

Passed Away

by [Jean-Mark Sens](#) in the [August 2023](#) issue

Just your fingertip between the glass tabletop and its frame  
no cut, no bruise  
a pinch leaving a black comma of blood under your skin.

You were rummaging in your father's office,  
still full of the living man  
and all that fits into files, name-tagged and alphabetized  
tallies and memoranda in letters, bills, loans, installments  
by years, by days, by hours, by the end of the minute he breathed in.  
An olive wood rosary you pulled out of a file cabinet spilled  
a brief, watery rustling  
prayers scattered on the floor  
the lean cross alone hanging down a string.

a circular path  
a ladder to an ancient encyclical chant  
the cross between your thumb and index  
Jacob's last rung passing into high heaven.