

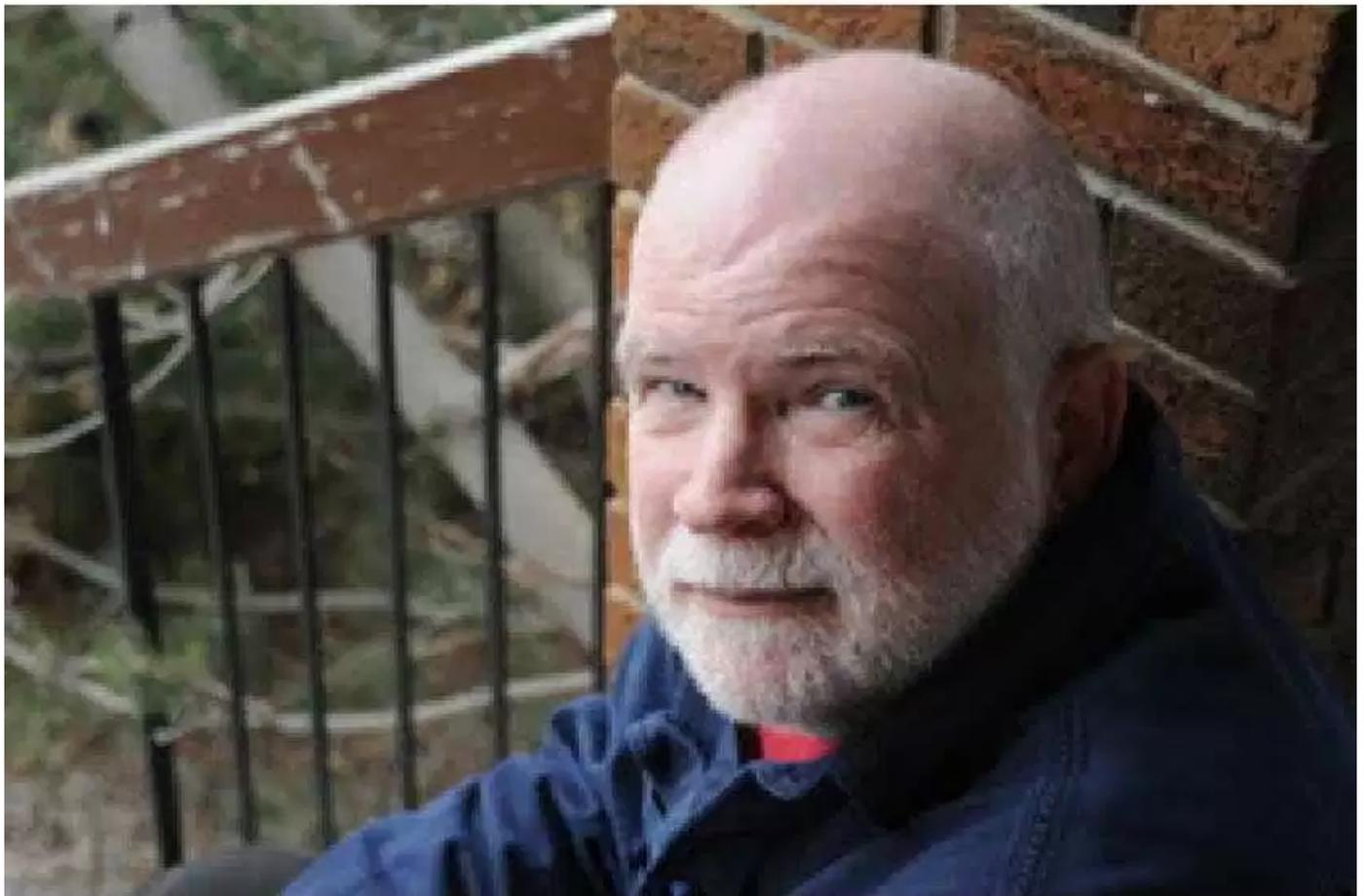
Detective Lane uncovers murder in Kensington, deals with fundamentalist family in Garry Ryan's new mystery



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Author Garry Ryan. *PHOTO SUBMITTED*

Garry Ryan had two models for Andrew Pierce, a sinister professor at the heart of his new Detective Lane novel *Indiana Pulcinella*.

Both were professors. Only one was a criminal, although his crimes certainly paled in comparison to Pierce's activity in Ryan's book.

It was in the early 1970s when one of Ryan's university instructors was revealed to be a burglar. He would use his attendance at elegant parties to case houses for future break-ins.

More than 20 years later, Ryan returned to university during a sabbatical from his teaching career and had a run-in with a different professor. He wasn't a criminal, but he was condescending and arrogant.

"I would always ask questions, I'm a pain in the ass," Ryan says, in an interview with the *Calgary Herald*. "He was talking about bullying and then he started to bully me. It was those two things — the prof who was stealing things and the prof who appears to be this really popular guy who was really, under the surface, wasn't."

The two men meshed, Ryan kicked it up a notch and Pierce was born.

For those familiar with the murder, mayhem and unsavoury characters Detective Lane has uncovered over the course of eight novels, Andrew Pierce's characteristics will be nothing new. It's not that Ryan, a prolific writer who has already finished the next three Lane mysteries, has stock villains per se.

But peeling back the veneer of respectability to reveal the darkness beneath has been a recurring theme for the author, a retired teacher who has been publishing Detective Lane novels since 2004.

"I've run into accomplished people who have no soul," says Ryan. "I'm not sure of the right word, but they are psychopaths. Their whole *raison d'être* is to do whatever it takes to amuse themselves."

As with all of Ryan's Detective Lane tales, *Indiana Pulcinella* (NeWest Press, 221 pages, \$18.95) takes place in Calgary. More specifically, much of action unfolds in Kensington, an unlikely spot for murder and mayhem, perhaps, but one that offers Calgary readers some recognizable landmarks. On top of the pizza place referenced in the title, there are shoutouts to Pages on Kensington and the Plaza Theatre, among other spots.

The trendy community is where Lane and his partner, Nigil Li, find themselves investigating the gruesome murder of a couple. The crimes bear a striking resemblance to murders committed years earlier that resulted in a mentally-ill man being convicted and imprisoned.

But as with many of Lane's adventures, the gritty on-the-street crime investigation is only part of the story and mirrors and certain messiness in the protagonist's personal life. Lane, whose first name is never given, has been attempting to build a home for himself and his family after escaping a chaotic past. Ostracized by his fundamentalist family because he is gay, Lane suddenly finds them back in his life after his niece, Christine, gives birth to a baby boy named Indiana.

Members of Lane's family belong to a fundamentalist and polygamist cult. Led by Lane's unhinged and bigoted sister, who is also Christine's mother, the group wants to raise Indiana as their own and attempt a forceful and violent intervention. This brings up some unwanted ghosts for Christine, who escaped the community after being earmarked for breeding by a polygamist bishop years earlier.

It all serves to severely complicate Lane's life as he investigates murder. But it also fits into another theme Ryan has investigated before.

In 2014's *Glycerine*, Lane investigated a case that involved honour killings, terrorism and fundamentalist factions among both Christians and Muslims.

"I think using religion for violence is such a juxtaposition," Ryan says.

“It’s that juxtaposition of ideas: Love your neighbour, kill your daughter, kind of thing. It’s all about exerting power over women. It’s misogyny. In it’s simplest terms, that’s what it is.”

Ryan’s next three instalments will see Lane covering some new geographical ground. For the first time, he will venture outside city limits and into Cuba and Mexico for tales that involve a Bre-X-type fraud and militias engaged in Mexico’s drug wars, respectively.

But, as always, most of these roads will lead back to Calgary.

“I love this city,” says Ryan. “I keep coming back to it. I go other places. But this is home. I think Calgary has a personality. I don’t think it’s what people think it is.”

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