

Andrew Roff

THE LOST HOUR

Heaven is too crowded for Agnes' taste. For the solitude, she frequents the lost hour: that missing beat at the start of summer when modern clocks leap forward, and old ones nag for a winding.

The time foregone falls between two and three a.m., and most of the living would have given the minutes over to sleep. Agnes, a librarian pre- and post-mortem, catalogues what else has been surrendered: arguments (Dewey: 168.1), late-night snacks (641.3), unaired infomercials (659.1). Children scheduled for conception during that hour will never exist; drunken declarations of love will remain unuttered. Agnes weeps as she works, flipping through index cards for a destroyed collection.

An hour is added at the end of summer, to balance the ledger. But that is a different hour, an artifice, full of unrelated happenings. For those who need what was omitted, it is no recompense. They are ignorant, but Agnes takes note: the DJ not reviewed, never discovered; the hotel cook, fatigued, who scorches her hand against the grill; the condemned man marking off the days.

The stretch spent living is already too short. Now that she has time in abundance, Agnes knows the folly of daylight saving.