



Repeat Offender's:

Short Story Narratives

By

Ricky LaVaughn

Table of Contents:

The Pink Slip And A Lifesaver	3
Strike Zone	12
I Love You Abigail...Help	18

All stories written by Ricky LaVaughn.

Characters are based from the novel “*Repeat Offender*”. The book is available on Amazon.com, Barnes and Noble, Lavauri.com, Createspace.com and many other internet outlets.

To see a preview of the book, Repeat Offender go to Lavauri.com for more information.

The Pink Slip And A Lifesaver

“We are not here to fire you,” Michael Pinkston stated. His voice was soothing and full of confidence. Michael wore the deep blue power suit, white shirt, and a navy blue tie. It resonated confidence and placed the idea that people could trust him. To a group of middle management leaders and executives from Gordon-Hirschel, this was far from the truth. “Only to evaluate the best way to get Gordon-Hirschel to increase profits.”

Rumors spread that their jobs might be cut. Layoffs were eminent and no one was happy to see Michael “the pink-slip” Pinkston. Many people gave Michael this nickname, although he never fired anyone. He worked as a human resource and finance specialist for large companies. They would hire him to evaluate the company to see how they could improve their employment situation and bottom line. In Michael’s ten years of experience, he never suggested a company to hire more people. Many of Gordon-Hirschel workers knew this, so no one was happy to see him.

“Isn’t this the same guy who was responsible for Omaha being downsized,” Itzal said into Henry’s ear. Both men were supervisors in the Gordon-Hirschel company. They came in around the same time and promoted to lead their own team of reservationists.

Gordon-Hirschel was a company that took reservations for a variety of hotel chains across America and Canada. They took these jobs so hotels wouldn’t worry about paying a staff to deal with reservations. The key success for Gordon-Hirschel is to make sure that the customers did not know they’re calling another company. Most of the reservation teams deal with a specific hotel chain so customers would think it’s all one company.

Some reservation teams worked with online sales as the internet became a hotbed for hotel customers. Henry Hall and Itzal Watkins’ teams worked under Pedro Fuentes. They dealt with the three-star hotels and often competed to see whose group could close the most deals.

“Yeap,” Henry responded.

“Hmm,” Itzal muttered. They both looked at one another then at Pinkston.

The 200-seat auditorium filled with Gordon-Hirschel leaders and supervisors at the headquarters in Columbus, Ohio. The company started in the Midwest and spread to cities across America. Columbus was chosen as headquarters due to the growing white-collar job growth in the area. To increase profits, regional sites were closed and sent to central Ohio. Omaha was the

last office outside of Columbus to remain open until Pinkston came in to evaluate how the company was being run.

“Once my evaluation process is complete, then I will return with my findings. You will of course be informed, and I know the transition will be best for all,” Pinkston said.

“I’m sure,” Itzal muttered.

There were some light applause and chattering within the crowd. Pinkston nodded to his audience and left the stage. Henry kept his eye on the man and sighed. He could feel that something was not right.

“He’s not from here, is he,” Henry asked. The two men got up from their chairs and meandered there way through the crowd.

“No,” Itzal answered. “He’s from a company whose business is to evaluate how large corporations can make more money.

“Greed,” Henry stated.

“It’s how the system works,” Itzal responded.

Three months after the evaluation process, Pinkston’s gave his report. Henry had an ominous feeling about the process and Itzal tried not to think about it. They knew Pinkston’s report would be upon them. There was a possibility that Pinkston would find that the company was excellent and did not need to be downsized. After all, this was the last office for Gordon-Hirschel.

A similar meeting was set up like the one where Gordon-Hirschel leaders where first introduced to Michael Pinkston. Henry decided to make an extra strong cup of coffee in the break room. There were two canisters and one had the regular mix and was half-full. The other was empty so he prepared that one for his special blend. He was a recovering alcoholic and tried his best to stay focus as well as keep his nerves at ease. The extra strength coffee would help with both.

Josh Hammels, longtime reservationist, walked into the break room while Henry poured the second bag of coffee in the filter. His sudden presence startled Henry. Josh wasn’t on Henry or Itzal’s team, but his group was near Pedro’s department. Josh was a team lead for a group that

handled five star hotels. However, a nervous breakdown caused Gordon-Hirschel to send him down to the one star motel reservations to help ease his mind.

“Hey Josh,” Henry said.

“Hey,” Josh responded. “I heard Pink-slip is here.”

Henry chuckled. “Yeah, Michael is here. I’m hoping for good news.”

Josh poured himself some of the regular coffee. “You think,” he asked. Josh’s blue eyes had a dead look to them. It was as if he was looking at Henry but was lost in some other thought. Henry could tell something was weighing on him but didn’t know what. Since the man had a nervous breakdown ten months before, he really didn’t want to stress him out.

“I’m sure, I hope,” Henry responded.

“You’re a supervisor, so you should know.”

“They don’t let us know everything,” Henry said and grinned. Josh didn’t crack a smile. “But I can’t see them doing to us like they did Omaha. We’re the last U.S. place left.”

“There’s always the world,” Josh stated. Henry didn’t think about that and Josh left the break room. For some reason, the thought that they would move all of the offices away never crossed Henry’s mind.

“There’s no way, they would do that,” Henry said.

“Talking to yourself again,” Itzal said. Henry jumped but caught himself. He started the coffee machine to make his blend of coffee. “What didn’t you think of?”

“Smells good,” Henry began. “Think they would move all our jobs, or most of them, away from America. I figured they would keep something here.”

“True.” Itzal stared at the stream of coffee being made. “This looks extra dark,” Itzal commented.

“Yeah, I needed the extra strength.”

Three hours after drinking coffee in the break room, Henry received the news from Michael Pinkston. It was in the same room as the first time with the same group of leaders. Three months ago the people had a chance of hope that they would be saved, but when Pinkston returned, the mood was completely different.

Michael Pinkston had a few armed officers and guards on the stage with him this time. This wasn’t his first time delivering bad news and has seen people get violent. Gordon-Hirschel

set up protection and Pinkston gladly took it. As usual, he was in a deep blue suit and matching tie.

Pinkston started his speech with praise for the leaders and officers of the company. He knew to get people warmed up before giving them bad news. After seven minutes of flatteries and encouragement, he knew it was time to get to what he was being paid for. "It has been my recommendation that Gordon-Hirschel downsizes its Columbus office and move to a more financial viable situation for the continued growth and welfare of the company," Pinkston stated. There was no emotion or kindness in his words. He said it as if he just told the room that black panthers are dark or the sun is hot. It was a matter of fact. He didn't care about the people's lives that would be affected. Only that Gordon-Hirschel was paying him to find ways to make them more money.

The audience, Pinkston's peers, booed and jeered him. Not common for a business meeting, but then it wasn't common to hear that their jobs would be downsized. Many were visibly upset, others crying, and some had a blank look on their face. Pinkston didn't give any indicating if everyone had to go, or if a few departments.

"Greed," Itzal stated. Henry agreed silently.

Henry left the meeting like all the others visibly distressed. Not only was he concerned for his own job, but for the welfare of his team. He had a teen who was pregnant, others where saving for a new house and some needed medical bills paid. Henry was close to them, and treated them like family at work. He didn't know how he would break it to them that the department could be laid off. He didn't know if everyone would come under the axe but should prepare them just in case.

To gather his head he went to the bathroom and splashed water on his face. The cream-colored walls and silver plated sink never looked so good. He used to complain about coming to his job sometimes. The pay was good, people friendly, but sometimes work got to him. He didn't realized how great he had it until the possibility of it being gone came to fruition.

The power of wanting a drink was growing. He slipped a few times, him and his wife, but usually they where strong. The urge grew within him to quell those anxieties with a nice sip of beer or rum. Saliva began building and the overall taste for a nice cold beverage grew in his mind. Henry splashed another round of water on his face and took a deep breath. "Pull it together," he whispered.

Like many of his workers, he too had to help pay for some family business. His wife was dealing with kidney disease she inherited from family genes and binge drinking. Now he's hoping for a cure, which seemed unlikely or a transplant. Dialysis was out of the question for her. Not that she couldn't have it, but had experience of seeing her family go through the process. Dialysis was something she did not want to do.

"Could you keep it down a little bit," a voice from the stall said. Henry whipped his around to see where the voice was coming from.

"Hello," Henry asked puzzled.

"Yeah, I'm here," the voice said, and I was hoping you could keep it down a little bit."

"Okay," Henry said. His voice oozed with confusion.

"I've been taking some pills to help my bowels move easier, and I want to concentrate on that."

Henry was completely shocked that someone would be so honest. Then again, he could tell by his voice that the man was close to retirement age and did not care. He could probably care less if the department, company, or anyone was being let go. As far as he was concerned, he was on his way out anyway. Right now, the most important thing for him was to relieve himself in the bathroom.

"Okay, I'm on my way out," Henry started, "sorry about that."

"Thank you."

Henry was about to respond when three gunshots rang-out not far from the bathroom. He paused and looked around. Henry instinctively checked his body and was glad to know that nothing came through the walls. For a moment, he assumed it was his imagination and thought it was probably someone dropping office supplies off their desk.

"Did you hear that gunfire," the man in the stall asked.

"Yes," Henry grimly said. He was going to say something else when a loud bang on the front of the bathroom door startled him. He whipped his head around and Josh was wrestling with Pinkston through the door.

"There's more of that if you follow me," Josh yelled.

"Josh," Henry exclaimed. He looked at Josh's vibrant eyes and the terrified look on Pinkston. Josh held his victim with a strong arm under Pinkston's shoulder and around his neck.

A 9mm black handle gun in the other. Henry wasn't worried about type but knew that Josh was serious.

"Watch the door Henry," Josh ordered. Henry stared at the gun but couldn't move. "Henry, the door!" Henry heard him the second time and walked to the bathroom door. He could hear people on the other side. Some with panic in their voices others had an authoritative sound to it. Henry figured these were the guards.

"You're going to get our jobs back," Josh said to Pinkston.

"Could you keep it down," the man in the stall said, "I'm trying to take care of business."

"Who said that," Josh yelled. He was unstable and Henry knew Josh could end the stranger's life.

"It's okay Josh; it's just an old guy trying to use the bathroom."

Josh paused for a while his eyes flaring but his grip strong on Pinkston. "Tell him to keep it down."

"Okay," Henry said.

"Tell him!"

"Sir," Henry started. "Right now, would be a good time to let me, and the man with the gun, handle this."

"Okay," the man said. There was fear in his voice. The word gun put fright in his mind and Henry could tell from the quiver in his voice.

"Tell 'em not to come in," Josh said.

"Who," Henry asked.

"His bodyguards," Josh said grabbing Pinkston harder.

"Don't come in," Henry yelled at the door.

"He needs to let the hostage go," one of the guards said.

"I know, just don't come in right now," Henry said.

"Tell 'em I have a grenade and will kill us all."

"He has a," Henry paused for a moment. "You have a what," Henry asked.

"Grenade."

Henry paused again and stared at Josh. He couldn't tell if he was serious or not. Josh urged Henry on by waiving the gun to tell them.

“He has a grenade,” Henry said. He didn’t say with confidence but with concern in his voice. He was hoping Josh was bluffing. “Please don’t come in,” Henry said. He knew if Josh was right, then there was no place to go in such a confined area.

“You will not get away with this,” Pinkston stuttered.

“I don’t care. I’ve already tried to kill myself, once,” Josh said. He wasn’t lying. During the nervous breakdown, Josh tried to take as many aspirins as possible. He was sick, but the doctors were able to pump his stomach before it killed him. He now has problems with certain foods and drinks due to ulcers. At that moment, Henry knew Josh didn’t mind killing himself. The large amount of aspirins caused his stomach to bleed and be sensitive to coffee. He should have known something was up once Josh got a cup of coffee.

“Don’t get us killed,” Henry muttered. Pinkston was silent. Defiant. But silent. “Josh, what are you doing?”

“I don’t know, I just saw him and snapped.

“You have a grenade and a gun,” Henry said.

Josh bent his head. “You’re right.” Josh shook his head and a small tear began to start in his eye. “I knew he would have bad news. I’m tired of this mess.”

“This is bad, but what you’re doing is so much worst,” Henry said.

“Is it? Our lives, as we know it is over. You know it’s tough to get a job like this back again. Sure Gordon-Hirschel can always make more money, but what are we going to do,” Josh asked. He really didn’t mean that as a question, more of a statement.

“Survive,” Henry answered. “Bad things happen all the time. So we survive.”

“But this bad thing is due to people like him,” Josh responded, “working on behalf of the company for greed.”

“I’m just doing my job,” Pinkston answered.

“You’re killing American families!”

“Whoa,” Henry said. He was a little nervous and could hear a creak towards his back. Henry turned around to see the bathroom door slightly open and the look of someone peering in. The guards were probably getting a quick surveillance to see if they could come in and take Josh down.

Josh noticed what Henry was looking at and pointed his gun at the door. “I swear I’ll do it,” Josh said.

“Go back,” Henry yelled at the door.

Josh shoved Pinkston away from him and with a quick tug from his pocket pulled out a grenade. It was slightly bigger than what Henry imagined from what he had seen on television. He never seen one in person and couldn’t believe the size of it. Josh pulled the pin and grabbed the handle. “Shoot me now,” Josh yelled.

“Don’t, please don’t,” Henry exclaimed. “He has the grenade in his hand and it’s ready to go.” The door crack closed again. Henry blew out a sigh of relief and Pinkston struggled to stand. His eyes were wide with fear. Henry realized that Pinkston thought Josh was bluffing. He knew with a slip of the hand they would all be dead or severely injured.

“For a moment,” Pinkston said, “I thought you were bluffing.”

“Not at all,” Josh said emphasizing each word.

“I know it’s going to sound cliché, but you don’t have to do this,” Henry said. “You think you’re the only one.”

“Only one?”

“The only one with problems. I’m loaded with mess.”

“You’re a top level supervisor,” Josh said. “Don’t lie to me.”

“My wife is dying, and it’s my fault!”

The room was silent for a span of two seconds. Only the humming florescence lights and the low raspy breathing of the man in the stall made noise.

“How,” Josh asked.

“We use to party too much in school and from there we developed our love of alcohol and each other. I knew kidney problems ran in her family, yet I pushed sometimes for us to have a good time.”

“Oh,” Josh responded.

“And now,” Henry started and began to fight the urge to cry. “She waits for a donor or some miracle cure to help her. Or else she’ll be chronically ill or lose another baby. Like my other child that was miscarried.”

“You’re not lying,” Josh asked, “are you?”

“You’ll think I’ll lie about that,” Henry said. Josh shook his head. “Of course not, that’s the love my life. No, she is my life. I wouldn’t lie about that.”

Josh thought for a while and then put the pin back in the grenade. He got on the ground and said, “let them in.”

“He’s giving himself up, don’t shoot,” Henry said.

The guards came into the bathroom with guns drawn. The first two immediately went to Pinkston and Josh, while the third checked Henry. They took Josh out and carried the grenade carefully.

“Good luck with your wife,” Josh said.

“Thanks,” Henry said as they carried Josh out of the bathroom. “Get well.” Josh smirked and he was gone from the bathroom. Henry heard the guards make sure Pinkston was okay and feeling good. He was fine and they checked him out thoroughly. One of the men would have gone to the guy in the stall but he was still trying to take care of business. He pushed but knew the stress would back him up for at least another day or two.

“You’re a good man,” Pinkston said to Henry.

Henry nodded. He was thinking of telling him to call off the layoffs but knew that wasn’t going to happen. “Self preservation, I do love my wife.”

Pinkston nodded.

A brief hostage situation trumped the news of layoffs for the day. No one was thinking about themselves, only if Henry was okay. Physically Henry was fine, but mentally he was a mess. As much as he was concerned for himself, he was also thinking about Josh. He knew that anyone could be like him. If pushed hard enough, people snap.

“What are you thinking about,” Itzal asked. They were on the bottom floor in a common area known as the lounge. Most people came to the spot to chill, check text messages, and sleep. Henry needed to think. Abstract paintings of green circles and red rectangles dotted the walls.

“Anyone can be like Josh.”

“He had a grenade.”

“Why not,” Henry stated. “Anyone, if pushed hard enough can do that. I feel for him.”

“Really?”

“Yeah, I mean, I won’t do anything crazy like that. But, what is anyone’s breaking point.”

“Hmm, you never know,” Itzal responded.

“Exactly.”

Strike Zone

Pedro Fuentes settled his nerves and took a deep breath. He was on one of his better streaks and was thrilled to have some bragging rights over his friends. Crashing pins, children laughter, rolling balls, and a few old televisions filled the bowling alley with fun. He was calm after starting poorly at one of his bowling matches. It was unusual for him to have four open frames to start a game. After he settled down, cracked his neck, relaxed his shoulders, he got his stroke again and dominated the pins.

“Let’s see what you can do Pedro,” Arnold shouted. Pedro smirked while the other two guys with them chuckled. Pedro knew that Arnold was trying to get him off his game. One more strike in the final round and he and his team would tie their opponents at one game a piece.

One more deep breath and Pedro rolled his strike ball Tidal Wave. The blue and silver swirled strike ball whirled down at 18mph and crashed into the pins. Nine fell immediately but one was almost hesitant until it fell. John and Pedro cheered and pointed mockingly at Arnold and Antonio.

Pedro started bowling with his friends sporadically after being laid off from Gordon-Hirschel. They handled reservations from low budget to luxury hotels. Bowling was a sport he loved as a teen but allowed work and school to interfere with playing. During the time off he picked it up again and started bowling with his friends from college and church.

All four guys were married and none told their wives about their guy’s night. To them they wanted privacy. This was their moment to relax and get away. They desired to enjoy themselves and bowl.

“Take that Double A,” Pedro said. Double A referred to Arnold and Antonio who frequently teamed up to go against Pedro and John. They were not related but both men had a Mediterranean look that most people assumed they were cousins.

“All tied up, good for you,” Antonio sneered. “We’ll see this next game.”

“Anyone up for another round,” Arnold said while walking to the bar.

“Not for me,” Pedro answered.

“Worried, it’ll affect your game,” Arnold said. “I’m buying.”

“Affect my game,” Pedro said mockingly. “You know it relaxes me.”

“All the more reason for you to get a beer,” John stated. “Go ahead and bring back a bucket.”

Arnold nodded and headed to the bar. The bowling alley was running a special so each person in the group could have one, and there would be one extra beer leftover. That one always went to the buyer. There were leagues further down in the alley, but the four men loved coming there at least once a month, sometimes twice.

All four guys had two balls. None were professional but John had an opportunity to get into the PBA. The top ball was for strikes, the other for spares. The strike ball had a nice curve when rolled to hit the sweet spot right to the side of the head pin. The spare ball was better for going straight to clear the remaining pins left behind.

Pedro was cleaning his white and heather gray mix spare ball when a familiar perfume caressed his nose. He sniffed a few times and looked around.

“Maria,” Pedro said to his wife. He had his arms open and a smile to match.

“Don’t Maria me,” she said. “I thought you were at the office going over the budget and making sure you can hire new people.” Pedro got a new job working with a temp agency as a manager. He worked his way up to supervise two offices. The temporary agency was called upon to fill 50 jobs for a regional insurance company and Maria assumed this was taking all of Pedro’s time.

“I was,” Pedro lied.

“I know you’re lying,” Maria said. Arnold was returning with the bucket of beer when he saw Maria standing by Pedro.

The one thing that impressed Antonio was Maria’s figure. She wore deep blue skinny jeans that hugged her petite and curvaceous figure. A light jacket hid her lavender satin top. Antonio checked her out and then glanced at Pedro. Like Pedro, he felt weird because his wife thought he was at the office.

“Stop checking me out Antonio,” Maria snapped. “I can feel your eyes on me.”

“I didn’t do,” Antonio started, “sorry.”

“Does your wife know you’re here,” Maria asked. Antonio shook his head. Maria pointed to John and he did the same as Antonio. Maria looked around to see Arnold with the bucket of beer in one hand.

“I’m just here to get beer,” Arnold said.

“Unbelievable,” Maria said. “We’re a team, a family.”

“I just wanted to come to a place with out having to explain myself.”

“It’s bowling. You think I’m so mean, that I wouldn’t understand you coming to bowl,” Maria said. “Do you know me?”

Pedro dropped his head. His bowling friends mirrored the same look. They all could see Pedro and Maria’s spat but felt the same in their lives. Antonio felt so bad that he began to text his wife to let her know where he was.

“We’ll talk later,” Maria said. “I’m not going to put my business in public. So enjoy your game,” she snarled.

“Maria I’m sorry, I promise...” Pedro began but stopped when she walked away.

Maria had tears in her eyes and rushed to the door. She was far enough way so Pedro couldn’t see her tears. Itzal Watkins, ex-employee of Pedro, walked in and met Maria’s eyes in the foyer. “You okay?”

“You where right, he was here,” Maria said. “I’ll be there tomorrow.”

Itzal paused for a moment and then said, “oh the rally.”

“Yeap,” she responded.

He nodded and she left the bowling alley. Itzal smiled a little and continued to walk into the building. Itzal had known that Pedro came in the bowling alley often and through his conversation with Maria at his rallies, assumed she didn’t know about him going out. To her it wasn’t where he was, but that he was leaving without her knowledge. She felt like if he could keep this secret, what else could he be hiding.

Itzal worked for Gordon-Hirschel. He was laid off with Pedro and his best friend Henry Hall. The company moved the jobs to Korea and every since then he has held rallies to protest their existence in another country. Itzal’s main idea was to get people to boycott business that helps Gordon-Hirschel. Maria had showed up twice before but felt great to know that she would be there in support again.

The league bowlers where leaving so this allowed Itzal to get an alley to himself. He surveyed the area and notice a lane not that far from Pedro and his friends that was open. To his surprise, they kept bowling and took in one of the bucket beer deals. They might not have been jovial but they where still playing. Itzal was not a good bowler but figured since he was there he might as well have fun and mess with Pedro.

“You’re still here,” Itzal said while getting the neon orange house ball into the rack. Pedro was shocked to see Itzal but nodded.

“You know him,” Antonio asked Pedro.

“Yeah,” Pedro said. “Hey Itzal.”

Pedro sipped on his beer. He got up to bowl and took his focus off Itzal. He sighed and rolled Tidal Wave. Strike! It was the fifth one in a row. John cheered him on and Double AA were impressed.

“I saw Maria when I came in,” Itzal remarked.

“Yeah, she was here,” Pedro said.

Itzal bowled the neon color orange ball and hit three pins. “Almost,” Itzal said. There were a few more frames of no talk between Itzal and Pedro. Itzal was amazed that after what he assumed had to be an argument between Pedro and Maria, his ex-boss he had put together an amazing game. However, Itzal didn’t come over to clean the dust from the gutters with his house ball or admire Pedro’s game.

Pedro had just bowled his seventh strike in a row when Itzal said, “When are you coming to a rally.”

“Let it go,” Pedro said. “They left. That’s what happens.”

“Hmm,” Itzal said. “My wife left me due to that. Is that what happens?”

Pedro sighed. “I don’t know, sorry to hear that.”

“Is he bothering you,” Arnold said after picking up a three pin spare.

“You going to do something about it,” Itzal replied.

“He’s harmless,” Pedro said and put his arm out to stop Arnold from getting into a potential fight. “Itzal, what do you want?”

“I’m just bowling.” Pedro got up to bowl is eighth frame. “Wanna know what’s funny,” Itzal said to Antonio. He didn’t know the man, but didn’t care. He wasn’t going to be rude and yell to Pedro while he was bowling. Itzal knew Pedro could still hear him. Antonio didn’t respond. “Wives are like businesses.” Pedro bowled and got his eighth strike. “Sometimes they leave un-expectantly.”

“What’chu saying man,” John responded. He was tired of Itzal who was laughing loudly.

“It happens, that’s life,” Itzal said. “Especially when secrets are involved.”

Pedro snapped his head and got close a little close to Itzal. He wasn't as big or tall as his former employee but was fearless. "I'm tired of your crap. You got where you where because of me, don't forget that."

Itzal put his hands up and stepped away. He walked to his ball and hit four more pins. Pedro assumed it was over. When it was his turn he cracked his neck and got back up to bowl again. Some of the people around began paying attention to that fact that they could see a perfect game.

"Amazing," Itzal started. "I've never seen a man bowl the perfect game while his wife leaves in tears." Double A and John glared at Itzal. Pedro sighed and bowled. Strike!

Pedro was going to say something but sat down. "That was low man," Arnold said. He was visibly upset. With only one more frame, many couldn't believe what was going on.

"I wonder if she knew about you, if she would cry harder," Itzal responded and made sure to emphasis you.

"Enough," Pedro yelled. He jumped at Itzal and grabbed his shirt. "What do you want," Pedro yelled.

"Get off me."

Itzal shoved his attacker and Pedro punched back. Pedro's friends and people standing around broke up the two men while took another swing at one another. The manager came in between them and looked at Itzal.

"I don't know you sir, but you have to leave."

"I have every right to be here," Itzal called out.

"Not if you're causing trouble. I could press charges."

Itzal looked at Pedro then at the manager. "I'll leave," Itzal stated. "Good luck, Pedro." There was no shred of sincerity in his words.

Pedro didn't respond. He just watched his former employee grab his jacket and head around the corner to leave the bowling alley. The audience cheered and Pedro went back to shaking off the thoughts of Itzal. After his friends bowled, he was up again.

He tried not to think about it. Realizing that it would blow his chances, he sighed and didn't look at the score. Between his multiple strikes and John's high score, they had already clinched the win. Even Double AA was rooting for him to get three more strikes for that proverbial perfect game.

It took less than five minutes total but Pedro bowled. Strike! Strike! Strike!

The audience roared and cheered with each strike. Pedro knew that waiting for him at home was trouble and an argument. However, for that moment he was somebody. He would have his picture in a gold frame on the wall with the two other guys who performed the same feat in that bowling alley. He would be immortalized.

In spite of the pain, he caused his wife and confrontation within Itzal. Pedro bowled the perfect game.

I Love You Abigail...Help!!!

The storm clouds came in and the sound of rain patted against the window and roof. It wasn't an unusual storm but due to it being early spring, a cold one. At some points, the wind hollowed through the trees and the flash of lightning gave the leaves an ominous look.

Pastor Clayton Colley didn't mind the oncoming storm. He lived in Ohio all his life so this was nothing new. He would've preferred being there at home with his wife, Abigail. They were not divorced or separated but she left due to a rash of break-ins in their neighborhood.

The Pastor assured her it was a few youths vandalizing the area. He told her the news was making it sound much worse than reality. Most of the vandalizing happened to vacant homes. She didn't care. Abigail was nervous.

He decided to stay home for a while to show her everything was okay. Abigail lived with family in Wheeling. Pastor Colley like the West Virginian city, but didn't care much for the casino. He felt like gambling halls brought down a town's moral compass. To Clayton, casinos were a haven of immorality, crime, and suspicious behavior. He was against Ohio's ballot for casinos and preached against them in his sermons. He felt victorious when the first ballot failed.

However, just like the oncoming storm, he realized that having a casino was only a matter of time. He didn't care of the glitzy hotel that would open up on the Westside of Columbus. He was happy that he lived on the eastside, so at least whatever problems would hit the city, he wouldn't be near them.

Pastor Colley, head minister of the Everlasting Hope Christian Church and avid fan of Cleveland's basketball team, sat by a window to watch the storm. He was at peace with his surroundings. It shortly stopped and the wind would dry all traces of moisture on the cars and homes.

From a distance, he could see another storm brewing. He assumed it had to be an hour or two away. He didn't mind and sat there for a while drinking hot chocolate while Cavaliers basketball spewed from the TV in the background.

His thoughts went to earlier that day and how he saw a few people for counseling or going over church ministry ideas. E.H.C.C. had quite a few retired people who would see the

pastor during the day to talk about better ways the church can grow and serve the community. Others came in because they needed help with a personal problem or situation.

One person in particular, Henry Hall, came in earlier that day. Colley's mind troubled when his thought turned to him. He knew of Henry's addiction to alcohol but his earnest desire to be free from the liquid drug.

Stacey, Henry's wife, also had an alcohol addiction. Due to her kidney problems the addiction took a hard toll on her body. Colley figured to help Stacey by keeping her busy and mind off her condition. He hired her to help edit his book and implement ideas for a smoother church service.

Pastor Colley blew out a sigh. Guilt overcame him and he sipped on his hot chocolate. The TV was on but the sound was so low his heartbeat sounded louder.

"I hope, I did the right thing," he whispered. Pastor Colley tried to counsel Henry on how to get over his addiction. He stared at two writing tablets resting on a oak and glass coffee table.

The tablets were a similar idea he suggested to Henry for help. His treatment, which started three months ago, was a bit different. One of them dealt with the mental process of self-forgiveness and the other praising God for a variety of blessings in his life.

Pastor Colley could not let go of self-pity and guilt, no different then Henry turned to alcohol. It was like his personal elixir. Just as Henry turned to the bottle for relief, the Pastor turned to guilt. For some reason it helped.

"I gotta' get over this," Pastor Colley said. *"Tired of living with this burden. I'm tired."* He sighed, sipped more of the warm chocolate, and thought, 'please help me.'

A loud knock at the door woke Pastor Colley from his slumber. He didn't realize he had fallen asleep for a few minutes. The warm cup of chocolate was in his hands and he spilled a little with the knock at the door.

Pastor Colley assumed it was thunder, but once the knock came again, he knew it was a person. He put his cup next to the tablets and didn't even think to look out the window. He assumed someone went to the wrong house or a hysterical parishioner came by. Colley figured it could not have been the kids vandalizing the place. His home with the neatly trimmed yard, good painted siding, and a garden gnome dressed as a basketball player certainly gave the look of people living there.

“Here I come,” Pastor Colley called. He didn’t bother to check the eyehole and opened the door. “Listen I don’t need...”

A thump on the head stopped Pastor Colley from continuing. He staggered back and tried to pull himself together when the figure rushed him. Pastor swung his elbow and caught the side of the man. The intruder made a guttural sound.

“There’s more of that,” Pastor Colley stated. The intruder didn’t make a noise but was able to turn Pastor Colley quickly on his stomach so he couldn’t see his face. Pastor Colley struggled to take another swing when a powerful blow to the head nearly knocked him unconscious.

The minister tried to push him off and stand but immediately tumbled down. His head ached and a trickle of warm blood started down his forehead and onto his cheek.

Could my wife be right, “Pastor Colley thought. He was in pain and forced himself to stand. The intruder was gone but there was a strong dizzy feel. Because of the blood, Pastor Colley knew he was not imaging being attacked. He picked up a tablet to use as a weapon and then shook his head. He dropped it and headed for another room to get something better.

Pastor Colley assumed it was a gun or something hard that hit him in the head and almost knocked him out. He looked around his living room and the hall leading to the kitchen. *‘Better weapons in there’*, he thought. His leg felt heavy and that made him pause a bit. *‘C’mom Clayton you can do this’*, he thought.

Pastor Colley summoned some energy to move fast as possible to the kitchen. It took a second but he realized that there was a tumbling noise coming from the other room. He could hear the intruder walked down the stairs and stopped.

“You can take whatever you want,” Pastor Colley yelled. “Just leave in peace.”

No response. Pastor Colley was in the kitchen and grabbed a knife. His instincts told him to stay and wait, but if the stranger had a gun, *‘what good would standing around do’*. He figured to move and surprise the invader.

Pastor Colley crept around the kitchen table and quietly made his way into the dining room. A sudden noise crashed through just beyond the sunroom and into the front area. Pastor Colley raced into the area where he heard the noise. The knife was held high.

Pastor Colley came into the room hoping to catch the home invader and stop him from doing harm. Instead, what he saw where two tablets and his mug crashed into the side of a wooden statue and the bookcase.

He was tricked.

Pastor Colley turned around, got punched in the back, dropped the knife, and fell to the ground. An all black pillowcase was forced around his head. He could breathe but felt trapped. The intruder tied the pillowcase around his neck and began to pull on him. The black velvet pillowcase was Colley's favorite, but made seeing through it impossible.

Pastor Colley fought the intruder's grasp but rewarded with a hit in the back. There was a pause in the action and another blow to his head. The last hit was hard and the Pastor began to lose conscious. Only a few moments ago he was worried about feeling guilty. Now his thoughts, was on survival. He tried to muster the strength to stand and fight but couldn't. He felt the grip of his captor grab him once more under his shoulder and lift him to his legs.

The cool wind wisped through the blue and steel gray pajamas he was wearing. Pastor Colley was not prepared to leave in such a hurried manner. He was forced from his home and thrown into the passenger seat of the car.

Before losing conscious he whispered, "I love you Abigail."

"Shutup," the intruder said in a ruff voice. The intruder shoved the Pastor and slammed the door. He was hoping not to die and fought the urge too sleep. The last hit in the head was too much and he only remembered hearing the purr of the engine and the movement of the car.

Read what happens next in Repeat Offender.

Characters are from the novel Repeat Offender by Ricky LaVaughn

You can pick up your own copy from Amazon.com, Barnes and Noble, Lavauri.com and many other internet sites.