**A Vivid Experience – By Laura Elbazi – an excerpt**

*It all began when I was eleven years old. My mother and I had taken a vacation to Lebanon. My family and I lived with my father's side of the family. It was located in a charming village. My grandfather owned several acres of land behind the homes. It was like being in a hidden jungle. My uncles tried to take us to the creek on a scorching hot day almost three years ago. We had to walk through the forest for a long time to get to the creek.*

*“Come on, take a break from your game and join us!” My cousin grumbled.*

*But, as it turned out, I didn't want to go. Why should I bother? There were spiders, frogs, and a variety of other noxious creatures. In my cool air-conditioned bed, I was perfectly at ease playing my game. But no, my cousin had to complain.*

“Please, please, pretty please!” My cousin droned on and on. She shook me with her grip on my back. I became irritated.

“No, leave.” Smacking her in return, I said. I'll confess that I should've been kinder to her.

“Come on, Laura, get up.” I groaned when my uncle said, holding a shotgun. I looked at him warily.

"You never know what could creep up on you." He whispered more to the gun than me. I didn't want to irritate him, so I went.