

Rory

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Rory wants to become a syari warrior. How far will she go and how much will she sacrifice to fulfill her life dream? (sry ppl this is the 1st time i've ever written a story so sry if its bad. I'll get better (i hope^-^) there'll b more chap...

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1 - Chapter 1

Rory impatiently pushed a stray strand of jet black hair out of her face. She glared at the bubbling pot that held mud-colored goo. "It's not working, it doesn't look right and-" she paused and scrunched up her nose, "-it smells like something died...oh wait that might be Robin" she grinned sweetly at her 9 year old sister. "That is so not funny! I do not smell. You're not exactly a basket of roses yourself." Robin scowled. A woman in her mid-thirties stepped into the room. "Rory! Robin! Don't start." She gave them a warning look. She peered into the pot at the bubbly mess. "Ree, you forgot the sugar." Rory moaned and banged her head on the table. A muffled reply came back "Why do I bother? I can't cook!" Robin looked at her sister with mock surprise. "You can't cook?! What do you mean you can't cook?!" Their mother chuckled, "Robin leave Rory's cooking alone." Rory scowled at both of them both. She got dressed for the cold and stomped out of the house. She wasn't about to stay and be made fun of.

Skating furiously around and around the pond was slowly venting out Rory's anger. Soon Rory was gliding along. Suddenly she heard a chuckle behind her. She spun around to face the voice and recognize her neighbor and friend, George. "You're only going to be out here a few minutes not a whole night." He indicated her layers of clothing. "You wouldn't know how long I'd be out here." Rory sniffed indignantly.

"I don't think you can move too well with all those layers on."

"Really..." A smile curved her lips. She leaned over scooped up some snow and lobbed it in his face. "See? I'm nice and warm *and* mobile," she smiled innocently and continued skating. Glancing over her shoulder, she could see where she had left George. She found that he had vanished. Hearing skates behind her she stopped abruptly. Not a good idea. With a crash, she and the other skater collided. Lying on her back, she looked up into a laughing face. "George! Get off me!" Rory gasped and tried to take a breath of air. "You're squishing me!" that made him laugh harder, but he untangled himself from her and stood up. When Rory was finally able to take deep breaths, she narrowed her green eyes. "Why are you at the pond?" She demanded. "Unless you enjoy banging into people and knocking the air out of them, which isn't a great-" She stopped short. George's smile was gone and replaced by an excited look. "What is it?" The answer she got surprised her.

"The Syari Masters are heading toward our village to pick out more boys for Syari. They-"

"-But wait aren't they supposed to come-"

"-Yea, I know. They're supposed to come next year. But they are coming! I couldn't wait to tell you."

Rory had never told George she wanted to be a Syari warrior but she wasn't entirely sure she wanted to.

"How did you know I'd be out here?" Rory looked at him.

George grinned "...Welllll...."

“Yes?”

“It's the morning and you normally try to cook breakfast.” She glared at George, he continued. “After that your sister normally makes some sort of joke and you storm out of the house and go skating.”

“You sure know my mornings.” Rory commented dryly. George grinned. “C'mon lets skate. I promise not to squash you this time.” They skated around the pond, slowly at first then faster. Rory sped up. “Race ya!” She called over her shoulder.

All of a sudden the ice under her broke through. Biting back a yell, she fell through the ice. Desperately she tried to swim to the surface. Her skates were pulling her down. Reaching down, she fumbled with the laces of her skates. Finally! They were off and she was plowing toward the surface. Fortunately, she hadn't moved far from the hole in the ice so she bobbed right up through the hole. Strong hands grabbed her arms and pulled her out of the icy water. She looked into the concerned face of George. His image started to swim. “Are you okay?” He asked anxiously. The words came from far away. “Yeah.” She replied weakly before the world spun and she slipped into a black void.

2 - Chapter 2

Rory woke up warm and could smell some herbs. Her eyelids fluttered open. Her mother... was standing with her back to Rory, tending the fire. "Good you're awake." Blinking, Rory wondered how she could tell she was awake. "How long have I been asleep?"

"4 days." Came the calm reply.

"4 days?!"

"Yes Rory. Four days. 1...2...3...4. You had a fever, but you're strong and recovered quickly. By the way, George came by a few times, wanting to see you."

"Is he okay? May I go see him? How many times is a few?" Rory asked all this in one breath.

"Slow down Rory. He came 3 times. And yes Rory, you may go see him, but not for too long. I think I'll want to keep you inside for a while. No more skating for a bit. We need to improve your cooking." Her mother replied. "And no `buts'."

Slowly Rory got dressed and went over to George's. He was happy to see her. "Hey Ree." George smiled, "How are you doing?" Rory smiled back. "Good, have the Syari warriors arrived yet?"

George shook his head. "Nay, they're 3 days away."

Rory sighed with relief. *Good I haven't missed them*, she thought.

"But—" Rory argued. "No buts. You're getting older, you're already 11 and you can't cook. You should already be able to cook and clean so—" Letting out an exasperated sigh, Rory rolled her eyes, "So when I get married, I'll be a good wife...I don't want to get married! I want to become a Syari warrior."

"Ree, only boys are Syari warriors. You'll change your mind when you get older."

"But—"

"Keep stirring and don't let that burn." Her mother instructed.

Just five days after Rory's dunking in the pond, and she was working double time.

As Robin and Rory were getting ready for bed they talked. "Hey Ree? Why do you want to be a Syari warrior so badly? That's what boys do." Robin wrinkled her nose

"That's just it," Rory said, "They've never given girls a chance. I bet we could do it better than some boys."

"But mother won't let you be one; she wants you to be a lady. A wife of an important person from our village."

"Well, I'm sorry but that is not going to happen." Rory stated firmly.

"We'll what can you do?" Robin looked at her sister and understood what she meant. Eyes wide, she gasped. "Ree, you wouldn't! You wouldn't run away!"

"I would," Rory replied grimly, "If I have to."

The next evening, after dinner, there was an excited knocking at the door. Robin answered it. A breathless boy from the village managed to gasp out, "They're here! They're here! The Syari Masters are here!" Heart thumping, Rory tried to conceal the eager grin that was spreading across her face. That night, she went to bed early. When she heard the steady, even breathing of her mother, she crept out of bed. Robin turned over and then all of a sudden sat straight up. "Ree?" Rory put a finger to her lips. "Are you leaving?" Rory nodded. "Now?" Rory shook her head. "I just have to gather up some things and cut my hair and I'll be off."

"Your hair?! But Ree, it's beautiful!" Came the fierce whisper. Robin paused then sighed. "Well if you must, I'll help you."

Robin helped Rory cut her hair. When she was finished, locks of shiny black hair lay on the floor. Rory went about collecting this and that. When she was finished she returned to where Robin was standing. Her eyes bright with tears, Rory hugged Robin tightly. "Goodbye Robin."

"G-goodbye Rory..." came the sniffled reply. Rory slipped out the door and was gone. Robin stood, rooted to the spot. She held up the black tresses against her cheek and let the tears come.

3 - Chapter 3

Rory opened her eyes a crack, but quickly shut them again. Why does Robin never remember to shut the window? It was freezing. Then she remembered, she wasn't at home, she was outside. She hears some murmuring above her head. "Shush! The lads sleeping!"

"No he's not, I just saw his eye flick open and he-" Rory's eyes snapped open and she sat up quickly. There was a small crowd of only 5 or 6 people gathered around her. "How was your sleep?" Rory winced. She was stiff all over. "Well that's what you get for sleeping on the cold hard ground."

A pretty brunette with dark brown eyes stepped forward. "What's your name?" Thinking quickly, Rory blurted out the first name that came to mind. "Alex!" The girl raised an eyebrow. "You have a last name?"

"Yes."

"...Well?"

"Jennings."

"Well Alex Jennings, I'm Melanie Woods. I'm assuming you're here because of the Syari training, no?" Rory nodded. Melanie led Rory away from the crowd of people and into a crowd of boys waiting. "There you go." Melanie walked briskly away. Rory looked around, she saw boys, *lots* of boys. Well what did she expect? Oh, someone was coming...

Recognizing George walking toward her, Rory's heart caught in her throat. George smiled that friendly grin of his. "ello there, the names George." Looking shyly up from the ground, Rory murmured in what she hoped was a boyish voice. "Alex."

"Quite the talker aren't you?" he chuckled. Rory smiled, then her smile slowly faded. George was looking at her in a peculiar way. "Do I know you?" he frowned "I swear I recognize that there face of yours..." he suddenly smiled. "Nah, I must be going nuts. You see for a second, I could of sworn on me mum's grave, that you remind me of a girl I know. Rory Tuthner. Do you know her?"

"I remind you of a girl?" George laughed. "Nay, that's not it..." He looked thoughtful. Rory decided to question further. "What's she like?" George looked up and grinned, "Oh, she's my best friend." He paused. "Pretty too, thinking on it, green eyes, black hair... Are you sure I don't know you? You have those green eyes..." He smiled. "Sorry mate, once I find something, I Can't rest `til I figure it out. Oh yea, Rory, let's see... she's funny..." George kept talking but Rory didn't hear him.

Her pretty?

A gruff voice interrupted her thoughts, "Boys! Straight line! Heads high!" There was a scramble as all the boys tried to get into a line. The man shook his head with amusement and walked back to a group of 3 or 4 men. Preferring not to be run over by a bunch of boys, Rory picked her way, slowly, to the end of the line. She didn't see George anywhere. All of a sudden Rory was roughly pushed from behind and fell. She wiped the mud off her face and heard a sneering voice. "Well, well, well. The country hick can't keep himself out of the mud." The boy's followers though few, laughed. Rory felt her temper flare. Who was this? Who pushed people into mud because he thought himself of higher class?

She flew at him, fists flying. With satisfaction, she felt her fists connect with her target. Unfortunately, she was out numbered. The boy's goons dragged her off him. She felt hard blows fall on her all over. "That's enough...for now." The boy leered at her with a bloodied lip and a bruise forming on his cheek, "My name is Oliver. From now on, you will do whatever I ask, *whenever* I ask. You-

"I'd rather eat a worm." She spat. "I would *never* and will never take orders from a *mere child*." She put extra emphasis on her last words. His eyes narrowed. "A mere- *what?*"

"Did I stutter?"

Pure hatred came into his eyes. While she was held down, he kicked her again and again. She winced as his blows fell on already forming bruises. "Hurts does it?" he sneered. "Enough." An unfamiliar voice said the word with disgust. "You take pleasure beating up people held down? You coward." Oliver cringed and managed to squeak out. "N-no." The stranger raised an eyebrow. "No?"

"No sir!"

"Get out of my sight." The stranger watched Oliver run off, then turned and offered a hand to Rory. His warm, honey colored eyes were questioning. "Are you okay?"

"Yes sir!" she responded quickly. The stranger laughed. "No need for that. My names Chance. That's what my friends call me. Others just call me sir as you've seen." He chuckled.

Just then an old lady came walking around. "Have you by any chance seen a young lady? About this high," she indicated with her hands, "and thin. Pretty little thing. `er name's Rory? Rory Tuthner? Has a scar on her collarbone shaped like an X." then she whispered, "Just between you and me, she got that from her dad she did. Abusive guy, finally left the family afore she turned three."

Chance shook his head. "Sorry ma'am can't say I have." The lady toddled away to ask some other people. Rory sighed inwardly. She had always wondered where she had gotten the scar. Her mother had refused to tell her, now she knew why. George raced up to her. "Alex, that was my friend! The one she was talking about!" With that he took off again in pursuit of the old lady for more information.

Again, Chance started talking, as if the interruption from the lady hadn't happened. "I'm guessing your names Alex?" He smiled. She nodded. "Well Alex, Oliver is a pigheaded nuisance. He is stronger than you, but I agree with you he can act like a child. Some in his presence can say they feel like eating dirt." He winked and Rory flushed. "We'll put him in his place. Oh how rude of me-" he hit himself on the head. He indicated to different boys. "That is Paul," he pointed to a lean and tall boy. "Kris." Kris was a stocky boy, but a bit taller than Paul. "Briar," he nodded toward a boy who reminded her of one of Oliver's followers. "Case you haven't noticed, Briar's twin is for some reason one of Oliver's worshippers." Briar grimaced. "Which is no fault of yours. Must `ave gotten all the smarts." Chance said to Briar. The boy smiled slightly. "Peter," he looked toward a quiet boy. "And last and most certainly least, Noah." Noah glared mockingly at Chance. "Just joshing with you mate." Chance grinned innocently and Rory laughed.

4 - Chapter 4

Rory quickly glanced at Chance. He had strong features, a straight nose, honey colored eyes, brown hair, and a strong set jaw. He was handsome, *very* handsome. "Why does everyone listen to him like that? She asked Paul. He looked surprised. "You don't know? Chance is the son of the Duke of Tarnchester." Duke?! It was Rory's turn to be surprised. She was now friends with a *duke*?

All of a sudden, a hush went through the long line of boys. Rory looked up and saw the Syari masters. They started down the line, looking each and every boy in the eyes. Those who winced or looked away were left standing there. Seeing them come to George, she held her breath. Yes! They all nodded and motioned to the small group of boys they had decided on. There went Chance, Paul, Noah, Peter, Briar, Kris... With disgust, she realized they had picked Oliver. She took comfort in the fact they hesitated with him before nodding. She grinned when she realized one of his followers didn't get picked.

All too soon, they came to her. As they looked into her eyes, she stared back into theirs. Rory felt pain, war, death of loved ones, the satisfaction of saving a life and many other emotions. She grit her teeth and kept looking. Finally after what seemed forever of staring, they nodded their heads, without hesitation. She smirked toward Oliver, then walked toward the group of her new friends.

Hands patted her on the back. Warm smiles greeted her. "Well done!" George said. Heat rushed to her face. "Thanks." The Syari Masters returned to the group. "Walk." They commanded. Rory wasn't the only one who groaned quietly. This was going to be a *long* afternoon. By the time they had gotten to their first campsite, everyone was, with an exception to the Syari Masters, exhausted. To add insult to injury, they then had to gather firewood. Oliver passed her and stuck out his foot. "Whoops." he said sarcastically. Rory went sprawling dropping all her wood. Struggling to keep her temper under control, she bent to pick up the many pieces of firewood she had dropped. She heard Oliver take off suddenly and then there was someone helping her pick up the wood. It was Briar. She smiled gratefully. "Thanks."

"Not a problem. He can really be an @\$\$. "

"Did he ever pick on you?"

“Did he ever?” Briar laughed. “My brother was friends with him. Of course he picked on me.”

“That stinks.”

“Yea. But after I broke his arm he left me alone.” Revealing white teeth, Briar smiled. “Don't worry, Alex, that fellow won't hurt you with us around. He wouldn't dare.”

“I can take care of myself.” She was indignant. She could fight her own fights.

“You can against him. But you against all his goons? Not a chance. No offense but you *are* tiny Alex.” Rory smiled. “I know. But let him try to pick on me by himself.”

When all the boys got back, their next task was to start a fire. Rory jumped right in to do it since she had to do it so many times at home, Oliver bumped into her. Briar and Chance exchanged a knowing glance. Not wanting to take that, especially from him, Rory tripped him. “Whoops, ever so sorry old bean.” Stepping over him and flashing a false smile in his direction, she helped start the fire.

Later on they all sat around the fire and had a light dinner. After a while, Rory struggled to stay awake. While getting ready for bed, her shirt neck slightly slipped, revealing her scar. She glanced around to see if anyone saw. Horror embedded itself deep in the pit of her stomach. Chance was staring at her.

5 - Chapter 5

Just as the sun was coming up, the Syari masters came from boy to boy, dumping water on their heads. The yelps quickly woke Rory. Alas, they were 5 seconds to late. Icy water was dumped unceremoniously, on her head. She shot up, right away wishing she hadn't. The muscles in her calves were tight and sore. She winced as she stretched her legs out. Slowly the pain dulled to an aching throb. Rory noticed Syari Master after Syari Master with determined expressions, walking to and fro from a mat with buckets after buckets of water. She tried to suppress her amusement when she realized that the tousled, wet head belonged to none other than George. Seeming oblivious, George slept on. Finally, the problem was solved. A small yet nimble boy captured a squirrel and let it loose in George's blankets while the Syari Masters where preoccupied. With a yell, George abandoned the warmth and comfort of his blankets.

Seeing George again she grinned. He was muttering about the injustice of it all. She slid into the empty space next to him, just as Chance started to walk toward her. Rory had been avoiding Chance for the whole morning walk. "Sleep well?" she asked innocently. George glared and all of a sudden grinned. Splat. Rory tripped over his outstretched foot and landed in a large bank of snow. "Hey!" she gasped out. Laughing George reached out a hand to help her up. Taking his hand, she tugged, hard. With a thud, he fell into the space next to her. "Blimey! It's cold!!"

"You did it first." Sticking out her tongue, Rory stood up and brushed off her clothes. A hand spun her around. "Hey there." It was Chance. Rory looked at him and forced a smile, not knowing what to expect. Fortunately- "You had to drag poor squirrel boy with you?"

Rory grinned. "He did it first."

"And now I bet he dearly regrets it."

"Exactly."

She fell into stride next to him. "Poor squirrel boy. This morning, then this." Chance chuckled. Rory laughed and opened her mouth to reply. "All of you keep walking! Silence!" The rest of the walk was a quiet one. Rory was bored. And her muscles in her legs still ached from yesterday. *Well I suppose that's what I get for staying inside and trying to cook all the time. My legs aren't used to this.* After it was late in the evening and it was getting dark out and they *still* hadn't stopped. Rory was walking, but she was half-sleeping too. She stumbled for what must have been the hundredth time that day and kept going. Suddenly she felt warm hands pick her up. "Hey!"

"Shhh. It's too dark for anyone to notice and you *will* bang into a tree one of these minutes." Chance

whispered. "But everyone else is walking I can too."

"Too bad you can't say that and then look in front of you and see all the receding backs of everyone." Chance laughed. "Wha?" Rory looked ahead. "Oh geez. They're far ahead."

"Yes, exactly why I point out. You are tired and I truly believe are going to take out a tree one of these stumbles." Rory scowled "I *can* do it." No way *would Oliver* beat her. Speeding up her pace, she soon caught up with the other boys. Many of them looked like she felt. Many of them were stumbling. Looking around, Rory almost laughed out loud. Oliver was being carried. Looked like he twisted his ankle. Glad to know, she wasn't doing worse than him, she smiled contentedly and settled into the pace of everyone around her. Soon, though not nearly soon enough in Rory's opinion they stopped. She was exhausted. And, they still had to build a fire and eat. Like zombies, all the boys went into the surrounding woods to look for firewood. Sooner than she expected, they had enough firewood and built the fire. They ate quickly and then it was time to go to sleep. All the boys were only too happy to comply. Everyone fell onto their mats and were out instantly. Rory was no different.