

Author's sci-fi novel looks at psychopath U.S. president

Quantum Night
is Robert J.
Sawyer's
23rd book

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Prolific Mississauga science fiction author Robert J. Sawyer knows that many of his works have a certain sense of optimism to them as he looks to the future.

And, while he isn't one to put too much stock into the words of critics, he says some had opined that perhaps he was too hopeful and was bordering on naivety.

It got him thinking and he soon decided that he wanted to explore the idea of evil. As a science fiction writer, he wanted to approach it in a clinical way to discover if it's something that can be quantified and measured.

Known for his prodigious background work that adds an authenticity to his books, he eventually came across the research of Robert D. Hare from the University of British Columbia, who created a diagnostic tool to determine if someone is a psychopath. Sawyer said some of the defining characteristics are a lack of empathy and manipulative behaviour.

What the author also discovered is that psychopaths are far more common than he first believed and aren't always the scary pop culture reference many people assume them to be such as a Norman Bates or Hannibal Lecter.

Sawyer's latest novel *Quantum Night*, which was released on paperback at the start of February, explores what happens when a far-right psychopath emerges from out of seemingly nowhere to become the next president of the United States. The author wanted to examine why

psychopaths attract so many followers when, without them, they wouldn't be able to rise to positions of authority and power.

"The plot grew out of how almost everybody has to deal with psychopaths and how they're being manipulated for the psychopath's own ends without even being aware of it," Sawyer told *The News* from his Mississauga home. "When one seeks political power, enormous numbers of people can be manipulated to support them even when it's contrary to their own best interests."

The novel is set in 2020 when a fictionalized version of Calgary mayor Naheed Nenshi is the prime minister of Canada. American president Quinton Carroway isn't pleased with Nenshi in charge due to his Muslim religion and that leads to confrontation between the two nations.

Is there any correlation

between what happened in the real world south of the border and the book?

Absolutely, says Sawyer. The author says Carroway is an amalgamation of Donald Trump, Herman Cain, Ben Carson and Sarah Palin and Sawyer sees a worrying trend happening in the United States as the Republicans shift fur-

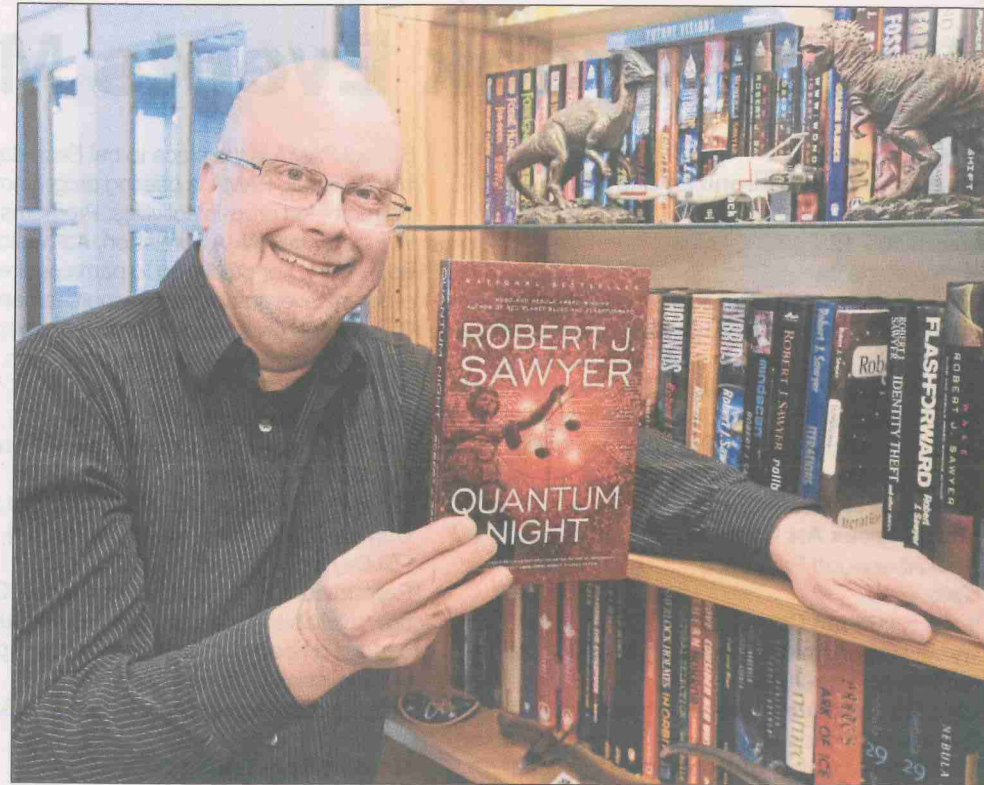
ther to the right and cater to the fringe aspects of the party.

"In Donald Trump you have a (reality) show host who rose to the most powerful office in the world," he said.

Meanwhile, *Quantum Night* follows experimental psychologist Jim Marchuk who learns he's missing six

months of memories from his past and that he's responsible for terrible deeds. He partners with quantum physicist and former girlfriend Kayla Huron to unravel the mystery while also trying to save humanity from itself.

Sample chapters of the book can be found at sfwriter.com.



Rob Beintema/Metroland

Award-winning author Robert J. Sawyer's latest book, "*Quantum Night*" is following up its best-seller success with a paperback release.