

Lifestyles

Catherine Cojocaru: Unique Stories Fill the Subway

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I have spent many an afternoon wandering the subway system of Mayo Clinic. Due to my school's close proximity to the clinic

and the nearly two hours I have free between dismissal and play rehearsal, traversing the tunnels below the city has become a pastime of mine.

At first, about four years ago, I saw this time as an opportunity for freedom — to assert my independence as a teenager. Later, my use of these passageways became more utilitarian, as I spent this precious time grabbing a sandwich and starting my small mountain of homework.

But within the last few months, I have come to utilize the subway system for a different purpose — a type of meditation, you might say.

Not forgoing my sandwich, I purchase my early dinner and then find a place to sit and watch — people-watch, that is. I'm not sure why I had never noticed what a diverse group of people inhabit these hallways, but it's evident that each person who works at or seeks treatment at Mayo Clinic has a unique story.

Nurses in their multicolored scrubs cheerily power-walking are among the most numerous here, as their duties are extremely important to such a large clinic. IT developers and engineers in their suits rush past, always busy with something groundbreaking.

Doctors and surgeons in lab coats are also very easy to spot. Not so easy, however, is trying to imagine

what these dedicated physicians face each day.

Did he just have to relay terrible news to a patient? Did she have to perform a painstaking operation mere hours before?

Who could know the things these people have seen just today? We will never understand the gravity of their life-saving deeds, but just be able to catch glimpses of their lives.

But perhaps even more inspiring are the patients. Young and old, of every race and background imaginable, they come from all over to receive the best medical treatment.

Yet, it is not always an easy journey. Again, looking at these patients, one could never know what they deal with each day.

They could face troubling surgery with many potential complications, or they could be here simply for injections. No one could truly know exactly what these men, women and children are going through, but it is impossible to look upon these people and not notice the bravery in their eyes and wish them well.

People-watching has let me observe incredible diversity, but also led me to a better understanding of humanity. We all suffer, and while we cannot know the specifics of what others deal with, it is our ability to sympathize that unites us.

So this holiday season, I invite you to sit down, and not "see," but watch.

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