woods that he'd never seen before. It was a big, shiny, long shape moving across the ground like a fish through the water!

Kit loped along, following the shape from a safe, careful distance for a short time until it came to a stop at a building. As he watched, Kit realized people were getting inside the shape, as he could see them walking and sitting down. After several minutes, when all the people were seated, the shape began to move forward again, and before too long, it was completely out of sight. Kit sat pondering what he'd experienced until long after dark.

That night, after Kit got home, he excitedly described all that had happened. His parents explained that what he'd seen was a train, and the one near the forest that people rode in was called the South Shore Line. His parents had seen the train many times but never gotten very close. Kit knew what trains were, and he wanted to know where this one went, but most foxes are naturally cautious of loud noises, and therefore, Kit's parents could not answer any of his questions.



SOUTH SHORE LINE
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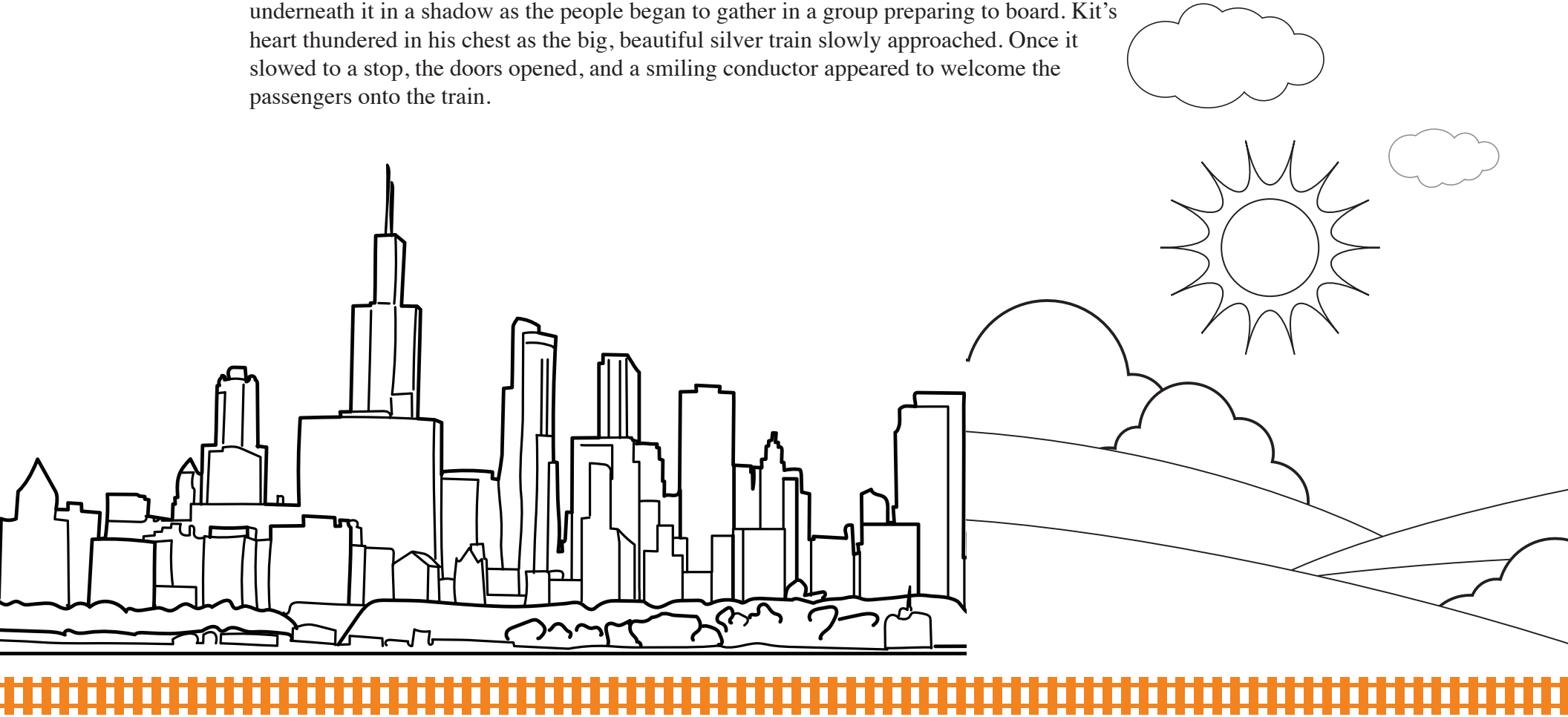
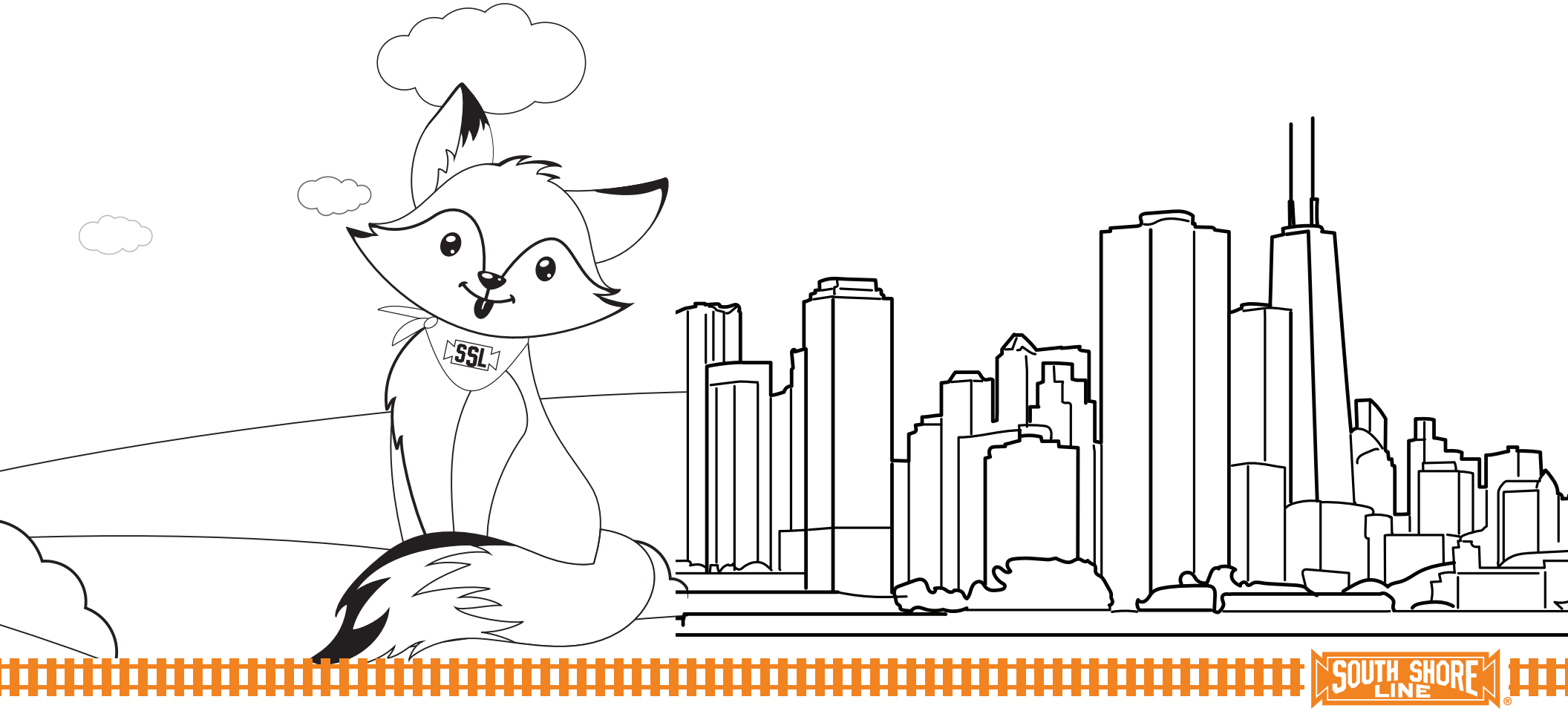
Early the next morning, while it was still dark, Kit waited at the same spot by the edge of the forest and watched anxiously for another glimpse of the South Shore Line train. He could see and hear people gathering at the building across the tracks, so he knew the train must be coming soon. He would not rest until he knew more, so he followed the nature path above the tracks and carefully crept nearer to the building. He was shy of people, so he didn't want anyone to see him, but he knew the building would hold more information. Once inside, Kit looked at all the colorful posters and brochures and finally found the answer he was looking for… the train took people to the big city across the lake – the one you could sometimes see at sunset – **CHICAGO!**

At that very moment, there was a short horn blast signaling that the train was drawing near. Kit wasted no time. He scampered out the back door, and made his way over to a bench, and waited patiently underneath it in a shadow as the people began to gather in a group preparing to board. Kit's heart thundered in his chest as the big, beautiful silver train slowly approached. Once it slowed to a stop, the doors opened, and a smiling conductor appeared to welcome the passengers onto the train.



Kit saw his chance to dart from under the bench when the conductor turned to help a passenger with a suitcase. But just as Kit stepped out from under the bench, the conductor turned back in his direction, and their eyes met. Kit froze! The conductor seemed just as surprised to see Kit as Kit was to be caught trying to sneak aboard the train. After a few tense moments, the kind conductor smiled and bent over to say, “Dune Park to Chicago?” Sensing that there was no danger, Kit swallowed and nodded his head, “Yes.” The conductor gestured to the door and said, “OK then, all aboard!” Kit beamed and scampered through the door as the rest of the passengers filed inside. He found a seat by the window where no one was sitting. The doors closed, and the train began to roll forward once again. Thus began the first of Kit’s many amazing big-city adventures.

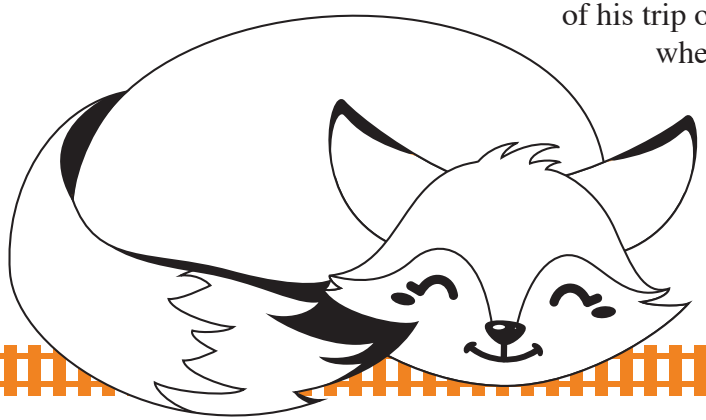


Later that night...

Kit had taken his first ride on the shiny train they called the South Shore Line. He was so excited, and he couldn't wait to tell his friends about all he had seen. Back home at his den deep in the dunes, Kit lay dreaming of what could lie beyond the train doors in Chicago. Until tonight, he had never left the dunes, and his imagination began to run wild. All night, he had dreams of the adventures that seemed just beyond his grasp. He dreamed of meeting new animals and new people, tasting new foods, and seeing buildings as he had seen only in storybooks.

After a restless night's sleep, Kit rose with the sun, grabbing only his train map and a small snack his mother had packed him. He was off to the Great Marsh inside the national park to meet his friends. They met at what they called "The Big Tree" every morning when they weren't in school. Up ahead, Kit could see his friends already gathered. There was Rex, a red-tailed hawk who is always excited with something to say, and Flower, a bunny whose home wasn't far from Kit's. Kit and Flower often shared similar tales of annoying little siblings and the job of being big brothers and sisters. And then there was Tobey the turtle, the only one of the friends who lived in a house with people. He knew a lot of things the others didn't know about being around people, so the friends often found themselves on the edge of their seats as Tobey shared his latest adventure of roaming his yard and eating delicious snacks found in nature. While his family didn't like that he ventured outside of the house, he always tried to return before they noticed to not cause alarm. He loved his family!

Kit excitedly began telling his friends all about the South Shore Line before he even reached the foot of the big tree. "You guys are never going to believe this! I rode the South Shore Line train!" The friends were astounded at Kit's big announcement and began bombarding him with questions. Kit explained how he was welcomed aboard by a conductor and rode all the way to Chicago. He relived every detail of his trip out loud, from the sounds of talking and laughing to the sound of the wheels on the track. Kit was talking so fast that his friends could barely process what he was saying before he was off to the next detail. He told them of the huge blue lake he had seen out the window, the big pipes of what the conductor told him was a steel mill, and watching the skyline of Chicago get closer and closer.



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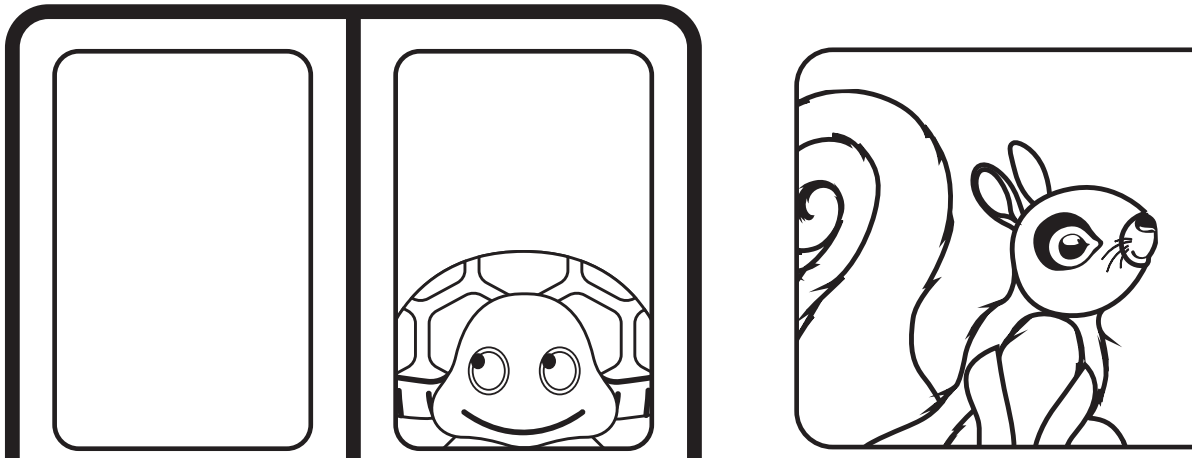

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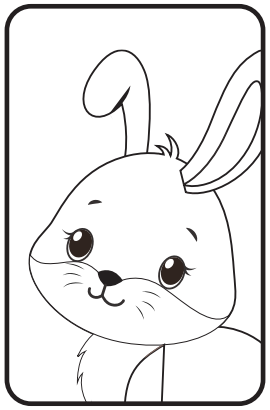
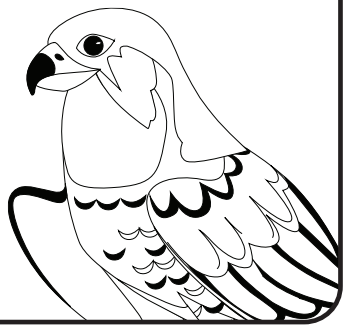
CHICAGO





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Kit's friends marveled at his bravery and could not believe he had taken this journey all alone. "It was nothing," Kit boasted, but knowing deep inside his fear had kept him from getting off that train, and it was only with the help of his friends that he would be able to hurdle the fear and embark on the greatest adventure he had ever known.

Kit unfurled the train map and showed Rex, Flower, and Tobey everywhere the train goes. Rex could not contain himself, saying, "Let's go. We can't waste another minute!"

The friends traipsed through the Great Marsh, making their way to Dune Park Station, where the big silver bullet was just screeching to a halt. The four ran to the conductor – the same one Kit had seen the day before. "Well, hello again," he greeted Kit. "Who do we have here?" The friends had hidden as much as they could behind Kit. "These are my best friends, and we are headed to Chicago."

"Welcome aboard!" Flower hopped up the steps, followed by Rex, Tobey, and finally Kit. They found four seats together and slid into place. The people were amazed to see the animal friends enjoying their ride. They talked to them, asking where they were going and what they wanted to see. The people began telling them the things they needed to see while in the big city.

"You have to try deep-dish pizza! It's the best thing you will ever eat," said one lady. A man chimed in, "Lincoln Park Zoo is amazing and full of wonderful animals that don't normally live around here." More suggestions flooded in, "Museums." "The Art Institute." "The Lakefront." "Wrigley Field," – and so much more.

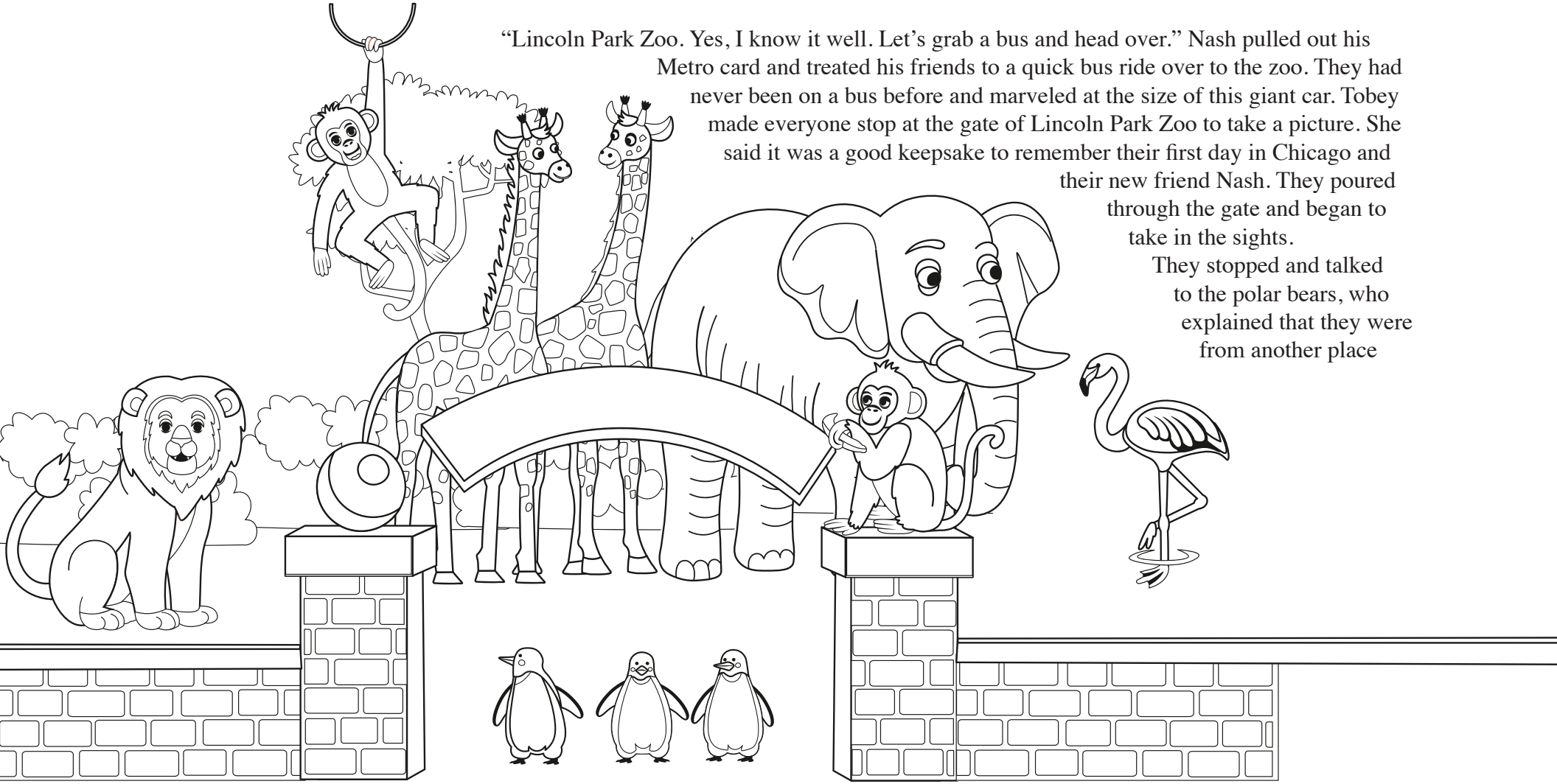
Kit was overwhelmed. How could they ever choose what to do? Tobey said he had indeed had pizza before, but it was not Chicago-style. He said that if we did anything, getting pizza was a must. His eyes watered, and she salivated as he described, “Pizza you have to eat with a fork and cheese that will stretch from the pan to your mouth!” Kit’s mouth watered at the very thought of it. So it was decided…Pizza was the first stop. The train slid into Millennium Park Station, and passengers began to disembark. Suddenly, the friends’ excitement turned to fear. Rex decided to take the lead, pushing his chest out proudly and saying, “Follow me.” Rex led them through the station and followed the flood of people out onto the street. “Honk.” “Beep.” “Screech.” The city was loud. Lights were up above, changing to red, yellow, and green. People were rushing up and down the sidewalk, not seeming to notice Kit and his friends. Cars were going and stopping. People were crossing streets. Everyone seemed to know what to do without being told. Rex’s puffed-up chest began to sink as he, Kit, Tobey, and Flower knew that they were not going to be able to navigate the city alone. As they pondered what to do next, a voice broke through the chaotic noise, “Hey, are you lost?”

Tobey asked, “Did you guys hear that?” There it was again. “Are you lost?” There was a tap on Flower’s shoulder. She hopped straight up with fright. Turning around, she was eye-to-eye with a squirrel. But this was not just any squirrel. Nash explained that he was born in Chicago and knew the streets like the back of his paw. He was raised in Grant Park and often came over to Millennium Park to hang out and watch the people. He said that the people liked to give him food, so he always enjoyed a nice snack of popcorn or a nibble of a Chicago hot dog. “Do you know anything about pizza?”, Shouted Rex. “Chicago-style pizza is my favorite, and I know exactly where to go.” Nash led Kit, Flower, and Tobey down sidewalks and streets. They followed his every move as he taught them about the big colored lights and the little lights that show when and when not to walk across the street. He took them through Grant Park to show them where he lived and to a grand building where they would eat some of the best pizza they ever had.

Nash was a great storyteller and entertained the group with the history of the pizza they were eating. Flower began to nibble on the pizza. “Yum! You have to try this!” Kit dove in, sauce sticking to her whiskers. Rex nearly took flight he was so excited. They were happy to have their new friend and navigator join them for their first pizza experience. “That’s the best thing I have ever eaten!” Kit exclaimed. “Where to next?” Inquired Nash. “Well, we heard about a zoo,” replied Tobey.

“Lincoln Park Zoo. Yes, I know it well. Let’s grab a bus and head over.” Nash pulled out his Metro card and treated his friends to a quick bus ride over to the zoo. They had never been on a bus before and marveled at the size of this giant car. Tobey made everyone stop at the gate of Lincoln Park Zoo to take a picture. She said it was a good keepsake to remember their first day in Chicago and their new friend Nash. They poured through the gate and began to take in the sights.

They stopped and talked to the polar bears, who explained that they were from another place



called the Arctic Circle, and they were at the zoo to teach people about the animals there. They met penguins from Antarctica, too. The penguins tried to teach Rex how to slide down the ice on his belly, but he kept getting his wings stuck under himself and rolled instead. The monkeys and gorillas were from a faraway place called Africa. They had huge trees and vines to climb. Next, they met tigers who were originally from Asia. The friends could not believe that they had met so many animals from so many places. “I learned so much today,” exclaimed Kit. “This was the best day of my life,” added Flower. As the sun began to set, Nash led his new friends back to Millennium Station and waved goodbye as they boarded the South Shore Line.

As the train slipped away in the distance, the four friends leaned back in their seats, pondering everything they had done and seen. Soon, they drifted off to sleep and were awakened by the loudspeaker saying, “Next stop, Dune Park Station.” Rex, Tobey, Flower, and Kit gathered their souvenirs of acorns from Nash, leftover pizza, and their photo from Lincoln Park Zoo. They got off the train, each excitedly rushing to their own home to tell their families of the exciting adventure they had…but not before Kit said, “New adventure tomorrow? See you at the big tree?”

“See you there!” “I’ll be there!” “Can’t wait!”

THE END.

Kit

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