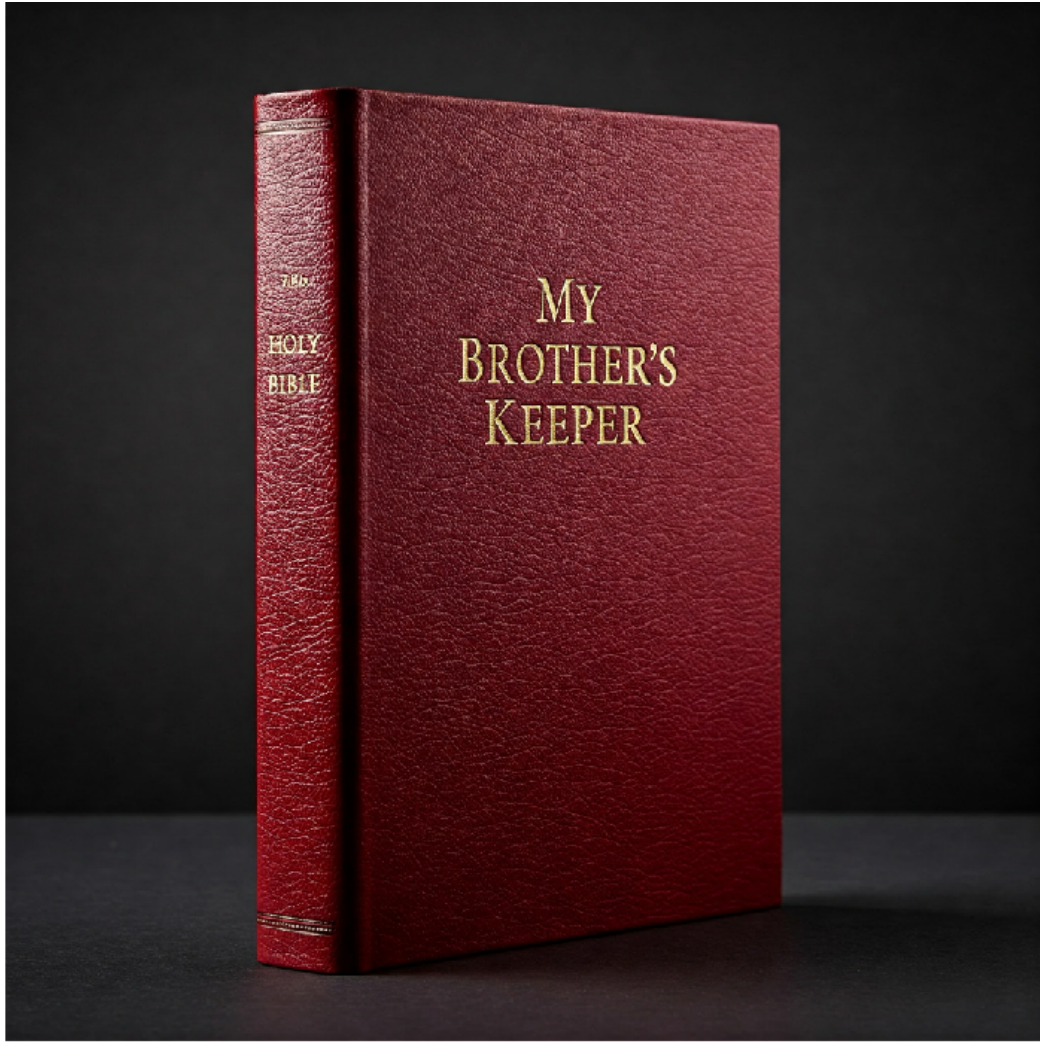




AI generated Gemini


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My Brother's Keeper

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Most churches in Moonriver were small in size and membership, but not the Achan Church. It was a highly respected megachurch—so big it had ten full-time employees, ranging from senior and associate pastors to maintenance workers.

Local newspapers described Achan Church as the perfect church. But after today different descriptions would be used.

The highly respected senior pastor, Reverend Richard Pearlgate, sipped his favorite hot tea. It was a sweet indulgence to him, but the buzzing intercom interrupted his moment of pleasure. His secretary insisted he take an incoming phone call from the Central Bank of Moonriver.

Rather than the usual greeting of a bank employee, an anonymous female voice said, “I can’t take it anymore. It’s done.” She paused. “A large envelope is on my dining room table for your eyes only. I hope you get here before the cops. I will be in the bathroom. The front door is unlocked at 221-C Raker Avenue.” The call ended.

The voice and the address sounded familiar. He ran the address through his computer records, but it was not recorded. What to do? He couldn’t recall any complaints or arguments

with his church parishioners. But who was in trouble? It sounded frighteningly serious. Or was it a setup? Or a trap?

“Why?” he asked out loud.

Reverend Richard Pearlgate stood and put on his black trench coat. He retrieved his fedora off the hat rack, straightened the red feather on the band, and set it on his gray-haired, half-bald head.

He bowed his head, extended his arms and hands toward heaven, and prayed for Jesus to be merciful and protect him. Feeling uneasy as he began to walk, he steadied himself against the wall with his hand and stepped out the back door.

The sun hid behind storm clouds as he parked his car a block away from 221-C Raker Avenue. Rain began to fall as he walked to the address. The storm and rain seemed to be ominous signs from heaven of what he might find at the address.

As he entered the bungalow’s front porch, the rain grew heavy. Lightning flashed with a thunderclap so close that he jolted in fright. The front door was slightly ajar. He hesitated. It could be some kind of setup. Maybe this woman wanted him to enter and she would scream, accusing the pastor of breaking and entering, or worse, attempted rape.

Suddenly, a newspaper wrapped in plastic swished past his head and slammed into the front door, opening it all the way. He turned to see a newspaper boy riding off on his bicycle. Great. Now a witness had seen him at the house.

His nerves made his hands shake, and fear brought him to the point of leaving. God only knew why he entered the house.