

# READERS' GUIDE

## *The Troupers* by Richard Scarsbrook

### INTRODUCING *The Troupers*

The Trouper-Royale Orpheum Galaxie Theatre is a jewel in the entertainment crown of Niagara Falls. At least, that's what the marquee out front says. To the Fabulous Trouper Quintuplets, their family's old theatre is a thorn in the crown of their adolescent memories.

Under their famous-child-actor-turned-director father's overbearing, and narcissistic eye, the quintuplets are raised on a strict diet of Golden Age entertainment and homeschooling to mold them into the best actors of their generation. But through a series of hilarious and tragic events, the siblings begin to develop their own personalities and ambitions, rebelling against their father's aspirations for them. The tension rising from the quintuplets' newfound individualism sparks an onstage brawl on their eighteenth birthday that changes the trajectory of all their lives.

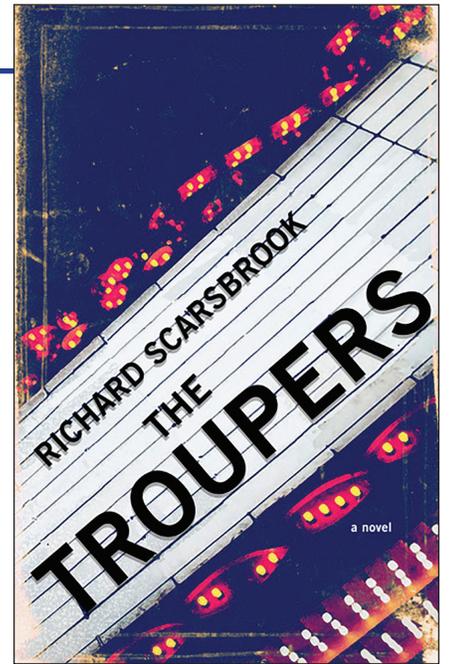
Twenty years later, the quintuplets reunite for the reading of their father's will and his demand for one last performance.

### IMPORTANT THEMES

*Family* — The Trouper children have differing connections to their mother, father, grandmother, and each other. Family connections are highlighted throughout the book, in both negative and positive ways.

*Independence* — In several moments during their childhood, the Trouper children seek out, and gain, some independence in their closely structured upbringing, culminating in their eighteenth birthday, when each of them will have the opportunity to potentially get away from their father's control.

*Identity* — The Trouper quintuplets are raised and encouraged to meet a strict ideal created by their father. As they grow, they each develop their own distinct personality, find their unique interests, and make connections outside of their family unit, creating their own distinct identities, regardless of their uniform upbringing.



## QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. The book opens with Errol recounting a recurring dream he has about the night his sister and mother were in an accident — do you have any recurring dreams? Or have you had dreams about loved ones who've passed on?
2. What goes wrong at John Lionel's funeral? What do we learn from this about each of the siblings and their personalities?
3. What expectations does John Lionel set out for his children before their birth? Are these realistic expectations?
4. Why does Errol feel like his birth is a disappointment to his father? How does this affect their future relationship?
5. What happens to Violet, Marigold, Olivia, and Errol at the Honeycomb Hideout? What do they take and how do you think the experience influences them as they grow up?
6. What does Errol's mother's 1959 Renault Floride symbolize for Errol?
7. Describe each of the Trouper quintuplet's "escape plans."
8. How does the Troupers' grandmother, Chrysanthemum, affect their lives throughout the novel?
9. How does the Trouper Quintuplets' final performance intend to make use of all their individual skills?
10. Who is the mysterious figure Errol sees in the basement of Trouper Terrace? How do they aid in the closure Errol receives from the events thereafter?



### ABOUT RICHARD

Richard Scarsbrook is the award-winning author of ten books, and his short stories and poems have been published widely in literary journals, magazines, and anthologies. *Royal Blood*, the first of Scarsbrook's screenplays to be produced, won Best Short Film at the TIFF-associated Milton Film Festival in 2019, and his last novel, *Rockets Versus Gravity*, was a *National Post* bestseller. Scarsbrook currently teaches courses in creative writing at the Humber School for Writers and George Brown College. He lives in Toronto, Ontario.