The map couldn't be wrong. Kevin drove up Mossy Pine Road and all the landmarks were still there. Well, almost all of the landmarks, that is. He counted the correct number of forest trails to the right, the stream running steadily on the left. In the car, he had checked the topographic map and the state forest map, as well as the hand-drawn map Matt had sent him when he heard he was coming home for a week or two of exploring and reminiscing.

Home wasn't really home anymore, not with both of his parents gone and the farm having been sold to perfect strangers. Still, it was where he was born and raised, and while it now belonged to others whom he neither knew
nor had met, it would always be called home to him. No matter where he may
go, the cemetery, with the bodies of his beloved father and mother reposing
in their silent beds beneath the cool shade of the trees, would always be a
connecting link that would call him back again and again and again.

He checked the map again. Something wasn't right. The dirt road he
was on split in two ways. The left fork crossing the creek wasn't on the map.
Not even on Matt's hand-drawn one. And, coming to think of it, when he
trudged and hiked through these woods years ago, there never was a road
going left and crossing the creek on the old trail. None whatever.

He looked skyward. The sun was almost directly overhead. Noon, he
reasoned, checking his watch to discover that it was exactly eleven-fifty.

He scanned the map again then decided to eat one of the three
sandwiches he'd had the waitress make up for him when he had stopped for
breakfast at five that morning. It was a new restaurant, he noticed. At least it
hadn't been there when he had gone abroad eight years ago to do
missionary work.

Kevin sat down beneath a dense spruce tree, gave thanks for his food,
and pondered where he could have made the mistake in his journey. He had
known the area like the palm of his hand when he was growing up and
roaming the mountains with his brothers. You could not have lost any of
them; not Matthew or Luke nor Anthony or him, Kevin. No indeed. They knew
these mountains; knew them accurately and well for miles and miles around.
They had hiked in them, trapped in them and hunted in them all their
growing-up years. Not only the range that joined hard up against their father's
orchard either, but those other ranges that overlapped and made gaps in the
range nearest their farm, also. In years past, he would not have needed a
map; the old familiar landmarks were all the map any of them would have
needed. But Matt had written that the years had brought a few changes and
he felt it was only wise that Kevin should have the maps to look at and go by,
just in case. . . .

Kevin finished the sandwich and drank from the canteen filled with icy-
cold water, then he started walking again, wishing suddenly that he'd taken
the road to the right instead of the one to the left, especially so when the
branch path on the map never appeared. The path he was on suddenly
began to cut downhill instead of following the mountain top into the meadow
fields he'd often visited before to watch the deer herds grazing and feeding contentedly in. But that was years ago, before there was a map showing a path veering off to the left across the stream and one going right.

He walked on, to the trail's end -- at a "gate" in a valley, and for a while he thought he had circled back to Mossy Pine Road. But the sun was now behind him; the creek was flowing the wrong way, and it was on the wrong side of the road. Where was he? he wondered, as he studied the area, hoping to find at least one familiar landmark which would tell him something or other about his whereabouts.

He came to the only possible explanation, finally, and that was that he was on the other side of the mountain and that the day was fast waning and twilight was coming on -- the compass and the colors in the western sky didn't lie.

Folding the maps up carefully, Kevin started back the way he'd come, checking the compass repeatedly to make sure he was heading in the direction of the parked car. It was dark and late when he finally emerged from the woods and unlocked his car, took out his Bible and crawled into the tent he'd set up earlier in the day.

For a long while after reading the Bible, Kevin lay awake, thinking and wondering where he'd gone wrong on his hiking trip that day. Then he suddenly remembered that Matt had told him some time ago, in one of their telephone conversations, about a new road that had been made up into the mountain and, instantly, he knew that's where the fault had been. The new road was not listed or, even shown on any of the maps he had. His were old maps. At least, old enough that they needed updating. Especially so since the new, well-graded dirt road was now a part of the mountain and many of the trails he once knew -- and roamed up and down -- were no longer there.

He sighed, realizing suddenly that change and decay was all around him, and ever present. It was something he would never be able to get away from so long as he was in his mortal, physical body. Why, only that morning he had noticed some radical changes in the once-familiar territory and landscape -- fields that once produced bumper crops of corn and oats and wheat were now woods; woods were cleared for fields; roads that once wound to seeming endlessness were gone and new ones had taken their place.
Change! He thought about that for a long while. Whether he liked it or not, it was happening all around him. And try as he may, or wish for all he was worth, he would never be able to bring back things the way they were when he was growing up on the farm and roaming the mountains in which he was now lying this night.

Like a balm for his tired body and trusting soul, the words from Malachi came to Kevin, "For I am the Lord, I change not . . ." (Mal. 3:6).

Pulling the Bible close to his heart, he thanked the Lord for his timeless, changeless, ever-accurate "map" to Heaven -- the Word of God. So long as he followed its precepts and its teachings, Kevin knew he'd never go astray or be lost, nor would he find a detour in its pages. But then, there were no shortcuts in it, such as he had taken by following the map he was looking at that day. Ah no! God's map was always explicit and clear -- "This is the way, walk ye in it . . ." (Isaiah 30:21). It was a straight way; an highway of holiness and righteousness and he, Kevin, was walking on it. And it was clearly marked too. So clearly and plainly, in fact, that Isaiah declared, "but it shall be for those: the wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein" (Isaiah 35:8).

Tears of holy joy cascaded down Kevin's cheeks. He was blest in his soul; he was following God's perfect map and it was leading him day by day and step by step nearer and nearer to his eternal home. He fell asleep with the blissful thought.