

Wayfaring strangers

by [Fred Bahnson](#) in the [October 31, 2006](#) issue

This is a Spiritual War, you've got to understand that,
says the man on NPR. I'm getting out of my car

when his voice grabs hold, pulls me toward the dial.
My son died last week, he says, Humvee hit a mine—

it's a Spiritual War. Anybody who doesn't believe
me, just look right there in the Bible, you'll see.

Right there, I say to him—yeah, like the Word is some dog-eared
road atlas. Just thumb down the index to *Spiritual Warfare*,

subheading *Iraq*, and you'll see it all mapped out
right there waiting for you. No interpretation

required. Look right there and you'll know how
to deploy, when to attack, where to stand when

it all goes down. My wife calls from the porch and I release
my stranglehold on the steering wheel. How long

have I sat, car door ajar, one foot grounded, parsing
this man's language of loss? Oblique rays

of dusk cut swaths of light across the meadow,
halted only at pasture's edge by a stand

of sweet gums. The trees reach, lean into the light,
pulling me with them; thus we bend,

blind pilgrims all, tilting

toward a New Jerusalem.