

Allison

Mr. Wells

AP Language and Composition

6 November 2023

### Shore Serenity

Every morning, as millions of New Yorkers awaken, I join the cycle of the city's daily grind. My routine unfolds like clockwork: I eat breakfast, brush my teeth, get changed for school, and hop into the car promptly at 7 a.m. My hour-and-a-half drive to Manhattan starts with my mother merging onto the bustling Brooklyn Queen Expressway. My view outside the car window is a mix of yellow school buses, tank trucks, and minivans. They are drivers and passengers who have places to be. Usually, I see a car dangerously speeding, narrowly avoiding collisions with other vehicles. In response, honks quickly punctuate the air, starting a chaotic symphony of unflattering noise. I watch as my mom's silent tapping on the wheel turns to yelling, "Not like they are going to get any farther." New York traffic is brutal! Especially on rainy days, traffic jams are the worst. As cars come to a standstill, I can feel my four hours of sleep catch up to me. The red taillights seem to blare me a message, "WAKE UP, SMELL THE COFFEE." But sleep deprivation is insufferable, and these calls are futile. Slowly, I drift to a deep sleep, looking out the passenger window to a more calm atmosphere. The sunrise that hovers over the Atlantic Ocean provides a tranquil backdrop to my mornings.

Eventually, I reach Chinatown, and life is in full swing. The Chinese bakery, right after crossing the Verrazano Bridge, has its double doors invitingly open every early morning. It is busy in there: filled with parents hurrying to buy school lunches for their children - as my mother has done years before - eager grandparents chatting with their friends, and others are

businesspeople in their sharp suits impatiently watching the clock. Just ten minutes later, my journey comes to an end when I arrive at my destination, Nest+M. But there's no time to waste. Not even five seconds after stopping the car, my mom swiftly unlocks the door: my cue to leave. There's no time to compose myself. There's no time to savor the stillness. It's all part of the city's morning hustle. Five days a week. REPEAT. REPEAT. REPEAT. I crave for a change of pace.

To my luck, I know of a hidden gem in my hometown, Brooklyn. Known as Shore Parkway, this place serves as both a bike path and a walkway. I have the privilege of seeing its serene views unfold outside my passenger window every day on the way to school. People of all ages engage in various activities here, such as running, fishing, reading, and martial arts. The number of people that come here for leisure is no coincidence. I would know because my best childhood memory lies here: my first bike ride outside. I recall the cool ocean breeze caressing my face as I took off pedaling. I was so close to the railing that I could hear the sounds of water softly crashing into the rocks. It helped calm my nerves. With each turn of the wheels, I felt more free, like I could ride forever guided by the shoreline beside me. My smile never faded. Since that day, Shore Parkway has become my top spot for bike riding. The endless path stretched before me makes me feel exhilarated to ride until I physically give out. Here, it's easy to lose track of time. The glorious sunsets captivate you, making you never want to stop. My favorite aspect is the privacy provided by the elm trees. It is refreshing, given the amount of people in this city. It is what separates unwanted ruckus from a place of peaceful sanctuary.

However, not all moments were sunshine and rainbows. Shore Parkway also holds the memory of where my parents' relationship erupted and dissolved. I vividly remember that day. It was evening time, and we had just begun our walk on the path. The weather was warm, but I could feel the cold tension in the air. After minutes of deafening silence, the inevitable happened.

Screaming ensued. Curse words were spat out. Fingers were pointed. Text messages were pulled up. There it was, the image of my perfect family crumbled before me. I could do nothing but sit back and marvel at the fiery redness of the setting sun. For the first time, I couldn't hear the water brushing against the rocks. I didn't feel warmth in the space I once found comfort in. The towering trees were like dark figures now, preventing me from running away from this disaster. However, as silly as it sounds, I began to ground myself. I found peace in the stillness of the scenery. Nothing moved besides my parents and the waves. I told myself that I would rather it be here than anywhere else. The sunset was still beautiful. The trees still blocked out city life. The kids are still riding their bikes. As life changed drastically at home, Shore Parkway was the unwavering constant in my life. Its timeless beauty reminded me of the good times and gave way to new beginnings.

Shore Parkway is my second home. Countless times, I've sought refuge within its tree confines. Every time, it welcomes me with perfect clear views of the Manhattan skyline and a soothing wave noise. As I walk along its winding path, I am not alone in my appreciation of this place. I often observe other individuals seeking peace here as well. *What's their connection to this shore?* Most people have their version of Shore Parkway, whether that is a cozy book store or a beloved hiking trail. Either way, it is vital that we take time to ourselves to pause, reflect, and breathe out.