

On grace in late August

by [Jacob Stratman](#) in the [August 10, 2022](#) issue

She uses the dishwasher  
only to dry what she washes

in the sink. She looks out across  
the dry-brown backyard, grass

probably crinkly under foot,  
like walking on potato chips

in the carpeted den, just to notice  
her son's square garden, framed

by railroad tie fragments  
housing rot and yellow jackets,

with its single jalapeño  
or spotted Beefsteak hanging

heavily, waiting for him  
to free them from the heat,

from the deer. No one's around  
her now, anywhere near the kitchen,

the sun high, a spotlight, inviting  
her gaze on the garden. It will be

years before he confesses  
his sins at the counter,

to be absolved, just in front  
of this sink where she promises

to wash peppers and tomatoes  
that tend to die on the vine

on this heat-drenched square patch  
of garden in the back, still

in view, stilled as she hums  
hymns and waits for dishes to dry.