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The Space Between Before and After
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Why Cystic Fibrosis?

As I tell people about this book, I—ve been getting questions about how and why I chose to work with cystic fibrosis as part of the storyline. I haven—t had a personal family history with this condition. But for years, I—ve heard my husband talk about a friend he knew when he was younger who was living with CF.

What struck me over and over as I heard about this person was how *normal* life was for him in so many ways. And yet, while everyone around him was working with the assumption that life would mean planning for another sixty years or so, he was looking at a much different timetable.

The other thing that stood out when Rick relayed anecdotes about this friend and conversations he—d had with him, was the lack of self-pity found in this person—s interactions with his buddies. He spoke with great optimism to Rick about how life at that time for someone with CF could mean living through one—s thirties. It occurred to me that, faced with the same situation, I wasn—t sure if I would have the same positive outlook, the same strength of character.

Having painted this person as a saint, I have to say that, he probably made the same stupid mistakes and choices that most of us did as teenagers.

For years now, I—ve been interested in working with a character who is living with CF. What would it be like to adjust to the idea that your expectations for the future must be different from the expectations that your friends have for their own lives? Also, what would it be like to fall in love with someone with CF, so that all decisions about the relationship—much less children and marriage— have more weight, an intensity, attached because of the condition? I wanted to make Kilian strong, but also real, and flawed in all the usual ways.

This book is fiction, of course, and I—ve had to take some dramatic license in order to drive the story. But I hope I got some of it right and did justice to Kilian.