

*A postcard from Tamar Charney, Managing Director of NPR One.*

I retreated to the shore of Lake Michigan to find something. It had been one of those weeks where I'd lost my bearings.

The temperature had plummeted overnight and the west wind had kicked up the waves. I walked along the shore toward Petoskey State Park. The beach at the park was dotted with people. Every single one of them was staring at the ground like a Zombie. Some were still and staring. Others slowly walked. It isn't uncommon to see this on a wet morning after the lake has been stirred up.

The horde of Zombies was looking for Petoskey stones.

Petoskey stones don't look like much when they are dry, but when they are wet they show their magic. They are covered with the lattice like pattern of coral and were dumped here by the glaciers. The stones are supposedly common along Little Traverse Bay, but in all the years I've walked this beach I've only found two little pieces.

But then I'm not combing the beach with my head down walking Zombie style. I'm more likely to have my head lost in the clouds. I'm the person who literally and figuratively trips over things that are right at my feet.

You see different things depending on where you look. Those people lumbering along the beach may find a Petoskey stone, but they missed the god rays that have been shining on and off through the heavy low clouds. They missed the rainbow that shot across the sky toward the lighthouse. And they missed the way the water has been alternating between turquoise and black as the light changes.

But truth be told I miss a lot of things myself and I don't even have a Petoskey Stone as a consolation prize. My mind is busy with a million daydreams, which means it isn't paying attention to what is in front of me - whether it is up or down. I've lived a thousand lives in my head while walking the beaches of Lake Michigan. I've had a million conversations I've never actually had. And I've done things that, in reality, I've only dreamed of.

I scoff at the Petoskey stone beach Zombies as I pass them on my way into the dunes. But deep down I'm jealous. They can focus on what is right there. They are single minded in their pursuit. They seek and they find. They know what they are looking for.

I do not.

I don't even know where I might want to go. And yet, I still believe deep down, I'll see and find something better than I can ever imagine. Something that matters more. That means more.

But some days it is hard to keep believing that. I wish I could just be good with a shiny wet Petoskey Stone.

As I head back up the shore I realize, that I did in fact find what I'd come here seeking. It's probably the same thing the Petoskey stone Zombies are really looking for - which is a little peace of mind amidst the pounding of Lake Michigan's wind and waves.