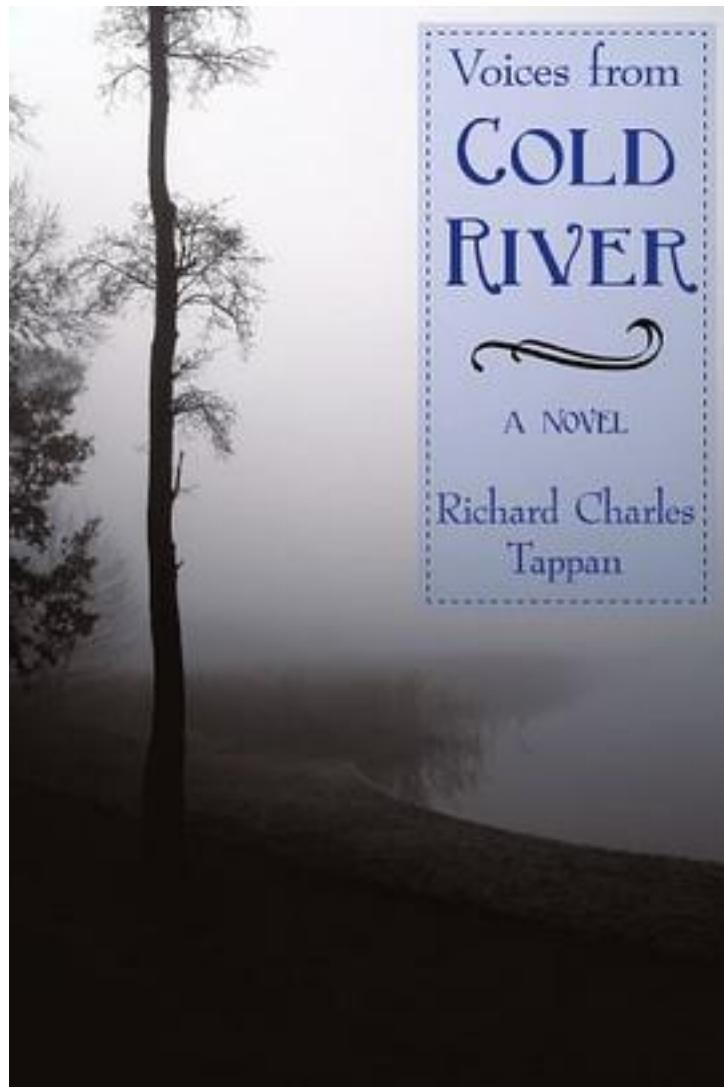


# Voices From Cold River



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What is to become of a brainy young maiden who bathes naked in the river the day before her wedding? Mariah Bennett seized her freedom one day before her childhood would officially end at the altar. Despite her mother's calls and forebodings, Mariah would indeed marry her ambitious, head-turner beau Will Dunfield, and yes, she would bathe in Cold River. Victorian girls--especially girls with no means but God's meager gifts to the "weaker flesh"--lived with limits as tight as whalebone corsets. Advanced education, business, the professions--all closed to women except those rebels bankrolled by liberal parents or husbands. The risks of rebellion for a common farm girl were daunting: Young women without the cushion of money and family could fall hard. In "Voices from Cold River," Mariah Bennett Dunfield did indeed fall hard. Her first shattering blow was her husband's betrayal. Will Dunfield's work as a salesman sent him down the rails many days while Mariah worked at home to outfit high society ladies. The handsome couple had just stepped over the threshold into the gilded life when Mariah felt nausea and fatigue. Will returned one evening expecting the happy news of fatherhood only to be slapped into the consequences of his brand of wanderlust--he had infected Mariah with syphilis. Mariah fell from the sky like Icarus. Exiled to her aunt and uncle's farm in Iowa to start life over again, Mariah continued to hear the voices of Cold River, the voices of youthful dreams. She would one day return and bring with her a new hope and the same reckless ambitions that continued to cling to her like the icy waters of Cold River. "Voices from Cold River" received an honorable mention in the Peter Taylor Prize competition in December 2006.

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目录:

[Voices From Cold River 下载链接1](#)

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