

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.