



Two stolen fathers, a hideout, and a river not to be trusted lead to a secret friendship that bridges differences and changes lives

Finalist for the Kraken Book Prize for Middle Grade Fiction

On an ordinary Monday, Rill Kruse left for third grade with a dad, but when she came home, he'd been stolen. By a river. One year and thirteen days later—on the first morning of summer vacation—Rill still insists he's trudging home. Her mom has become a practical woman. Her older brother, Eddy, now calls her baby and dork. Gus, second-in-command at Kruse Whitewater Adventures, Rill's family's rafting company, has gone from being her dad's "risk bro" to her mom's guardian angel. Joyce, company secretary, arm-wrestler, and mechanic, still calls Rill a fingerling, but, after learning what a cheater water is, Rill wishes she'd stop. When Rill's cat, Clifford, leads her to the family tree fort on the mountainside behind home, she discovers a stowaway, Perla. To help Perla, Rill embarks on an adventure that tests her understanding of the world, of loss, and of what it means to be a friend. In the end, what Rill discovers will nudge her—and all those she loves—toward healing.



“A shimmering, breathtaking read! *The River Between Hearts* has everything I hope for in a great middle grade novel: A spirited heroine with a voice that leaps off the page, a scenic setting I want to spend time in, vivid characters, adventure, swift page-turning chapters, and heart—this book positively sparkles with emotion. Fans of Kate DiCamillo will be delighted by the wonderful tale that Heather Mateus Sappenfield has crafted!”

—Todd Mitchell, *The Last Panther*, Nautilus Book Award and Colorado Book Award Winner

“Rill is determined to stay exactly the same. Everyone and everything around her is changing and growing up.... In an attempt to escape the ever-changing landscape around her, she visits her old hideaway, Fort Kruse. She expects the old photos and old drawings that will painfully attempt to bring back unwanted memories, but she does not expect to find someone hiding out in the Fort. A chance encounter of two lives in upheaval leads to a beautiful story of friendship, healing, and a cemented belief that people are not things. Sappenfield does a beautiful job at tackling important issues for middle grade students to grasp! Highly recommend!”

—Sarah Hopkins, Bookseller, Bookworm of Edwards

“Heather Mateus Sappenfield’s *The River Between Hearts* is a beautiful young MG that hits all the right notes: a strong heroine who’s dealing with all the changes of growing up, and has a broken heart that needs mending. This story has lots of heart, a beautiful setting, and a spirited, sweet voice make the words come alive. Perfect for fans of Leslie Connor’s *A Home for Goddesses and Dogs* and Laurel Snyder’s *My Jasper June*. The Colorado setting shines and carries you away. *The River Between Hearts* is a middle-grade novel not to be missed!”

—Fleur Bradley, MG author of *Midnight at the Barclay Hotel*, NPR Best Book of 2020

The River Between Hearts by Heather Mateus Sappenfield

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

Heather Mateus Sappenfield loves adventures, especially in the Rocky Mountain landscape that’s been her lifelong home. As part of women’s teams, she’s won 24-hour mountain bike races and road bicycling’s Race Across America—San Diego, California to Atlantic City, New Jersey. She’s also competed in the Mountain Bike World Championships; ski instructed for Vail Resorts loves backcountry ski touring; and is a mom and wife. Her toughest and bravest adventures, though, happen when writing novels!

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