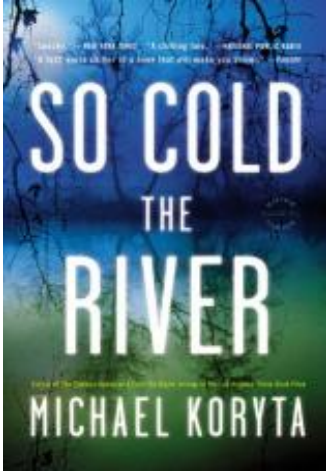


So Cold the River

by Michael Koryta



About the Book

It started with a beautiful woman and a challenge. As a gift for her husband, Alyssa Bradford approaches Eric Shaw to make a documentary about her father-in-law, Campbell Bradford, a 95-year-old billionaire whose past is wrapped in mystery. Eric grabs the job even though there are few clues to the man's past --- just the name of his hometown and an antique water bottle he's kept his entire life.

In Bradford's hometown, Eric discovers an extraordinary history --- a glorious domed hotel where movie stars, presidents, athletes, and mobsters once mingled, and hot springs whose miraculous mineral water cured everything from insomnia to malaria. Neglected for years, the resort has been restored to its former grandeur just in time for Eric's stay.

Just hours after his arrival, Eric experiences a frighteningly vivid vision. As the days pass, the frequency and intensity of his hallucinations increase and draw Eric deeper into the town's dark history. He discovers that something besides the hotel has been restored --- a long-forgotten evil that will stop at nothing to regain its lost glory. Brilliantly imagined and terrifyingly real, **So Cold the River** is a tale of irresistible suspense with a racing, unstoppable current.

Discussion Guide

1. **So Cold the River** begins with the line "You looked for the artifacts of their ambition." What are some examples of such artifacts in the book? Discuss what they reveal about the characters. Do you think that ambition manifests itself differently than other drives? How and why?
2. The first time that Eric Shaw sees the dome of the West Baden Hotel, he is filled with wonder. Have you ever had a similar reaction to a building or place? What was it about the sight that most strongly affected you?
3. On page 134, Anne McKinney thinks to herself, "Rare was the storyteller who got trapped by reality." Do you think

that writers have a responsibility to faithfully represent events as they actually happened? Why or why not? Do you hold writers of fiction to a different standard than you do writers of nonfiction?

4. Discuss Josiah Bradford. Do you think he is in control of his fate, or is he stuck on a predetermined path? Why or why not? Have there been times in your own life when you have felt like you have no control? When?

5. How does ego drive each of the characters? What are the differences between Eric's, Campbell's, and Josiah's vanity?

6. Eric begins to have trouble distinguishing his visions from reality. Have you ever had a dream that was so vivid, you were certain that it was real? Why do you think it affected you so strongly?

7. How do you feel about Eric's relationship with Claire? Why do you believe their marriage fell apart? What do you think will happen in the future?

8. As one of the oldest people in the two towns, Anne McKinney is a repository of historical information. As a self-taught meteorologist, she also looks toward the future. Can you reconcile these two different outlooks? How does history inform her predictions? What is her role in the story?

9. What do you think about Josiah and Danny's relationship? Why do you think they are friends? Have you ever had an unequal friendship? Did you do anything to balance it?

10. Discuss the confrontation of perception and objective reality in the novel. When does the line between the two become unclear? Which do you think is more reliable: what one personally experiences or what is recorded or observed by the world?

11. What are the differences in the ways that Josiah and Eric experience their visions? Why do you think these visions occur?

12. Do you think that **So Cold the River** has a message about revenge or ambition? If so, what do you think it is? If not, why?

Author Bio

Michael Koryta is a *New York Times* bestselling author whose work has been translated into more than 20 languages and has won or been nominated for the *Los Angeles Times* Book Prize, Edgar® Award, Shamus Award, Barry Award, Quill Award, International Thriller Writers Award and the Golden Dagger. They've been selected as "best books of the year" by numerous publications.

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