

= Squall Leonhart =

Squall Leonhart ( Japanese : ????? ? ?????? , Hepburn : Suk?ru Reonh?to ) is a fictional character and the primary protagonist of Final Fantasy VIII , a role @-@ playing video game by Square ( now Square Enix ) . He was designed by Tetsuya Nomura , with input from game director Yoshinori Kitase . Squall has appeared in several other games , including Chocobo Racing , Itadaki Street Special , and the Kingdom Hearts series , as Leon ( ??? , Reon ) . His weapon , a gunblade , also appears in other works .

In Final Fantasy VIII , Squall is a 17 @-@ year @-@ old student at Balamb Garden , a prestigious military academy for elite mercenaries ( known as " SeeDs " ) . As the story progresses , Squall befriends Quistis Trepe , Zell Dincht , Selphie Tilmitt and Irvine Kinneas and falls in love with Rinoa Heartilly . These relationships , combined with the game 's plot , gradually change him from a loner to an open , caring person . Squall had a varied reaction from critics , with some judging him poorly compared to other Final Fantasy heroes ( due to his coldness and angst ) and others praising his character development .

= = Creation and design = =

The first character Nomura designed for Final Fantasy VIII , Squall was inspired by actor River Phoenix , although Nomura said that " [ n ] obody understood it . " Squall is 177 cm ( 5 ft 10 in ) tall , initially with longer hair and a more feminine appearance . After objections by game director Yoshinori Kitase , Nomura made the character more masculine . He added the scar across Squall 's brow and the bridge of his nose impulsively ( to make the character more recognizable ) , leaving the description of its origin up to scenario writer Kazushige Nojima . Nomura 's design of Squall included fur lining along his jacket collar as a challenge for the game 's full motion video designers . In Final Fantasy VIII Nojima worked to give players insight into what Squall was thinking , in contrast to Final Fantasy VII ( which encouraged players to speculate ) .

Nomura created Squall 's gunblade with silver accessories . The weapon is a sword with components of a revolver , sending vibrations through the blade when triggered ; this inflicts additional damage if the player presses the R1 trigger on the controller as Squall strikes an enemy . Although the weapon was intended as a novel way for players to control weapons in battle , Nomura said he feels ( in retrospect ) that it looks odd . Square 's Hiroki Chiba said that his favorite moment in the Final Fantasy franchise was when Squall and Rinoa embrace in space due to the use of Faye Wong 's " Eyes On Me " music in the background and having to work every frame to make it work .

= = Appearances = =

= = = Final Fantasy VIII = = =

At the beginning of Final Fantasy VIII , Squall is known as a " lone wolf " because he never shows his feelings and seems cold to his associates . His superiors ( such as teacher Quistis Trepe ) consider him difficult to deal with , but respect his talents . Squall is stoic , with his taciturn nature used for comic relief . In the cutscene where he meets Rinoa , she coerces him into dancing with her at the SeeD graduation party . Awkward and confused , he bumps into other party @-@ goers because he is looking at his feet . Rinoa perseveres , and Squall later reveals that he really can dance ( since it was a mandatory part of his training ) .

He is dragged into a heroic role when Cid , headmaster of Balamb Garden , appoints him leader of the academy midway through the game . During a late battle against Galbadia Garden , Squall has difficulty exhibiting leadership because of his lingering isolation . Although other characters try to pull him out of his shell and Rinoa Heartilly expends considerable energy pursuing him , it takes time for him to accept the others ' friendship , fall in love with Rinoa and care for her . Squall is more comfortable later in a leadership role , especially when he must fight Ultimecia .

Throughout the game , he has a rivalry with Seifer Almasy . The opening sequence features the duel where Squall receives his facial scar ( giving Seifer a mirror image ) , and scenes where Squall and Seifer are supposed to cooperate are characterized by squabbles between the cadets . Although Seifer later allies with the Sorceress ( requiring Squall to fight him several times ) , Squall still feels a camaraderie with him .

According to flashbacks during the game , Squall grew up in an orphanage with the other playable characters ( except Rinoa ) and it is implied that Laguna Loire is his father . On the airship Ragnarok late in the game , Kiro and Ward comment on Squall 's resemblance to his mother and dissimilarity to his father ( Nomura designed him to contrast with Laguna ) . The orphans were cared for by Edea ; although Squall remembers little about his past , he becomes an emotionally detached , cynical and introverted boy whose original goal is to go through life without any emotional ties or dependence . He gradually warms , and it is later revealed that his detachment from his companions is a defensive mechanism to protect himself from the emotional pain he suffered when he and his older sister were separated .

After Ultimecia is defeated , the time and space that she had absorbed begin to return to normal , pulling Squall 's comrades back into their places in the timeline , while Squall returns to the orphanage and meets a younger Edea . Since she does not want to involve the children , she absorbs the dying Ultimecia 's powers as part of the cycle of sorceresses ( a sorceress must pass her powers to a successor before she can die peacefully ) . Squall plants the ideas for Garden and SeeD in her mind , creating an origin paradox : Squall must become leader of Balamb Garden so he can pass its version of SeeD tradition to Edea , who teaches them to her husband Cid ( who co @-@ founds Balamb Garden , which admits Edea 's orphans ? including Squall ) .

= = = Other appearances = = =

Squall appears as a non @-@ playable character in Kingdom Hearts . He wears a short leather jacket with red wings on the back ( resembling the decorations on Rinoa 's duster ) and his Griever necklace . Squall takes the name Leon as an alias , because he was ashamed of not protecting those he loved from the Heartless when his home world ( the Radiant Garden ) was consumed by darkness . Leon is voiced by David Boreanaz in the English version of the game and Hideo Ishikawa in the Japanese version . His role in Kingdom Hearts is to help guide the protagonist , Sora , in his battle ( with other Final Fantasy characters ) against the Heartless . Although Squall 's appearance and age differ ( he is 25 in Kingdom Hearts and 17 in Final Fantasy VIII ) , his personality remains the same . A memory @-@ based version of Squall ( as Leon ) appears in Kingdom Hearts : Chain of Memories teaching gameplay in a tutorial . He returns in Kingdom Hearts II , voiced in the English version by Doug Erholtz . Erholtz said in an interview that he had a " fun journey " voicing Leon and it was a " really fun role to play " . Leon 's jacket later has a fur lining on its collar , which did not appear in the first Kingdom Hearts game . In this game , he works with his friends to restore their world . Squall also appears as an opponent in Olympus Coliseum tournaments , often paired with other Final Fantasy characters . His virtual replica appears in Kingdom Hearts coded , where it meets Sora 's virtual replica .

Squall is a secret character in Chocobo Racing and Itadaki Street Special , and a sprite version occasionally appears on the loading screen of the PlayStation version of Final Fantasy VI ( part of the Final Fantasy Anthology ) . He is the hero representing Final Fantasy VIII in Dissidia : Final Fantasy . Squall appears with the cast of the prequel Dissidia 012 Final Fantasy , where his Kingdom Hearts design is downloadable content . He is a playable character in Itadaki Street Portable and the main character , representing Final Fantasy VIII , in the rhythm games Theatrhythm Final Fantasy and Theatrhythm Final Fantasy : Curtain Call . Squall also appears as a premium character in Pictlogica Final Fantasy and Final Fantasy : All The Bravest both for Android and iOS .

= = Reception = =

Critical reaction to Squall was mixed . Journalist Jack Patrick Rodgers of PopMatters said that Squall 's cynicism and frustration with those around him made him a strong character , but " coldly inhuman " . GamesRadar called Squall the fifth @-@ best Final Fantasy hero of all time , praising the development of his personality and his improved interactions with other characters . GameZone rated him the fourth @-@ best character in the franchise , saying that while fans " either love or hate this guy " he became the " ultimate anti @-@ hero " ( despite little dialogue ) of an entertaining journey . The website called Squall and Rinoa the best couple created by Square Enix , noting the differences between them and the fact that their relationship was the first in the series to drive the plot of a game . They were on The Inquirer 's list of most @-@ memorable video @-@ game love teams , with comments again focused on the differences between them . GameSpot said that while Squall could be viewed as a " jerk " , he could also be seen as " standoffish because of some repressed Wagnerian broodiness , in which case he was kind of interesting " . Allgame said that they initially hated Squall , but although he originally seemed " cold and uncaring " , his romance changed him for the better . RPGamer called Squall " everyone 's favorite orphan " and said that although he tries to distance himself from others , " he can 't help but draw people to him , be it sorceresses or gun @-@ slinging ladies ' men " . GameDaily ranked him sixth on their list of the " Top 25 Gaming Hunks " , stating that while critics described the character as a " jerk " , his character design , notably his scar , made him visually appealing . Arnold Katayev of PSXextreme praised Squall 's redesign in Kingdom Hearts as the game 's best . In a 2008 Oricon poll , Squall was voted the tenth @-@ most @-@ popular video @-@ game character . He was voted the 29th @-@ best video @-@ game character by Famitsu readers in February 2010 .

However , IGN said that " the problem [ with Final Fantasy VIII ] is that the character at the heart of everything , Squall , is basically a pouty jerk ... When your story is character @-@ centered , you 'd better center it on a character the audience can care about . Squall ... just doesn 't fit the bill " . 1UP.com ranked Squall second on its list of the " Top 5 Most Irritating RPG Protagonists " and stated that although he was an attempt to " cater to the fedora @-@ wearing , trench @-@ coat @-@ clad folks " , his lack of social skills alienated players . Edge compared Squall unfavorably with Final Fantasy VII protagonist Cloud Strife , saying that Squall 's angst " didn 't seem to have any context " ( unlike Cloud 's , which developed from one of the pivotal events in Final Fantasy VII ) . His relationship with Rinoa was criticized by Edge : " He [ Squall ] suddenly falls in " love " with [ Rinoa ] at the end [ of Final Fantasy VIII ] . " In GamesRadar 's humorous " RPG Emo @-@ Off " , Squall was defeated in heartbreak by Cloud . Squall was featured in the 1UP.com article " Top 5 Final Fantasy Character Types " in the second category , " The Sullen Asshole " , with Cloud and Cecil from Final Fantasy IV . GameSpy featured him in its comical " Videogame Characters Who Would Suck in Real Life " , saying that in reality he would be a terrible soldier .