

## The Other Side

- Fallon Kane

My house, from the time I was four, sat right before a beautiful little woods, separating the space between the little neighborhood of pleasant, suburban houses from who-knows-what on the other side- for all we knew, it could have been a magical land, with all the things we had ever dreamed of- unicorns, fairies and wizards- but for now, we liked to keep it a mystery, a little tickle in the back of our minds. When bored, we liked to creep to the edge of the woods, so close our little feet began to wade through thick patches of clover, and we would stand there and envision what was on the opposite side of that thick blanket of trees.

There was always one kid who would then pipe up and claim that it was he or she who would discover it, who would uncover the deep haunting mystery. Normally, that child was me. I would boast of how I would travel through the trees, fearlessly with only a little food and water in a pack on my back, I would then return to tell stories of the wonderful oasis that lay beyond us, with only some trees in between.

As time flew by like the little seeds in the wind, we grew and aged, and soon we were allowed to venture into the outskirts of the woods. Oh, how exciting this seemed! We would tirelessly prepare for the hike like we were leaving for ten days; filling little backpacks with water bottles, snacks, Band-Aids (you never know when you might encounter a coyote) , whistles to blow in case we lost each other in the thick grove of gnarled branches reaching down as though they, too, were excited for our journey.

Into the forest we would venture, amazed at the wildlife we encountered- a nest woven meticulously of fine branches perched in a tree, a squirrel racing up the rough bark of a trunk like its tiny paws could stick to it.

The sun would shine through little gaps in the leaves, dancing and playing peek-a-boo on the ground, the ground, that one could never see, it was so covered with leaves, roots, plants and whatnot. What might lurk beneath the thick piles of brush, we never feared; we liked snakes, liked the way they were so crafty, hiding and sliding through little cracks of stumps, so stealthy you did not know the snake was there until it was right there, its little beady eyes gleaming at us, and all we could do is stare back, hypnotized by its gaze. Then, I'd get the bright idea that this would make a wonderful pet and I'd try to catch it, but it would be gone before I could blink. Oh well, I thought, I'll surely catch the next one.

I never did. And, it always seems right that I never did,. Because, of course, if I had caught a snake, it would have bit and hurt me; I am old enough, wise enough to see this now, but this is not why I am glad it remained uncaught. Because things like that snake belong out there, in the wonderful little ecosystem that the people in my neighborhood happened to be lucky enough to live by, to watch and observe and admire.

Fast forward a few more years, a few more cycles of bare branches and changing leaves. We are getting even older now, moving into double digits, and, for some of us, the woods loses its flair. It is no longer fun to race across fallen trees, to play hide-and-seek with a little chipmunk. It is pointless, a senseless thing to do. A waste of time.

But not for everyone.

A few of us, nature people, stayed in love with the trees and leaves and animals that all existed out there, our behind our houses, away from the TV and computers and basketball hoop.

We still did not know what lay on the other side.

Sure, we could have asked a parent, an adult, someone older and wiser who seemed to know the answer to any question that uttered from our lips, could tell us what was over there, but it seemed pointless to ask. We did not want to know what lay beyond our sight; we wanted to discover it.

I, myself, enjoyed the peaceful aura the woods seemed to give out. It seemed like the branches of the trees were hands, extending out and telling me to come join them, all problems will

disappear in here.

There was this one particular spot that was perfect. It was a fallen tree, a tree with a trunk with a girth so wide that I could sit on it and my feet would dangle above the cluster of delicate white flowers below, as their little buds tipped from side to side, their weight too much on the fragile stems, as though they were dancing.

Another, smaller tree, stood tall and erect behind it. It was at the age where it was small enough that I could still wrap my ten-year-old hands around its trunk, yet sturdy enough that it could support my weight as I leaned against it.

In front of me, leaves from several little saplings weaved and criss-crossed to form a protective net in front and to the left side of me, sufficiently blocking me from view from the houses that still stood in my line of sight.

It was there I would spend many a day, sitting, reading a book, or just listening to all the sounds that were fluttering about me: an angry squirrel clucking at an unknown source, a bee buzzing at the little white flowers, the quiet flap of a bluebird's wings.

It amazed me always at how many different forms of life I was surrounded by; birds, squirrels, bugs, chipmunks, snakes, foxes, deer, coyotes, and even the occasional turkey or raccoon. They all lived, coexisted in this woods.

Now, I am fifteen. With school and homework, family and friends, I do not have the time to lazily hike through the woodland, sit in my favorite spot and eavesdrop on the wildlife. The most I usually can get is a long stare from my window, and the wonderful memories that place holds.

I dream about how one warm, sunny, fall afternoon, I will grab a jacket, a backpack, and just take a long walk, as deep as I can go, admiring what is around me. Maybe I'll sit in my little place and let all the troubles and anxieties I have disappear, into the wind where it can blow them, far away.

One last look for tonight. It is dark, shadowed, and in the distance, I hear the distinctive call of a coyote. I shiver, wrap my arms around myself, though I am not cold, and turn to go to bed.

I still do not know what lies on the other side.

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## **Fallon Kane**

### **\*\*Bio\*\***

Fallon is a freshman and has loved writing since she was in kindergarten. Her first "published" work was her school's poetry anthology when she was eight. Her goal is to have a book published by the time she is seventeen. Her greatest inspirations are her mother and Stephanie Meyer (author of the Twilight saga).