

## Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings 1896 - 1953

Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings was an American author who lived in rural Florida and wrote novels with rural themes and settings. Her best-known work, *The Yearling*, about a boy who adopts an orphaned fawn, won a Pulitzer Prize for fiction in 1939 and was later made into a movie of the same title, *The Yearling*. The book was written long before the concept of young-adult fiction, but is now commonly included in teen-reading lists.

([https://www.goodreads.com/author/show/46158.Marjorie\\_Kinnan\\_Rawlings](https://www.goodreads.com/author/show/46158.Marjorie_Kinnan_Rawlings))

### *The Yearling*: Chapter VIII

Jody clicked the gate behind him. The unmistakable smell of roasting meat filled the air. He ran around the side of the cabin. Resentment was mixed with his eagerness. Resisting the open kitchen door, he hurried to his father. Penny stepped out of the smoke-house and hailed him.

The truth, a tangled pain and pleasure, was before him. A large deer hide was stretched on the smoke-house wall.

Jody wailed, "You been huntin' and didn't wait on me." He stamped his foot. "I ain't never goin' to leave you go off without me agin."

"Easy, son, 'till you hear. Be proud things come so bountiful."

His wrath cooled. Curiosity bubbled like a spring.

"Tell me quick, Pa, how come."

Penny sat down on his heels in the sand. Jody dropped flat beside him.

"A buck, Jody. I near about run him down."

Again he was furious.

"Why'n't it wait 'till I got home?"

"Didn't you pleasure yourself at the Forresters? You can't git all your 'coons up one tree."

"Hit could of waited. They ain't never enough time. Hit go too fast."

Penny laughed.

"Well, son, you nor me nor no man, ain't never yit learnt to halt it."

"Were the buck runnin'?"

"Jody, I'll declare. I ain't never had meat stand and wait for me, the way that buck stood in the road. He didn't pay the horse no mind. Jest stood there. My first thought was, 'Tarnation, and me with no shells to my new gun.' Then I unbreeched the gun and looked in, and bless Heaven, I mought o' knowed a Forrester would have ary gun full-loaded. There was two shells in the gun, and there stood the buck, jest waitin'. I cracked down and he dropped. Right in the road, handy as a sack o' meal. I h'isted him over

old Cæsar's rump and away we goed. Tell you what come to me. 'Me bringin' in venison,' I figgered, 'Ma won't crawl me for leavin' Jody with Fodder-wing.'"

"What did she say when she seed the new gun and the meat?"

"She said, 'If 'twas anybody but a honest fool like you, I'd swear you'd been out thievin'.'"

They chuckled together. The odors from the kitchen were savory. The hours with the Forresters were forgotten. There was no reality but the day's dinner. Jody went into the kitchen.

"Hey, Ma. I'm home."

"Well, must I laugh or cry?"

Her ample figure was bent over the hearth. The day was warm and sweat ran down her heavy neck.

"We got us a shootin' Pa, ain't we, Ma?"

"Yes, and a good thing, too, with you off all the time."

"Ma—"

"What is it?"

"We eatin' venison today?"

She turned from the fire.

"Merciful Heaven, don't you ever think o' nothin' but your empty belly?"

"You cook venison so good, Ma."

She was mollified.

"We eatin' it today. I was feared it'd not keep, and the weather warm."

"The liver'll not keep, neither."

"Well, for pity's sake, we can't eat ever'thing to oncet. If you'll fill my wood-box this evenin', could be we'd eat liver tonight."

He prowled among the dishes.

"Git outen my kitchen, lessen you want to torment me to death. Then what'd you do for dinner?"

"I'd cook it."

"Yes, you and the dogs."

He ran out of the house to his father.

"How's old Julia?"

It seemed to him he had been away a week.

"Doin' fine. Give her a month, and she'll have ol' Slewfoot hollerin'."

"Is the Forresters aimin' to he'p us hunt him?"

"We never come to no agreement. I'd rather they hunted their way and leave me hunt mine. I don't much care who gits him, long as we keep him offen our stock."

"Pa, I never told you. I was scairt when the dogs was fightin' him. I was too scairt even to run."

"Hit didn't pleasure me none, neither, when I found I didn't have me a gun."

"But you told it to the Forresters like as if we was mighty bold-hearted."

"Well, son, that's what makes a tale."

Jody examined the deer hide. It was large and handsome, red with spring. The game seemed for him to be two different animals. On the chase, it was the quarry. He wanted only to see it fall. When it lay dead and bleeding, he was sickened and sorry. His heart ached over the mangled death. Then when it was cut into portions, and dried and salted and smoked; or boiled or baked or fried in the savory kitchen or roasted over the camp-fire, it was only meat, like bacon, and his mouth watered at its goodness. He wondered by what alchemy it was changed, so that what sickened him one hour, maddened him with hunger, the next. It seemed as though there were either two different animals or two different boys.

The hides did not change. They kept their aliveness. Whenever he stepped with bare feet on the soft deer-skin beside his bed, he half expected to feel it start under him. Penny, small body though he was, had a scattering of black hair across his thin chest. As a boy, he had slept naked in winter in a bear-skin, with the fur next to him. Ma Baxter said he had grown hair on his chest from so sleeping. It was her joke, but Jody half believed it.

The clearing was filled as abundantly as the Forresters'. His mother had ground the slaughtered sow into sausage. Stuffed casings hung in the smoke-house. A slow hickory fire smoked under them. Penny left his work to drop a few chips of wood on the smoldering embers.

Jody said, "Must I chop wood or finish hoein' the corn?"

"Now, Jody, you know good and well I couldn't let the weeds take the corn. I finished the hoein'. Wood's the thing."

He was glad to go to the wood-pile, for if he did not do something to occupy his mind, hunger would force him to gnaw the dogs' alligator meat or pick up the chickens' scraps of cornbread. The time went slowly at first, and he was tormented with the desire to follow his father's activities. Then Penny disappeared in the mule lot and Jody swung the axe without distraction. He carried an armful of wood to his mother as an excuse to see how dinner was progressing. He was relieved to see it on the table. She was pouring the coffee.

"Call your Pa," she said. "And wash them turrible hands. I'll guarantee you ain't touched water since you left home."

Penny came at last. The ham of venison filled the center of the table. He drew his carving knife with maddening deliberation across the meat.

Jody said, "I'm so hongry, my belly thinks my throat is cut."

Penny laid down the knife and looked at him.

Ma Baxter said, "Now if that ain't a purty somethin' to say. Where'd you learn to say that?"

"Well, that's what the Forresters say."

"I knowed it. That's the kind o' thing you learn o' them low-down rascals."

"They ain't low-down, Ma."

"Ever' one of 'em's lower'n a doodle-bug. And black-hearted to boot."

"They ain't black-hearted. They're purely friendly. Ma, they fiddle and play and sing better'n the fiddlers' convention. We was up long before day, singin', and frolickin'. It was fine."

"That's all right if they got nothin' better to do."

Meat was before them, piled high on the plates. The Baxters fell to.