

## **Biography 1 – From exNihilo**

Hm, you either got here by accident, or you're so bored you wanna read about me (in which case, hah! Joke's on you: I'm gonna bore you even more >:)

**Real name:** Fatima

**Sex:** Female.

**Born:** October, 1978

**From:** Well, I was born in Kuwait, but I've spent a good chunk of my childhood in America, my teen years in Kuwait, and half my twenties in Ireland, but to me, Kuwait is home, I guess.

**Where's Kuwait?:** Kuwait is a tiny country situated along the coast of the Arabian (or Persian) gulf. We're sandwiched between Saudia Arabia and Iraq. Some of you might even remember the Gulf War of 1991.

**Not really. What was that war about?:** On August 2nd, 1990, Iraqi forces, under the orders of Saddam Hussein, invaded Kuwait to claim it as their own. I was, oh, 11 years old at the time. Both my parents were out of the country at the time, so they'd left my three brothers and I under the good care of my aunt. Unfortunately, our family didn't re-unite until after the conflict ended eight months later. During that time, we no contact whatsoever. We didn't know where they were. They didn't even know if we were dead or still alive.

Thankfully, the UN, lead by the American government, freed us from the Iraqi invaders. What is now known as the Gulf War started in 16th January, 1991. We were formally liberated on the 25th of February, 1991. In those seven months of occupation, Iraq had laid Kuwait to ruins. Buildings were looted and burnt, electricity and water had long since been cut, lives were destroyed, and till this day, around 600 souls are missing, most likely tortured and killed. They burned our oil fields, which had disastrous ecological consequences for the whole region. The country has recovered now, thank god. The dead were buried, they rebuilt the city, shut the burning oil fields, but unfortunately, the invasion left a permanent scar on Kuwait's history.

**Family:** My father is retired, but is still heavily involved in writing books and translating Persian literature to Arabic and vice versa. He also has a regular column in one of the Kuwaiti newspapers. My mother works at the university in the Arts and Language department. I have three younger brothers. And of course, we cannot forget Casablanca, our beloved cat.

**Job:** Well, uhh... I have none yet. I should be finishing med school in spring 2004, after which I graduate as a doctor. Scary thought, huh?

**Likes:** anime, manga, video games, The Simpsons, reading a good book, writing, drawing (I'm crap at it, but that's besides the point), cheesecake, coffee, and raisins (Mmmmm..... raisins....)

**Dislikes:** Pediatrics (child medicine), Obs and Gyne (women's medicine), fundamentalism, racism, prejudice, cleaning floors and washing dishes.

**Favorite Animes:** In desperate times, I'll watch ANYTHING, including Yugioh! (I have no shame :P) Nah, it's actually alright. Lemme see.... I love Rurouni Kenshin, Naruto, Trigun, Slam Dunk. Other animes I liked were Cowboy Bebop, Evangelion, Escaflowne, Slayers, the list just goes on!

**Manga:** I love- correction, WORSHIP "Blade of the Immortal" by Samura. Those of you who haven't read this manga, I pity you! You don't know WHAT you're missing! I cannot rave enough about this manga!! Heheh!

**Favorite Video Games:** Final Fantasy 7 and 10, Metal Gear, Castelvania, Vandal Hearts, Vagrant Story, Xenogears, Tomb Raider, I'm kinda ashamed to admit but I also like Zone of Enders 2, even though I hate robot games (Dingo just has this rough-I-don't-give-a-rat's-ass-tough-guy sorta charm :P

**Favorite Music:** Evanescence (Oh my God! I was fixing breakfast one morning while MTV was on, and I heard the song "Bring Me to Life"- the sheer beauty of the lead singer's voice! And the words of that song! I rushed out and bought it within the same hour O\_o) I also love Garbage (although I was a bit disappointed with their third installation), Michelle Branch, the Corrs, different songs here and there, from oldies to ABBA to Irish classics like Christy Moore's "Ride On" and Mary Black's "My Heart is so Low". Others include Sting, Dido, Misteeq, and Cold Play.

**Favorite Books:** Dostoevsky's "Crime and Punishment" - this book's theme of crime and finding redemption, even peace, through suffering, faith and love, is one of the most powerful I have even read. His book "The Brother's Karamazov" is equally as good. I also love Victor Hugo's "Les Miserables". Others I loved were Remarque's "All Quiet on the Western front", Elizabeth Wurtzel's "Prozac Nation" and Anthony Scott's "Is that Me?", a very touching personal account of his struggle with Schizophrenia.

You bored yet?

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## Biography 2 – From the Official Snow Fields site

The low-down on Zahra's past, her memories, and motivations... Here it is, word for word.

"Hmmm...you're either bored, or really nosy if you actually wanna read about me ^\_^ Either way, there won't be anything interesting to say.

My real name is Fatima. I was born in late October, 1978, to a middle-class family. My home country is Kuwait. Those of you who don't know where that is, check under "The Gulf War" in your history books; it's a tiny country in the Arabian Gulf. Anyway. My father is a well-established writer in the Gulf who is heavily involved in social/political/historical issues in the Middle East (Go Dad! ^\_^) My mother is an English Literature Professor at the Kuwait University, and also a bit of an activist (Go Mom!)

I have three younger brothers: one's a money-minded tyrant; another's quick-tempered (we call him "match"); and the youngest the sweetest soul. But since I'm the eldest AND the only girl, I rule supreme! >:D Yep. We're a strange family alright.

Though I was born in Kuwait, I spent a great deal of my childhood in the States. Rhode Island, to be exact. During this time, my mother was studying at Brown University, so we had to live in America for a while; that's how I learned English. As long as I can remember, I loved to draw! Heh..I even got into trouble once for drawing on the wall -- I also loved to play. I swear, it was almost an obsession. There's this special something about making up a story, with characters all from your own little "world", then projecting it somehow. Well, I think so anyway.

Hmmm...during the mid-80's, our family moved back to Kuwait, and we settled in there. It was a big shock for me. I mean, I had to learn a totally new language (Arabic O\_o), not to mention all the different social customs, laws, and attitudes. But I guess I got on well enough. All my relatives were kind, good people...and the country was a safe, nice enough place to grow up in.

Unfortunately, that all changed in 1990, when our lovely neighbors up North (Iraq) swarmed into Kuwait, thus starting the whole Gulf war. I was only eleven at the time. And it just so happened that both my parents were out of the country when it happened. Thank GOD for my relatives. They really took care of me and my three brothers during those hellish days. We had no electricity, no water, barely enough food, and Iraqi soldiers ravaging the whole country... yeah...and then in January, the UN FINALLY kicked some serious Saddam-ass >:D Heh, hearing bombs and gunfire had become so normal to us. The entire world outside had been completely cut off. All we knew was this war. I think that the only reason I stayed sane during those days was because I was so young. When you're that young, you don't think you can die. To you, it's just impossible.

February 26th was our liberation day (YAY!!) For eight months, I hadn't seen my parents or heard any news of them. Later, we found out they had taken refuge in the UAE, a neighboring Gulf state, so we drove there to be re-united with them ^\_^ Hmm..well after a while, we all returned to Kuwait, and the reconstruction began. It took Kuwait about ten years to recover: from the burning oil fields, to constant threats from Iraq, to POWs (who still haven't been returned), not to mention all the physical and psychological damage. Yeah, that war pretty much scarred the region for life.

Enough gloom already! In 1992, my mother was granted a two year Sabbatical Leave to go do research at Yale University, in

the States. Of course, we all moved again to America, this time to Connecticut. I must say that those two years were probably the worst two years of my life (yes, worse than the war). I won't go into details, but let's just say the Americans kids at my school weren't the friendliest. They pretty much rubbed me to the dirt because of my appearance, background, and even my name.

Thankfully, we returned to Kuwait again in 1994, and I completed high school there (happiest day of my life was graduation day! THANK GOD!) By then, I had set my heart on studying medicine. Unfortunately, the third-year education in Kuwait isn't up to standards as the rest of the advanced world, as my mother constantly reminded me. So, I applied for a government scholarship, and (thank God) won it. So, I was sent abroad to study in Dublin, Ireland. It's a HARD subject, full of the odd panic attacks, and "I-am-gonna-fail" episodes >\_< But I guess if ya want something, you gotta work for it.

All this time, I've always spent my time between drawing and reading. I used to draw with watercolours, but then my mother criticized my artwork so much, I gave it up (no talent...sigh >\_<) So, I took up cartoon drawing instead. I guess it was a form of playing. I'd draw up the characters and set the events however I wanted. And once I discovered mangas (the first one was Ranma), well I pretty much fell in love with the Japanese style and tried to imitate it (and still do, by God!) They were poorly drawn, I know, but I sure didn't care! I also loved to read, especially 19th century classics (call me nerdy :P) But I found a lot of inspiration and this incredible fascination with books like "Crime & Punishment", "Brothers Karamazov", "Les Miserables", "All Quiet on the Western Front", etc.

And then, of course, there was RPG's. I loved Vandal Hearts & Suikoden, but playing FF7 was more of an event than just another game ^\_^ To me, the anime-ish style help great appeal to me, and the incredible graphics and storyline, not to mention the whole cast, from evil company business executives to a motley group of rebels to a psychopathic baddie... not to mention the incredible character design! I fell in love with Vincent the minute my eyes fell upon him (hehe...yes, yes, I KNOW he's just a game character...but you know what I mean :P) I think FF7 has this "thing" to it I don't think any other game has. (well, so far anyway ~\_~)

I loved FF7, but I never, EVER, not for one second, dreamed of writing a fanfic about it. My English teacher had always told me my writing style was weak, strange, unclear, dismally lacking in vocabulary, yada yada yada- which pretty much destroyed what little self-esteem I had, and completely put me off writing >\_< I loved reading fics on the internet, and some writers were incredibly talented! I always wished I could write something too. I knew it would never be as good as the others, but still.... Heh! Well, I guess I owe my brother for nudging me on to actually writing it. So those of you who hate the fic, go blame him :D

Since I've pretty much rambled on and on, I'll just give here a quick "fact-file" about myself O\_o:

**Favorite games:**

FF7 without a doubt! Followed close by Xenogears (now THAT game outdoes any other RPG plot!) Vandal Hearts, Suikoden, Metal Gear Solid, Tomb Raider, Resident Evil, and the occasional fighting game (when I'm really pissed off >:D)

**Loves:**

Vincent, Vincent, and more Vincent ^O^ Business suits, trench coats, or cool uniforms (swoon) Men who are TRUE gentlemen. ~\_~ Raisins, Coconut Sorbet (YUM!), receiving mail (except flames ;\_~), long holidays, anime (Ruruni Kenshin!!), manga (Aah! I love "Blade of the Immortal!") playing RPGs, drawing, and of course, writing (well, I like to delude myself that I can draw and write >\_<)

**Hates:**

Ooh, I hate racism, sexism, fundamentalism (lotsa -isms); those slow people who walk in front of me when I'm in a hurry; exams; travelling on planes, Sadaam Hussein; and rice! (We ate rice all throughout the war...I've developed a strong aversion to it >\_<)

**Favorite Music:**

Garbage! No seriously, that's the band's name! Hmm, the Corrs, and my CD of Intro songs to anime shows ^\_^

What?! You're still here? Well, I guess that's all I could think of to say about myself. I really need to get a life, huh? -\_-"

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Some of Zahra's Non-FF7 Art



**exNihilo**



Zahra



Zahra



## Zahra's Interview

### A moment with the author...

This interview consists of ten questions and contains the details of Zahra's thoughts on her story, her motivations, and other backgrounds.

This has been copied and pasted word for word on her responses. Typos, if any, were the only thing edited.

### 1. When did you first start Snow Fields? (month/year, a time in your life that motivated you or held special meaning towards it?)

\*casts her mind waaay back\* I began "Snow Fields" in early January, 1998. I was so swept away by all these incredibly talented fanfic authors...I wished I could contribute too, no matter how crappy it was. Heh, actually, I owe it to my younger brother. On noticing how infatuated I was with Vincent, he jokingly suggested I write a fanfic just about him. At first, I thought: Nah! I can't write zilch, and I haven't even a plot! But my brother's words had already set my ideas in motion. Also, it so happened that I was re-reading "Crime & Punishment" and "Brothers Karamazov" (two excellent classics by Dostoyesky. Read them everyone! O\_O!) I was so intrigued by their theme, I decided to weave it into my fic. The whole concept of sin/crime, redemption and who deserves to be called "a monster" held such fascination for me (and still does!) And of course, cannot forget Queen Vera's Vincent Shrine, the mecca for all Vincent worshippers like myself. When I had written the first chapter, I immediately sent it to her.....must..pay..homage to..the great dark one @\_@

### 2. Approximately how long does each chapter take you to write?

Ah, heheh..well, it depends on many things -\_- My mood for one thing. I write less when I'm stressed or depressed, but boy-howdy! Do I write utter gibberish when I'm hyper \*chugs down her fifth cup of coffee\* O\_o The biggest factor, unfortunately, is university. It gobbles up so much of my time! But if all is reasonably well, then roughly it takes about a week.

### 3. Is FF7 your favorite game? Who's your favorite character?

Definitely!! And I still love it ^\_^\_^!! Vincent is my absolute favorite without contest. There's something (many, actually...heck! Everything!) that I find so..soooo... ^O^!!!! The dark aura his presence evokes; his tortured soul and obsession with guilt; the fact that he's a wicked gun-slinging, drop-dead gorgeous ex-Turk! (the perfect combination). Mind you, Aeris is tagging close behind. She's easily my favorite FF7 gal. Can't forget Rufus either (Mmmm..certainly can NOT O\_O)- heh! I have this "thing" for fine men in suits.

### 4. There were never any signs of a personal connection between Vincent and Aeris in the game. What made you choose to write about them in such a way?

'Cause I couldn't stand the idea of YUFFIE suiting Vincent! \*lol\* Nah, just kidding! ^\_^ I always thought they'd make an... interesting pair if circumstances were just right. In many ways, they are opposites that draw towards each other: Vincent is the evil demon with the bloody past. Aeris tries to provide some comfort; it's her innocence that makes the contrast interesting for me. She's always hounded by fear. And Vincent is so desperate to clear his conscience. It all came together. I dunno! I just liked the idea of Vincent and Aeris together.

### 5. There has always been controversy on the subject of your fic over whether or not Aeris and Vincent will get together as a couple. Can you give us any hints on what may happen? Do you actually intend to go deeper into their relationship?

Let's just say things might get interesting....for me. Mwahahahahah! >:D

### 6. What made you include the Turks in your story? Which is your favorite?

I love the Turks!! heheh, well besides that, they somehow got entangled in the plot while I was still making it up, and pretty much stuck there ^\_^ Now I can't think of any other way to have made the story without them in it. And it was inevitable: if I was going to include Rufus, the Turks just had to pop up somewhere. As for my favorite, well, it has to be Reno. Yeah, he's a slob and cocky cynic, but he's cool, and I guess he's got a good heart (er..as far as Turks go).

**7. Davoren is considered "arguably the coolest original character ever." (--GlassShard) Is he based on someone? Who?**

?!! Whoa!! That..heh..knocked me off guard (Thank you GlassShard! ^\_^) No, Davoren isn't based on anyone in particular. He's more like a mixture of several people, all rolled into one character: for one thing, he's based on my idea of a really good antagonist: intelligent, complex, and a tad insane @\_@ Some of his perspectives are my own, others are challenges to the generally-accepted views. I guess Davoren is also based a bit on my uncle. I didn't realize this until later: both of them smoke; both have a good sense of humour and can be quite pleasant, but God! I wouldn't want to get on their bad sides!

Just a piece of useless trivia: "Davoren" is an Irish name. I took it from a play by Sean O' Cassey called "Shadow of a Gunman" ^\_^

**8. Why did you decide to invent an original character?**

Alright! I confess! I had no intention of creating an original character until the last minute. First off, I couldn't hold the plot or theme together unless there was someone I had complete control over (ie. a character not in the game). Plus, I think an original character adds some more interest to a fic....there's somebody "new" to discover. I think the trick is not to add too many original characters. For me, I thought one was more than enough.

**9. Being a University student, how do you manage to keep this fanfiction in the making? Where and when do you find the time to continue your masterpiece?**

Beats me! :D (You'd think I'd know by now) I guess I just \*make\* time for it. Like any other hobby, I enjoy writing it (and hey, I haven't received too many flames yet) Granted at times, it's simply impossible to for me to write. If it's not college, then its some personal problem, exhaustion, or writer's block (urk >\_<) But usually I manage it somehow.

Heh..."masterpiece"? More like "Long monster-piece" ^\_^ But anyway, my best time to write is after dinner-time, in the warmth of my room, at the comfort of my messy desk (with a cool Garbage song in the background, but I digress).

**10. Snow Fields is such a success; do you intend on writing any other fanfictions in the future? If so, can you give us any hints?**

What, more torture?! ^\_^ Hm..I have been asked that before. As it stands now, I don't know. My only concern now is to finish "Snow Fields" and still hold whatever interest my few readers have (yes folks! It DOES have an ending...praise the lord! ~\_~) Somebody has suggested a sequel, but I sincerely doubt that. I may consider Xenogears later on, though. I was so immersed in its religious theme and all the different characters (not to mention the plot!) I won't do any FF8 fic, that's for sure. Yes, the graphics are purely stunning, but I still consider FF7 & Xenogears by far the best! (But that's my humble opinion, for all it's worth -\_-)