The Quiet Hour

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The Hour You Already Have

Most advice about time assumes you are short of it. You are usually not short of it. You are short of *unclaimed* time — an hour nobody else has a claim on, that does not have to be defended halfway through.

I spent eleven years building rosters for a hospital. Scheduling is not really about hours; it is about who is allowed to interrupt whom.

> *The question is never "where did the hour go". It is "who was allowed to take it".*

What a claim looks like

A claim is anything that can convert your hour into someone else's without asking first:

- a calendar other people can write to
- a channel where silence reads as a problem
- a task nobody has agreed is finished

Name the claims before you try to protect the hour. Protecting an hour you have not defined is how the practice fails in the second week.

The First Week

Do not start by finding an hour. Start by watching one.

For five days, note the moment the hour breaks and who broke it. Write nothing else down. The list will be shorter than you expect, and one entry will appear most days — that entry is the whole project.

The usual culprit

For most people it is not a person; it is an ambiguity. A piece of work whose completion is undefined expands into whatever room you give it.

> *Ambiguity is the interruption that does not need anyone else to arrive.*

Close the definition, and the hour survives without any defending at all.