

A Wayne Scott • LifeHouse Production



An Original Adaptation with
Script and Lyrics by
JANE CASON

Music by
DUSTIN CEITHAMER

Inspired by the Biblical book of Ruth

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CAST OF CHARACTERS

(In Order of Appearance)

Ruth	Faithful young woman
Elemilech	Man of Bethlehem
Young Mahlon	
	His boys
Young Chillion	
Naomi	Their mother
Boaz	Master of the fields
Head Servant	Boaz's trusted assistant
Mahlon	Outgoing young man
Chillon	His brother
Orpah	Chillion's wife
Closest Kinsman	Relative of Naomi

(These names represent at least one speaking line)

Daniel	Matthias	Benjamin
Salmon	Samuel	Matthew
Seth	Simeon	Judah
Rachael	Elizabeth	Miriam
Sarah		

**Reapers, Shop Keepers, Female Gleaners, Boaz's Household Servants, Wesley Merchants
Bethlehem Town Folk, Moab Merchants, Moab Dancing Girls, Bethlehem Gossips**

"THE STORY OF RUTH"
By Jane Cason and Dustin Ceithamer

SYNOPSIS OF SONGS

ACT I

Overture

1. "We Grow Children in Bethlehem"..... Townfolk of Bethlehem
2. "Fill Our Tables".....Boaz, Unnamed Servant, Men
3. "Opportunity in Moab".....Merchants of Moab
4. "Do You Remember?".....Elimelech and Naomi
5. "The Storm".....Orpah, Naomi, and Ruth
6. "Let Your God Be My God".....Ruth and Naomi
7. "Is this Naomi?".....Townfolk of Bethlehem, Naomi
8. "Sabbath Song".....Families of Bethlehem, Ruth and Naomi, Boaz and Unnamed Servant
9. "I Will Sing".....Ruth, Boaz, Unnamed Servant, Women, and Reapers

ACT II

Overture

10. "I Will Sing" (Reprise).....Ruth
11. "The Lord, The Lord Our God".....Ruth and the Women, Boaz, Unnamed Servant, and the Reapers
12. "Threshing Floor/ Sleep Song".....Boaz, Unnamed Servant and Men
13. "Aaronic Blessing".....Men, Servant Boaz, Naomi, and Ruth
14. "Face to Face".....Boaz and Ruth
15. "Wedding Song" ("Face to Face" Reprise).....Boaz and Ruth
16. "Pentecost Celebration".....Town Ensemble

"The Story of Ruth"

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ACT I

Overture

SCENE 1: IN RUTH'S HOME WITH BOAZ

(The stage opens with a bassinet from which we hear soft cries. The adult Ruth appears and lifts the child from his basket and begins to soothe him with her words)

Ruth Ohhh hush! You mustn't cry "little one" or you will wake the whole house. And worst of all you will wake your grandmother, she has promised to sleep in this morning. Think of how she fusses over you all the day, *you* know she needs her sleep. Hush now, yes that's good, hush, and I will tell you a story so wonderful you will fall back asleep and dream of the Author of all our stories. Listen now. Before you were even a hope or a dream, the Holy One knit together the lives of two women. Yes Bubby. I am talking of your Grandmother and myself. You see, there was a very difficult time when Grandmother Naomi felt that the Holy One caused her waters to go bitter. She felt He was punishing her but, Bubby the Holy One only chastens those He loves. As for me, my son, great affliction swept my soul as well, *but*, it was during this most painful time of my life that I first heard the Holy One say, "Drink," "Drink Freely. . ."

(As Ruth walks with the baby the bassinet becomes a work surface behind them for Naomi's mixing bowls. A table and chairs are set for the boys and Elimelech. Ruth will wander into their scene unnoticed to finish her scene)

Ruth A long time ago your grandmother lived here, in this house. She was married to grandfather Elimelech.... *(As she tells the story she walks into the scene and watches for a short time, kissing Naomi on the cheek before she leaves, and showing the baby to little Mahlon)*

SCENE 2: ELIMELECH'S HOUSE IN BETHLEHEM

(Elimelech is reading the Torah at a wood table with small benches for his boys and a chair for himself. The boys' backs are to the audience as they are sitting across from their father who is reading Torah to them. Naomi is seen across the room busily mixing and kneading bread. She is wearing an apron and there is flour flying about her small work area)

Elimelech And Moses went up into the Mount....

Young Chillion Mt Sinai, right Abba?

Elim /Naomi Yes. *(Naomi who is not a part of the lesson has answered with her husband and now turns away sheepishly)*

Elimelech You are correct my son. *(Shifting his eyes playfully to Naomi and then back to the boys)*. And the glory of the Lord abode upon Mt. Sinai, and the clouds covered it six days, and on the seventh day He called unto Moses from the midst of the cloud...

Young Chillion Did Father Moshe *really* hear the Holy One's voice?

Elimelech So the Torah tells us and the Torah is truth my son. *(Continuing)* And the sight of the glory of the Lord was like a consuming fire on the top of the mount in the eyes of the children of Israel. So Moses went up into the mountain. And Moses was on the mountain forty days---- and forty nights. *(Naomi becomes enraptured by the words of Torah and sings them as Elimelech reads. She can sing along with the underscore. Singing joyously she throws up her floured hands and begins to dance. The boys and Elimelech stop and stare bursting into grins. As awareness returns,*

Naomi realizes she is caught and begins to stomp her foot in an effort to playfully convince the three that she was not dancing, but stomping on a mouse)

- Naomi** I, I thought I saw a mouse.
- Elimelech** *(To boys)* I should like to meet so brave a mouse as to approach my wife, Mother Naomi, near her mixing bowls. I think no mouse so brave could be found in all of Bethlehem, Judah! *(Boys smile)* Worry not my dear; I am quite certain your dancing has frightened the poor creature away!! *(The boys giggle and knee slap as Naomi waves them all off dismissivel.)*
- Elimelech** Now sons, a wise man honors his mother and does not laugh at her, *(Boys straighten up)* even if she invites the mice to join her, in her dance of praise. *(The boys cover their mouths to stifle their giggles)*
- Young Chillion** Mimi is a lot like Miriam, Abba. She led all Israel in songs of praise beside the Red Sea!!
- Elimelech** Your mother *is* like Miriam my son, and I am blessed among men.
- Young Mahlon** I'm going to marry Mimi when I become a man!
- Young Chillion** You can't marry your own mother.
- Elimelech** Chillion is right Mahlon; it would leave your father broken hearted.
- Young Mahlon** Oh, don't worry Abba, I will wait until you are dead!
- Elimelech** Stop, please, all this kindness is killing me now. Let us return to our study, yes. The Lord spake unto Moses saying, "Speak unto the children of Israel, that they may bring Me an offering of every man, that giveth it willingly with his heart you shall take My offering. And this is the offering that you shall take of them: gold, and silver, and brass, and blue scarlet and purple threads with fine linen....." *(Naomi is again softly humming and swaying with her eyes closed. She is mouthing the words as Elimelech reads and when he gets to the words "And let them make Me a Sanctuary that I may dwell among them." She joins him singing at full volume completely lost in the moment and unaware of her surroundings)*
- Elim/Naomi** And let them make Me a Sanctuary; that I may dwell among them. *(Naomi opens one eye and realizes she has again been "caught" by the three who are watching her)*
- Elimelech** What do you say my sons, should we let her join us, she is already wiser than ten men?
- Boys** Yes, yes, come sit Mimi.....We love when you sit with us...Please....
- Young Mahlon** Brains, beauty, and she can milk a goat!
- Naomi** Enough of your flattery! *(Grabs a bucket)* Today you *(To Chillion)* will milk our goat. *(Kisses his head)*
- Young Chillion** Yes Mimi. You can't blame me for trying! *(Runs off)*
- Naomi** And you will go about your business so I can get our bread baked! *(Elimelech kisses his wife and starts to leave)* Dearest...
- Elimelech** Oiy!
- Naomi** Stop with your, "Oiy!". When you return the scroll, you *will* find out all you can about the journey, and the city, and the soil. The conditions of the soil are of utmost importance and *(Being interrupted by Elimelech's embrace)*...and the opportunities. *(Trails off)*
- Elimelech** I will ask a hundred questions!
- Naomi** And then when you....
- Elimelech** And then I will ask a hundred more!!! *(He hugs her and leaves)*
- Young Mahlon** Mimi, I finished pulling the weeds before our lesson, may I feed the birds now?
- Naomi** Yes, Bubby you may, but when you see the sun behind the trees, you must stop and fetch water for the house.
- Young Mahlon** Of course Mimi; I want to get some fresh water for my birds as well. *(Starts to walk off, but turns back with a thought)* Mimi, Abba told us Jerusalem is the gateway to Heaven, and all the birds stop there, to sing songs in Jerusalem's trees, to the Holy One.
- Naomi** Such music! I should like to sing with them.
- Young Mahlon** Me too! And I have thought of walking there myself and camping in the trees right next to them someday!
- Naomi** *(Naomi is at first laughing but, then expresses concern.)* Now Mahlon, you would never walk there yourself the road is dangerous for a child alone.
- Young Mahlon** I know Mimi...I'll wait till I'm older, besides I love it with you here in Bethlehem.
- Naomi** Camp in the trees with the birds..huh! He could have been a good friend to Father Noah!

SCENE 3: BETHLEHEM MARKETPLACE

SONG: "WE GROW CHILDREN IN BETHLEHEM"

Townfolk (All)	We grow children in Bethlehem Best of blessings priceless gems Matters not, smart, or dumb as posts We love to brag and boast
Individual 1	I understand others are proud when their children do well
Townfolk (All)	But my little darlings never cease to excel
Farmer's Wife	I've got a pain in my head And a cough with a hack
Farmer	I'm losing my hair and well my wife wants it back But, my little girl, what a beauty
Both	She can milk a cow faster than lightning But the way she plucks a chicken is downright frightening!
Strong Man's Father	My back aches and the pain gets worse with each passing day If it weren't for my son, I couldn't harvest my hay His arms are like plows and his legs like trees All the girls think he's the honey, and they are the bees
Townfolk (All)	We grow children in Bethlehem Best of blessings and priceless gems Matters not, smart- or dumb as posts We love to brag and boast
Individual 2	I understand others are proud when their children do well
Townfolk (All)	But my little darlings never cease to excel
Bookworm's Father	My wife can nag just by giving that look So my son has learned to keep his nose in his books Trying to keep her from starting to holler Has made my boy quite the scholar!
Chatty Wife	My husband complains when nothing is wrong
Grumpy Husband	My wife, she can talk all the day long
Both	But my daughter, she's beautiful with raven hair And look at those teeth, they're all still there!
Townfolk (All)	We grow children in Bethlehem Best of blessings priceless gems Matters not, smart- or dumb as posts We love to brag and boast
Bookworm's Father	I understand others are proud when their children do well
Townfolk (All)	But my little darlings never cease to excel
Individual 1	I don't mean to brag but my son has excellent aim And I believe it is a pretty fair claim To say that he is the best of hunters
Individual 3	Fine for you to say, but a stew needs some spice To eat meat alone just wouldn't suffice I would say my son's the best of all farmers I would say that my son is the best of all charmers
Strong Man's Father	
I-4	We would never complain even though we could
Strong Man's Father	The truth is our fields; well they're not looking so good
I-5	The plants are dying without reason or rhyme
I-4	There hasn't been rain for a very long time
Farmer's Wife	Now, now, be still, and hold your tongue Remember that our greatest resource is our young!

Townfolk (All) We would never brag
And we really needn't boast
But of all His children
The Holy One blessed mine MOST!!!

SCENE 4: BOAZ WITH TOWN MEN AND HIS SERVANT (NEAR HIS HOME IN BETHLEHEM)

Boaz The town is operating as though everything is fine, but all too soon we will all be starving to death.

U Servant The Lord is trying to get our attention; shouldn't we give it to Him?

Samuel (*Pushing the servant out of his path he speaks to the others*) My fields are dry and the plants are withering at their roots. The storehouses are nearly empty and the rodents are going to destroy what is left. I have no hope. I am completely...

Matthew Out of ideas!

Joseph Out of options!

Samuel Broken.

Boaz Samuel, friends, if you would be willing to have your men join with mine we could form chains from the wells to our fields. We can't water them all, but perhaps portions so that we might be able to save enough grain for the families of the city.

Matthew Our backs will be broken before the smallest portions are watered.

Boaz But our tables will have bread. Shall we meet at sunrise? (*The men show their agreement with their body language and chatter. Boaz shakes a few hands he softly sends them off with words like: "Thank you!" and "The Holy One bless you my friend", and "Shalom". The men respond and exit*)

Boaz (Calling off.) You won't regret this! (Turning to the U. Servant) Well, that went well. Would you walk with me my friend?

U Servant Yes, Master Boaz. If a man did not know how serious this situation was, he could read the whole story on your face

Boaz Am I that transparent? Before the men assembled I was praying. The others are troubled because they fear their tables will be empty, I am troubled because *my table* is a quiet place. The good part about not having a wife all these years is that no one, except you, has seen me in my times of faithless grief.

U Servant You grieve for our people, for Israel, because of the dryness of our fields.

Boaz The fields yes, but more so for the dryness of our hearts.

U Servant So many people are talking about leaving. Rumors have spread of opportunities in foreign cities. Elimelech has already packed up his family and begun his journey toward Moab.

Boaz So, it is good to hear that I am not the only man who struggles with waiting on the Holy One.

U Servant You have not packed your household sir.

Boaz I have nothing *but* a household. Perhaps if I had a family, I too would be tempted to flee. I must remember that the Lord is good, in times of plenty and in times of want. I wish my heart would be ever willing to wait on Him and not search for my own answers.

U Servant The men of the city are saying it is easy for a man of wealth, such as yourself, with storehouses that are filled with grain, to wait and trust. The time to celebrate the harvest is fast approaching and they are wondering if there will be even one bag of grain to celebrate.

Boaz They think this is all so easy for me; I am rebuked by my own foolishness. I too, am guilty of thinking there is nothing to celebrate. Yes, yes, my barns are full,-- but my table needs only *one chair*. Will you pray with me friend. I must remember to be thankful for all the riches the Lord has bestowed and not bemoan what I what I feel is missing.

SONG: "FILL OUR TABLES WITH YOUR PRESENCE LORD"

Boaz Fill this empty vessel with the oil of Your presence, Lord
Quench my thirst; You are the only One
Pour me out that I might find some worth
Only speak my name and call me son

Servant Bring us back to the ways of the Fathers

Both O Great Teacher, teach these truths to our sons and daughters
Wash us clean from all iniquity that we might grieve You no more
And with the songs of redemption ***praise You as we did before.

All Males Fill our tables with Your Presence Lord
Meet us in the places that we dwell, that we dwell
Your word feeds us; Your ways are sweet
Tip Your cup toward our parched lips
That we might again proclaim Your goodness in our streets

Boaz Pour me out that I might find some worth
Only ***speak my name and call me ***son

*(*** Add in male chorus for selected harmony.)*

SCENE 5: MOAB TOWN SQUARE

(Young Mahlon runs on and looks back calling to his family, he is shortly joined by his brother Chillion and eventually his parents. They are talking as they approach the city square)

Young Mahlon Hurry Papa. Hurry Mimi, it's just a little farther.
Young Chillion Look Papa, it's Moab! I think there must be a thousand people just in the square.
Naomi Soon a thousand and four and I hope they don't all smell like we do.
Elimelech Naomi my wife, we smell like hope. *(Kissing her on top of her head)*
Naomi Boys, your father is delirious from the desert sun.

SONG: "OPPORTUNITY IN MOAB"

All (Townfolk) Moab, Moab

Weaselly Merchant Opportunity is what we need
Untouched purses to gently lead
Look strangers approach the square
The gods have quickly answered our prayer

All (Townfolk) In Moab, Moab
Welcome to our community
No one has immunity
You'll soon be catching opportunity
It's for sale right here
In Moab, Moab

Weaselly Merchant Ahhhh, come this way; you look so confused
We have wares both new and used
Take a look around; enjoy what you see
The first glance is practically free!

All (Townfolk) In Moab, Moab
Welcome to our community
No one has immunity
You'll soon be catching opportunity
It's for sale right here
In Moab, Moab

Weaselly Merchant If you've no silver in your purse
We can put the boys to work

Two strong backs will bring a good wage
And they look to be just the right age

All (Townfolk)

In Moab, Moab

Two younger men

(Leading Chillion to the dancing girls)

In Moab the nights can be cold
And warmth and comfort from what we've been told
Can be found, if that's what you seek
Over here, now take a peek

(Music underscore continues during the following:)

(Chillion watches the dancing girls as the merchants badger Elimelech and Naomi in pantomime. During this musical interlude we see Mahlon make friends with Ruth)

Young Ruth

You should tell your brother not to listen to those boys.

Young Mahlon

Oh yeah, Pipsqueak! How did you know he was my brother?

Young Ruth

Easy, you both dress like, well, like your father.

Young Mahlon

Look, I found a cricket. Shalom! My name is Mahlon.

Young Ruth

Hello. My name is not Shalom, it's Ruth. I have a pet frog. *(She pulls it from her clothing and they begin to compare pets until..)* Isn't he a handsome frog? And look, he's smiling.

Young Mahlon

Hey, your frog ate my cricket!

Young Ruth

I'm sorry. *(Protecting her frog)* He was only doing what the gods created him to do.

Young Mahlon

My father says there is only one true God. *(Hands on hips and a bit upset)*

Young Ruth

How strange. Please don't be angry, we could look for another cricket, if you want, and maybe some flies for my frog?

Young Mahlon

(Softening) I like you Ruth!

Young Ruth

You're looking at me like my frog looked at your cricket. *(Young Ruth and Mahlon run off with Ruth turning a cartwheel)*

(Song resumes:)

All

In Moab, Moab

Vender 1

Pick your idols copper or gold
Just about everything is sold

Vender 2

Right here on our city streets
And the prices, they can't be beat

(Elimelech and Naomi go off to get settled. The adult Ruth and Mahlon appear. She cartwheels again and he chases her. She pulls her frog from her pocket and..)

Weaselly Merchant

But Children grow so very fast
Don't dwell too long on the past
What's done is done, there's no retreat
Your children have bought into our deceit

Select Voices

In Moab, Moab
Moab, Moab

SCENE 6: RUTH AND MAHLON (MOAB)

(Mahlon is chasing Ruth who is now backed into a corner and is playfully trying to escape; the two are in a two step kind of face off)

Mahlon

Finally I have you where I want you!

Ruth

Mahlon, why are you always chasing me?

Mahlon

Because, I haven't caught you yet!

Ruth

I cannot believe you threw pebbles at me in the temple to get my attention. The

Mahlon gods may forgive you, but I could never!
 You know I would never go in there. Besides, what were you doing in there?
Ruth You weren't praying were you?
 Praying, not exactly. I left an offering. I overheard the priest tell my mother
 it would help the men who are sick. And I tried to pray, but I was really only daydreaming.
Mahlon Dreaming that the wormy priest with the wart on the end of his chin would fall in love with you?
(Now, a little hurt, she lunges at him but she is overcome by his strength and he slings her over his shoulder)
Ruth Put me down you giant bully. Oh, if I were only taller. *(She pounds on his back)*
Mahlon I won't put you down until you admit I'm your friend.
Ruth A "friend" would not. . . alright, yes, yes, you are my friend.
Mahlon And am I the best?
Ruth Of all my friends, you are the, the. . . fastest and strongest!
Mahlon *(Putting Ruth down)* All your friends? How many friends do you have?
Ruth Oh I don't know, a few.
Mahlon A FEW?
Ruth Dozens really!
Mahlon How many of these friends end up in your dreams at night?
Ruth *(Lifts her brow coyly)* Just one. . . *(Mahlon smiles)*. . . but, I always wake
 up frightened by the wart on his face!! *(They both giggle)*
Mahlon Tell me about your dreams.
Ruth I don't know. I dream about the things all girls, I mean *people* dream.
Mahlon You sell yourself short Ruth; you are *not* like other girls...
Ruth What do you mean?
Mahlon Your mother wants you to be a proper lady, so you wait till she is not looking and turn cartwheels
 in the street.
Ruth Well, being proper and doing all that is expected has not made my mother a happy woman.
Mahlon Are you happy Ruth?
Ruth As happy as one can be! Do you pretend to have the reigns of happiness in your grasp?
Mahlon *(Very purposefully and sweetly takes hold of Ruth's forearms sliding down to her hands)* Almost....
(He leans in to kiss Ruth)
Ruth No, we mustn't. *(Ruth puts her hand up to stop the kiss)* My mother says that once one crosses
 over to well, such things, that they can never again be just friends.
Mahlon *(Tips Ruth's chin up, kisses her, and then speaks)* I have been trying to put an end to this
 friendship for years. Ruth, will you be my wife?
Ruth Only if I can also be your friend. *(Mahlon twirls her and as they are about to kiss again they are
 interrupted by a frantic Chillion and Orpah)*
Chillion Mahlon! Mahlon, *(Now seeing him)* Orpah and I have been looking for you everywhere! It's
 Father, his fever is worse than ever. We need to go now! Ruth, will you go with my wife to try to
 get some medicine? Mimi thought maybe your mother could help.
Orpah There's nothing left, the whole town is dying.
Ruth *(Grabs her hand trying to reassure her)* We will do our best.
Chillion Hurry please, I beg you! Mahlon, we have to go now. *(The men exit in a hurry. Ruth and Orpah
 start to exit but stop for a quick hug, and then rejoin hands and run off in the opposite direction
 that the men exited)*
Ruth Orpah, did Mimi ask for anything specific?

SCENE 7: ELIMELECH'S HOME (MOAB)

Naomi I sent Chillion and Orpah to town for medicine quite a while ago, and I can't imagine what is
 keeping them. I'm going to have to go myself. I know medicine will get us through this terrible
 mess. *(Starting to cry she rings out a cloth in water and puts it on his forehead)* There are doctors
 and medicine here in Moab...everything, anyone could want or need. Not at all like Bethlehem.
Elimelech *Not at all like Bethlehem. (Spoken fondly)* Do you remember the town square just before the
 Shabbat?
Naomi Everyone in such a hurry, running from this shop to that.... *(Suddenly feeling a renewed urgency)* I
 need to go and find you some medicine.
Elimelech No. Don't leave me! Please. I just want to talk. I miss the way we use to sit and talk....

Naomi

Now, we hardly could have raised our boys into men if we had sat and talked our lives away....

SONG: "DO YOU REMEMBER?"

Elimelech

I remember the stars in your eyes as they caught the twinkle of our Sabbath candles

Naomi

I remember the boys, they were anxious, ready to jump out of their sandals.

Elimelech

Do you remember?

Naomi

I remember

Elimelech

Do you remember?

Naomi

I remember

Elimelech

I remember you in your garden working for hours

Naomi

So you remember the beauty of my vegetables and flowers?

Elimelech

I remember

Naomi

Do you remember?

Elimelech

I remember

Naomi

Do you remember?

Elimelech

I remember

Elimelech

Do you remember the fields and the hills and how the sunsets set them all afire?

Naomi

I remember, I remember watching those sunsets at the end of the day, dreaming till we tired

Elimelech

Do you remember?

Naomi

I remember

Elimelech

Do you remember?

Naomi

I remember

Naomi

Do you remember how good it was to have family close?

Elimelech

It's the nearness to our places of worship that I miss most

(Spoken over music)

Naomi

Do you not remember that we prayed before we left?

Elimelech

Mimi, we prayed yes, *but*, not "Should we go?" only "When should we go, now or later?"

Naomi

Surely the Holy One would not punish an honest mistake?

Elimelech

I have asked Him to forgive.

(Singing resumes)

Elimelech

Do you remember when our bodies were as young as we felt?

Naomi

I remember the way you still make me melt

Elimelech

Do you remember?

Naomi

I remember

Elimelech

Do you remember?

Naomi

I remember

Elimelech

I remember His promises, I remember His mercy

Naomi

I do too

Elimelech

Do you remember His goodness? Do you remember His goodness?

Naomi

I do

Elimelech

Do you remember?

Naomi

I remember

Elimelech

Do you remember?

Naomi

I remember . . .

Elimelech

I remember living life with you

Naomi

I remember living life with you

Elimelech

I loved living life with . . .

(During the song the sons come in to the room, followed by Orpah and Ruth. At the end of the song Elimelech dies and grief fills the room. A very dramatic underscore begins which in and of itself demonstrates the grief and heartache. Naomi collapses in her grief and the others though helpless do their best to comfort her.)

Naomi (Weeping) No. No, please no. Show me mercy, take me instead! (Two men enter and carry Elimelech's body out the door. They are stopped by a sobbing Naomi who removes the shawl from her own shoulders and drapes Elimelech's head just before kissing him one last time. A choreographed demonstration will conclude this scene, moved along by an underscore. We will watch the two sons handing their wives a bouquet of flowers. Both women will slip a veil, similar to the shawl Naomi put on Elimelech's face, onto their own heads. Holding the flowers with the veils on their heads we will sense their weddings. Naomi will kiss one bride and then the other and exit. The couples will take hands to dance, but each man one at a time will fall to the floor. First Orpah then Ruth will cover her husband with her veil just before they are carried off the stage. The underscore will also allow Orpah and Ruth to join Naomi at the gravesides. Ruth will hand Naomi a single flower from her bouquet which she will lay on Elimelech's grave. Orpah and Ruth will both lay their bouquets on the grave of their husband. The underscore will transition into the song "The Storm". Three stones mark the places where the men lay. Ruth kneels beside one grave as Orpah and Naomi stand behind her to comfort her. Naomi walks off by herself and starts the song)

SCENE 8: THE STORM (MOAB GRAVEYARD)

SONG: "THE STORM"

Naomi
I felt his gaze from across the room
I felt his children playing in my womb
I'd awake when I felt his breath on my skin
But I don't ever want to feel again
But I don't ever want to feel again

Orpah
My eyes were glued to yours as we spoke our vows
There is nothing left but pain for me now
Naomi & Orpah
Your love and attention gave me my sense of worth
Such hopes now lay buried beneath the earth

Naomi (Sung simultaneously with Orpah)
Emptiness aches and I long not to feel
Wisdom puts me past hoping these wounds will heal
Even a painful death would be a gift
How did I break anchor, why am I adrift?
And I cannot remember the color of your eyes

Orpah (Sung simultaneously with Naomi)
Once upon a time my dreams had wings
Of giving life to sons, princes and kings

Trio
Barrenness is my only prize
I cannot remember the color of your eyes

Ruth
No one is left, three good men have died
Priests could offer no help, no hope
There was no loose end to be tied
With hints of needed offering they whispered promises untrue
But winds greater than their words sent these storms through

(All three sing simultaneously:)

Ruth
Now I'm caught in this raging storm
Will I ever again be safe and warm
Tears cloud my vision, my soul sees no path
Where will I find an end to your wrath
Where will we find an end to your wrath

Orpah
Now I'm caught in this raging storm
Will I ever again be safe and warm
Tears cloud my vision, my soul sees no path
Where will we find an end to your wrath

Naomi

Now I am caught in this raging

storm

Will I ever again be safe and warm

Tears cloud my vision, my soul sees no path
Where will I find an end to your wrath

Where will I find an end to your
wrath Where will we find an end to your wrath

Ruth I never wanted to feel like this
Orpah I only want to feel His kiss
Naomi I never want to feel again
Orpah Take away this heaviness and then
Ruth Let me find shelter as before
Naomi If I must feel, then I ask, let me feel Your presence once more.

SCENE 9: A DESERT PATH LEADING TO BETHLEHEM

Naomi *(After finishing her graveside lament she walks to her two daughters-in-law)*
Daughters, Orpah, Ruth, I, I must say goodbye. I am returning to Bethlehem. It is where I need to be. You must both go, return each to her mother's house. The Lord deal kindly with you, as you have dealt with the dead, and with me. *(Tears, hugs, deep embraces..)* The Lord grant you rest, each of you, in the house of her husband. *(More tears etc)*

Ruth Surely you understand, we will return with you to your people.
Orpah It is too dangerous a journey for you alone.
Naomi I am not frightened. Death would be a gift. *(Orpah softly moans and wails at this comment)* I have nothing here, and I have nothing to lose. Turn back precious daughters, why would I have you go with me? How I wish for your sakes that I had other sons to marry you and give you the children you deserve. But there are no sons in my womb. And even if there were, would you be so crazy as to wait for them to grow to be men? Nay, my daughters, you are young and beautiful and husbands will find you. *(More tears and kisses Orpah is clinging to Naomi's neck, but Ruth is kneeling at her feet and clinging to her legs. Naomi pulls her mouth away from Orpah's neck to say..)* It grieves me so much for your sakes that the hand of the Lord is gone out against me. *(A final kiss and Orpah runs off weeping, but Ruth is still at her feet clinging)* Ruth, let me kiss you one last time, Little Bird. *(Naomi bends down trying to urge Ruth to stand)*

Ruth No Mimi, I will not kiss you goodbye, you are my family— I too am empty, except for you.
Naomi Your sister-in-law is wise, she has gone back to her people, *(Trails off)* and unto her gods....
Ruth Do not labor, trying to convince me to go home, my home is with you.
Naomi Hear me please and consider reason. I have nothing. My hands are empty, so is my stomach, and my heart *(sobs)* is broken.

Ruth I have taken everything into careful consideration, I have seen in you, *(Beat)* even now, see more in your heart than I have seen in all the city of Moab. I have watched you when you did not know anyone was watching. I have seen you speaking to your God. Mimi, you know Him. Your heart may be broken, but it is not empty.

SONG: "LET YOUR GOD BE MY GOD"

Ruth Open your eyes
Try if you can
To see past these present tears
Remember again
The faithfulness of years
Consider the heavens, look at the sky
Labor for a moment to count the stars
Realize that His presence is much stronger
Than this present pain of ours
(Music continues as underscore:)

Naomi We have nothing in common Ruth, You are a "princess" from the city of Moab and I am a Jew. You are young, a hungry little sparrow, and I am an old crow.

Ruth Nothing in common. We have both lost our husbands! You have lost the fruit of your womb, and I will never know that joy. We share a common thread, the common thread of suffering. Have we not both shaken our fists and screamed with hot tears into this very night sky? Are we not both asking the same question?— "Why"? At the final moments, did you not try to bargain with God to take your life instead? We've been crying the same tears and praying the same prayers. The only difference is that the gods of Moab mocked my pain with their usual silence, and on them I will never again waste my breath.

(Song continues :)

Ruth We've asked the same questions
Proposed similar plans
But the end of our story is not in our hands

Naomi *(spoken under music)* Child that's what I'm trying to tell you. Ruth listen....
Once again you've taken threads of agony to Your Master's loom
And His weaving is leading
Yes, His weaving is leading you home

Ruth *(spoken under music)* Mimi listen to me.
Now if these be the very last words that I speak

Naomi *(spoken under music)* Shh shhh shhh.
His covering is all that I seek.
Where you go, I'll go too
Where you live, I'll live with you
Let your God be my God, teach me His ways
Let your people be my people all of my days
Let your people be my people all of my days
Help me to walk the path He's planned
Show me how to grab hold of His holy hand
(Musical interlude as underscore:)

Ruth I love you Mimi. . . One God, one heart, one people, where you die, I will die.

Naomi Ruth, it could be on this journey, I could easily. . . .

Ruth Then together we will be, *(Beat)* in life, or death. The Lord our God do so to me, and more, if anything but death parts us.

(Song concludes :)

Ruth Now if these be the very last words that I speak
His covering is all I seek
Where you go, *I'll go too *(*Naomi answers:)*
Where you live, *I'll live with you
Let your God be my God
I'll teach you His ways

Naomi Let your people be my people *all of our days

Ruth

Both Where you go, I'll go too
Where you live, I'll live with you
Let your God be my God, teach me His ways
Let your people be my people all of my days
Help us to walk the path He's planned
Show me how to grab Your holy hand

Naomi Alright daughter we'll go together, alright alright..

SCENE 10: BOAZ AND SERVANT (BETHLEHEM)

U Servant Master Boaz, I was able to hire all the extra men we will need to complete the harvesting. And they are all fine men. Today I saw so many of them putting their hearts and backs into the barley harvest and I'm quite certain their zeal will continue until the wheat is brought to the winnowing floor.

Boaz That is great news. The Lord brought us through the famine and soon our storehouses will be filled to the roofs once again!

U Servant This seems crazy to say, but as I walk the streets I have such a great sense of the Holy One's presence.

Boaz Not crazy at all friend. I feel it too. The Lord has indeed visited and given us this bread. There is joy in the air. But, I am forever grateful for the lessons that He taught me in the lean years. Come, there's work and I need your help...

SCENE 11: FINISHING THE JOURNEY (TO BETHLEHEM)

Naomi By the looks of those hills I would say we are getting close. I don't believe that we made it. We're half starved.

Ruth For food yes, but not for conversation. I am feasting with all those stories from the Torah.

Naomi I need to sit . . .

Ruth Of course mother! Rest, the end is in sight. *(Ruth tears her belt and begins to bandage Naomi's foot, unwrapping an old bandage first)*

Naomi May I have the water.

Ruth I am afraid ..it's all (gone)...

Naomi I'm not really, I was going to wash... Across those hills we will find God's provision for the unfortunate! *(Ruth looks up from bandaging with a questioning face)* One of the commands of holiness . . . "When you reap of your land, you shall not wholly reap the corners of the field, nor shall you gather every grape nor glean the vine. You shall leave them for the stranger and the poor." You are definitely a stranger to Bethlehem, and together we couldn't be any poorer if we tried! Oww! *(Naomi winces as Ruth puts her sandal back on her foot)* I don't remember the blisters the last time *(Naomi stands emotionally breaking with the reminder)* I made this journey, but that was ten years ago and things were different then. *(Naomi's voice cracks with emotion)* I wish I had better stories to tell. I wish my own story were different.

Ruth Will this always be so painful?

Naomi I think . . . It doesn't matter what I think. Men we have loved are gone. That will not change even if I cry my life away.

Ruth *(In an effort to return to more positive conversation)* Mimi, tell me more, I have so much to learn. Mahlon began to speak the words of Torah, that he had "hidden in his heart long ago". *(Spoken as if remembering Mahlon's words)* He started to do this more and more after Father Elimelech died, and well, before he himself. . . *(Naomi shakes her head knowingly)*. Whenever I heard the words, there was a stirring in my belly. I even thought, *hoped* that perhaps I was with child. I loved those days; I felt such, such . . .

Naomi Life, Little Bird.

Ruth Yes, life! Mahlon even said to me once, "Ruth, I pray that someday, you grow to be as wise as my mother."

Naomi Shhhhhhh, *(Now speaking directly to God)* Holy One she is young and foolish. She did not mean to say such things out loud, only grant Most High to make her wiser than her teacher!!

Ruth Mimi, Mahlon told me that Father Elimelech used to say that you were wiser than ten men.

Naomi Oh wise Naomi . . . *(Starts a very emotional tirade)* Nags her husband until he gives in. Talks him into leaving, our people, the nearness of our places of worship, our happy home to go to Moab! I had heard there were such opportunities there. Do you know what Bethlehem means in our tongue, Ruth? *(Ruth shakes her head indicating she does not)* House of Bread. Wise Naomi led her family out of the House of Bread, the place of praise, into Moab, the place of death. I felt something was missing. I thought I was empty. Now, I know what emptiness is. No Ruth, I am a fool.

Ruth A wise woman repents of her foolish deeds and walks on.

Naomi *(Naomi unclenches her fists)* You see, *(Looking up to heaven)* already wiser than her teacher. Ruth, it is not so easy to “walk on” when you know the cause of your suffering is your own . . . fault

Ruth *(Interrupting)* How did Father Elimelech and the boys come to call you Mimi?

Naomi Well that was the fault of my own stubborn husband!! Chillion was a baby beginning to speak his first little words. I began to worry. He would hear his father call me Naomi and say it too, and in Bethlehem this would be a scandal! I asked Elimelech to call me Ima so that the baby would learn to say it as well. The obstinate, hard headed son of Israel refused, “You may be my son’s mother, but Naomi, you are always going to be my bride.”

Ruth Naomi means pleasant, yes?

Naomi *(Skirting the subject quickly says)* Yes.

Ruth I still do not understand, why did they call you Mimi?

Naomi Because NA OO ME is too difficult for a small child to say, but Mimi *(Demonstrates facially the frantic hungry expression of a child.)* mi mi mi mi . . .rolls right off a hungry boy’s tongue. *(Both laugh)*

Ruth Why do you call me Little Bird?

Naomi I will save that story for some other day, I see Bethlehem ahead; we will soon be inside the city, and I need just a little time with my thoughts, to prepare.

SCENE 12: BETHLEHEM MARKETPLACE TOWN SQUARE

Man 1 Shabbat Shalom!

Man 2 Shabbat Shalom, to you, good neighbor.

Woman 1 How is the fish today? How does he smell?

Fish Man Not very well. I am afraid he is dead and can smell no more.

Woman 2 I need a small bag of salt.

Salt vendor I need a big bag of money.

Woman 3 Have you any oil for my lamp?

Woman 4 These figs are as dry as the desert. Don't you have anything that is fresh?

Fruit Vendor You've been complaining to me for twenty years. I'll get fresh figs when you get a fresh angle!!!!

SONG: “IS THIS NAOMI?”

Gossip 1 Is this Naomi? *(To those around)* Why, isn't this pleasant
Your absence has caused quite a stir
Gone for what was it? *(Men only)* Ten Years
The details, they're all just a blur.

All There are those in this world
Who will never be content with what they have at home
Always in search of gold
But end up all alone
Now I don't mean to be critical
It's just that it's common, predictable and typical
Oh, it's typical, common, foreseeable, predictable, oh oh

Gossip 2 Is this Naomi? Why isn't this pleasant
My, how your boys must be grown
Naomi My sons are not here, they are both dead
Gossip 2 Oh, I'm sorry, I couldn't have known

All There are those in this world
Who will never be content with what they have at home
Always in search of gold
But end up all alone
Now I don't mean to be critical
It's just that it's common, predictable and typical

Oh, it's typical, common, foreseeable, predictable, oh oh

Gossip 3 Is this Naomi? Why isn't this pleasant
You really must stop by for tea

Naomi We're not yet settled

Gossip 3 Isn't it like her to always disagree! (*Spoken to those nearby*)

All Oh, it's typical, common, foreseeable, predictable and . . .
Typical
Oh, it's typical, common, foreseeable, predictable, and . . .
Typical

Gossip 4 Is this Naomi? Why isn't this pleasant,
I absolutely love your new coat

Gossip 5 How was your journey?

Gossip 4 You could have dropped us a note

All There are those in this world
Who will never be content with what they have at
home Always in search of gold
But end up all alone
Now I don't mean to be critical
It's just that it's common, predictable and typical
Oh, it's typical, common, foreseeable, predictable, and . . .
Typical

Townsperson Naomi, Naomi?
(*Shouting to Naomi over music*)

Naomi No, no, I am not Naomi. Call me Mara! My life is filled with only bitterness, so call me as such, call me MARA. (*Weeping*) Please, call me Naomi no more. (*Suddenly you can hear a pin drop as the crowd and vendors all begin to disperse; for Shabbat is fast approaching*)

Ruth Mimi, you mustn't let their words shake you

Naomi I am fine Little Bird. I am reminded of what I missed about Bethlehem. (*Ruth looks quizzically*) The women, they stir up my anger, and that stirs up my faith! Now, where to lay our heads? (*Seeing a familiar face she speaks but is shunned.*) Deborah...Shalom, (*After a moment of grief she gathers her strength.*) We must sit at the feet of the Holy One, Ruth, and pray for a place to lay our tired bodies, it is nearly Sabbath. (*They kneel to pray*)

U Servant Shabbat Shalom!

Ruth & Naomi Shabbat Shalom!

U Servant You are sojourners in Bethlehem, yes?

Naomi Praying here. (*Spoken in an irked fashion under her breath.*)

Ruth My mother, Naomi and I have returned after a long time away.

U Servant The sun is low in the sky. There is a tent at the edge of the city. It is close to the fields and I know the man who owns it, you may stay there if you wish. (*Naomi gasps*) If you will allow me to rush off, I will do my best to get there ahead of you, so that I might put some water and bread and a few things inside for you.

Naomi (*Choked with emotion*) Oh praise be to the Lord Most High! (*Now regaining composure*) May the Lord bless You for your kindness to those in need.

U Servant The Lord bless you! Indeed, He is worthy to be praised! (*Servant hurries off*)

Ruth I cannot believe it, we had only begun to pray.

Naomi The Lord had two choices, stop the sun from setting or answer our prayer, either way, He is good!!!

SCENE 13: BETHLEHEM FAMILY HOMES

(Ruth and Naomi hurry to the shelter as a Sabbath song is heard being sung throughout Bethlehem. Ruth and Naomi will light the candles left for them and we will see vignettes of families celebrating the Sabbath across the city)

SONG: “SABBATH SONG”

U Servant Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy
Six days shall thou labor and do all thy work
But the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God

Selected Voice Blessed are You, Lord our God
King of the universe,
Who has made us holy through His commandments
And commanded us to kindle the Sabbath light?

Matriarch/ U Servant Barukh atah Adonai El oheinu
Melekh ha’olam
Asher kid’shanu bumitzvotav
V’tzizanu l’hadlik ner shel shabbat

Naomi & Ruth *(Naomi and Ruth sing separately in “rounds”)*
Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy
Six days shall thou labor and do all thy work
But the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God

Chorus 1 & 2 *(Chorus 1 and 2 sing separately in “rounds”)*
Blessed are You, Lord our God
King of the universe
Who has made us holy through His commandments
And commanded us to kindle the Sabbath light?

Chorus 1 *(Sung in “rounds”)*
Blessed are You, Lord our God
King of the universe
Who has made us holy through His commandments
And commanded us to kindle the Sabbath light?

Chorus 2
*Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy
Six days shall thou labor and do all thy work
But the seventh day is the Sabbath of the
Lord thy God*

Ruth & Naomi *(Sung as echo to the above verse)*
Blessed are You, Lord our God
King of the universe
Who has made us holy through His commandments
And commanded us to kindle the Sabbath light?

U Servant Barukh atah Adonai El oheinu
Melekh ha’olam
Asher kid’shanu bumitzvotav
V’tzizanu l’hadlik ner shel shabbat

Chorus 1 & 2 Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy
Six days shall thou labor and do all thy work
But the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God

Ruth, Naomi, Boaz Blessed are You, Lord our God
King of the universe

Who has made us holy through His commandments
And commanded us to kindle the Sabbath light?

All GOD!

SCENE 14: RUTH AND NAOMI'S SHELTER THE DAY AFTER SABBATH

Ruth Hello Sleepy! I should think yesterday's Sabbath rest would have helped you to rise early this morning,
Naomi *(Feeling the need to excuse her late awakening)* Now, now, the sun has only begun to peek its head.
Ruth And I am only teasing. *(Kisses her)* I wish you would sleep even more. Mimi, while I was walking to fetch us more water I could see miles of fields, ripe and beautiful. Let me go and glean heads of grain, after him, in whose sight I may find favor.
Naomi I fear for you my Little Bird. You too need more rest, but, I'm afraid we have very few options. Go my Daughter, and may God be with you! *(Ruth kisses Naomi's head, grabs a shawl, ties it around her waist, and runs out the door. She gives a final look back blowing Naomi a kiss in her joy and Naomi waves her away...when Ruth is out of sight Naomi catches her kiss in her hand and lovingly lays it on her own cheek)*

SCENE 15: IN BOAZ' FIELDS AND HOME

(Ruth is diligently picking the barley and the head servant comes near to speak)

U Servant Have you no basket or sack in which to gather?
Ruth I am afraid I came to the fields early this morning in earnest.
U. Servant You and your mother, we spoke just before Shabbat, did we not?
Ruth Oh yes, forgive me! The sun is so bright I did not recognize you, though I should have recognized the kindness in your voice. I am Ruth, and my mother-in-law is Naomi, wife of Elimelech. I was married to her son Mahlon, but he and her son Chillion, and Father Elimelech are all buried now, in Moab.
U Servant You have both known much suffering, yet the Lord has allowed you comfort in one another's company.
Ruth She is my family sir. And now, I pray thee, let me glean and gather after your reapers; we need not much to sustain ourselves.
U Servant You must first grant me my requests young maiden. Stop a while, and rest in the house, for I fear you are not accustomed to Bethlehem's sun. Then, when you return I am quite certain that my master would wish you to use this basket, so that you do not lose the grain you are working so hard to gather.
Ruth Thank you for such kindness sir, I will do as you have asked. *(Ruth runs off crossing Boaz)*
Boaz *(Approaches his head servant and greets him)* The Lord is with You Friend!
U Servant The Lord Bless Thee!
Daniel *(Seeing Master Boaz, stops to greet him)* Master Boaz, Shalom!
Boaz Shalom Daniel, how is the family?
Daniel All are well!
Boaz And the baby? Is he as beautiful as his mother?
Daniel But of course, we serve a merciful God. You can hardly tell he is mine, except, *(Lifts his hat and reveals his bald head)* we are both bald!
Male Reapers *(All on stage notice Boaz and give some greeting..)* Shalom
Master Good to see you Master. Welcome to the harvest.....
Boaz *(Speaking to all)* The Lord be with you in your work!
All Reapers And may the Lord bless thee!
Boaz I will join you as soon as I see to a few duties in the house. Shalom!
All Reapers Shalom!

(Boaz waves and walks off toward house where he stumbles on Ruth who is standing at his desk reading from an open scroll of Torah. Boaz stops short and secretly watches this unknown woman.)

Boaz will watch Ruth gently touch the scroll, mouth the words, and then repeat them to herself as if trying to memorize. She will then start to sing)

SONG: "I WILL SING"

Ruth

I have never known a harder labor
I have never felt greater rest
My days are suddenly sweeter
When I'm standing under your holiness

(Musical interlude- Ruth returns to the fields)

I have never known a harder labor
Yet I have never felt greater rest
My days are suddenly sweeter
When I'm mindful that I'm standing under your holiness—

I will sing, I will dance, I'll exalt, lift my hands
Build a sanctuary for You.
Build a sanctuary
Sanctuary for You
Come and dwell with me.

(During Musical interlude Ruth sets down basket and begins to dance while being observed by Boaz)

Boaz

Whose maiden is this?

U Servant

Her name is Ruth. She is a Moabite woman and the daughter-in-law of Naomi. The two have just returned to Bethlehem after enduring tragedy after tragedy. Naomi suffered the loss of her whole household but this young woman has clung to her like she was her own flesh and blood. She begged me to allow her to glean in the fields after our reapers. She has worked from early morning until now with much earnest. It was only at my insisting upon it that she rested for a short while in the house.

Boaz

She is the daughter-in-law of Naomi?

U Servant

Yes. *(Servant pauses to check his Master's interest level)* But, herself also a widow as I said, *(Beat)* Naomi suffered the loss of her whole household.

Boaz

The maiden is so small. After such a day's work she must be so, hungry! *(Staring intently at Ruth)*

U Servant

I see more hunger in your eyes.

Boaz

(Finally taking his eyes off her to acknowledge his servant) I am sorry my friend, I missed what you said.

U Servant

Uh huh, I said....She's tired too, look how she sighs!!!

(Song continues :)

Ruth

I will sing, I will dance, I'll exalt, lift my hands
Build a sanctuary for You
Build a sanctuary
Sanctuary for You
Come and dwell with me
With me

*(**Selected female voices
join in and pepper the
song with 'oohs and ahhs')*

The sky, the stars, the earth, the trees
Even the wind carries Your Name **on the breeze
Open my eyes that I might see
Much more of, of your Majesty

Ruth

I will sing, I will dance, I'll exalt, lift my hands

Boaz *(As countermelody to Ruth:)*

And I will sing

Build a sanctuary for You
Build a sanctuary
Sanctuary for You
Come and dwell with me
I will sing, I will dance, I'll exalt, lift my hands
Build a sanctuary for You
Build a sanctuary
Sanctuary for You
Come and dwell with me

I will dance
I'll exalt, raise my hands
I will sing
I will dance
I'll exalt Thee

(Key change:)

Ruth

I will sing, I will dance, I'll exalt, lift my hands
Build a sanctuary for You
Build a sanctuary
Sanctuary for You
Come and dwell with me—
I will sing, I will dance, I'll exalt, lift my hands
Build a sanctuary for You
Build a sanctuary
Sanctuary for You
Come and dwell with me, come dwell with me,
Come dwell with me, come dwell with me, with me

Boaz *(As countermelody to Ruth)*

And I will sing
I will dance
I'll exalt Thee—
I will sing
I will dance
I'll exalt Thee
Come dwell with me
Come dwell with me
Come dwell with me

U Servant *(As countermelody to
Ruth & Boaz for
key change:)*

And I will sing
And I will dance
And I'll exalt Thee—
And I will sing
And I will dance
And I'll exalt Thee
Come dwell with me, come dwell with me, come dwell with me

Chorus

I will sing, I will dance, I'll exalt, lift my hands
Build a sanctuary for You
Build a sanctuary
Sanctuary for You
Come and dwell with me
I will sing, I will dance, I'll exalt, lift my hands
Build a sanctuary for You
Build a sanctuary
Sanctuary for You
Come and dwell with me

Boaz, U Servant & Ruth

And I will sing
I will dance
I'll exalt, raise my hands
I will sing
I will dance
I'll exalt Thee

Chorus

I will sing, I will dance, I'll exalt, lift my hands
Build a sanctuary for You
Build a sanctuary

Boaz, U Servant & Ruth (And Select Voices)

(Sung as countermelody to chorus)
And I will sing
I will dance

Sanctuary for You
Come and dwell with me
I will sing, I will dance, I'll exalt, lift my hands
Build a sanctuary for You
Build a sanctuary
Sanctuary for You
Come and dwell with me

I'll exalt, raise my hands
I will sing
I will dance
I'll exalt Thee

Ruth Oh, that You might dwell with me....

(Ruth freezes, as Boaz looks on)
(Black out)

End of ACT I

ACT II

Entr'acte

SCENE 1: IN THE FIELDS OF BOAZ

(Still being secretly watched by Boaz, Ruth prays and then sings just a snippet of her song of praise)

Ruth My life's journey has led me to this place that You, Most Holy, call the House of Bread. I am filled with thanks. Today, you have given me hope and restored for me joy. I pray Thee, sing Your love song over me for I long to hear the sound of Your voice.

SONG: "I WILL SING" (Reprise)

I will sing, I will dance, I'll exalt, lift my hands
And build a sanctuary for You
Build a sanctuary
Sanctuary for You
Come dwell with me!

(The song finishes but the underscore continues and Ruth will hum the chorus as she again begins to glean. Resuming her work, Boaz approaches from behind where he has been enjoying her song of praise)

Boaz Shalom

Ruth You startled me, were you there long?

Boaz I have only just come from the city and barely greeted my men. Now it is my wish to greet you.

Ruth I am sorry. I am Ruth. *(She ties a head covering over her hair as she nervously speaks)*

Boaz My servant told me your name. Please, hear me now Ruth. I humbly request you not go into any other man's fields. You will be safe here. I will command my reapers to see that no harm comes to you. I implore you to abide in safety by following after my maidens. And when you are athirst go into the vessels which my young men have drawn and drink freely.

Ruth *(Ruth falls on her face and bows to the ground before him)* Why have I found grace in your eyes, that you should take knowledge of me, seeing I am a foreigner?

Boaz Umm, I a--. It has been fully shown me all that you have done for your mother-in-law since the death of your husband. How you left your father, mother, and the land of your birth and have come unto our people whose customs and God you did not know before.

Ruth *I know Him* now sir, and my home is with Naomi.

Boaz The Lord recompense your work. And a full reward be given you of the Lord God of Israel, under whose wings thou art now come to trust.

Ruth The Lord bless you sir for the kindness you show to the least in His kingdom.

Boaz It is custom in my fields, for my entire household and all the reapers, to join me at my table each day we work. I am afraid that the least in the Lord's kingdom is no exception.

Ruth I should wish to stay and work while the sun still gives me light.

Boaz Ah, but I wish you to eat, that you may regain some strength to finish your day's work. Perhaps one of my servants may grind your flour. *(Boaz motions to a servant to take Ruth's basket and grind her flour. Ruth will quietly protest saying something like "I can do it myself, thank you...", but, Boaz will insist)* No no, I insist.

Ruth Thank you. As you wish Master Boaz. *(Ruth curtseys and starts to turn toward the house, but stops and quickly turns around to go back and thank him for his kindness. Because Boaz is following so closely they nearly collide but, Boaz plays it off)*

Boaz We usually wait to dance until after the harvest is complete, but if you.....

Ruth My Lord, *(Having interrupted him, she now pauses just a moment before continuing)* You have granted me favor in your sight, and you will never understand just how greatly you have comforted me. In Moab, where I lived... In Moab, men do not always speak kindly to their servants, nor to mere women. You, my Lord, have spoken and acted kindly to me, and have made my safety your concern, even though I am not truly one of your maidservants. May the Lord bless you. Your kindness, reminds me of His kindness, and I receive it, from both Him and you. I pray that He might reward you for these acts of mercy, done for one, who can do nothing for you in return.

Boaz I have done very little, Precious Maiden.

Ruth You spoke to me, *(Beat)* "Drink freely". Only the Holy One Himself, has said such words to me, before you. You share His heart. *(Ruth bows before Boaz and begins again to walk into the house. The servant returns to Boaz with Ruth's basket now filled with flour and hands it back to Boaz. The U. Servant is paying the men their daily wage.)*

SCENE 2: RUTH AND NAOMI'S SHELTER

Ruth Mimi, Mimi, I am home and I have a wee morsel for you.

Naomi *(Opening her scarf)* A wee morsel? Oh my! This is enough bread for ten men and meat too?

Ruth And for your dessert, figs and an apple! But, the best part is, we will soon be baking our own bread... *(Ruth steps just beyond the threshold and picks up her basket to reveal her treasure)* behold, barley flour...it has been such a good day!

Naomi Where on earth did you....Whose field did you glean in today? *(Almost accusingly, but also talking quickly as her mind is jumping with the possibilities)* Blessed be the One who took notice of you.

Ruth The man with whom I worked today, his name is Boaz. He was most extraordinarily kind....

Naomi: *(Falling to a posture of prayer)* Blessed be the Lord, You have not forsaken Your many kindnesses, to the living or the dead.

Ruth *(Pulling Naomi back up and sitting her in a chair)* I too have been thanking Him all day for all His goodness! Now eat, Mimi.

Naomi No, no, Ruth, you don't understand, this man Boaz is a relation of ours, one of our close relatives.

Ruth Hmm, he did not say.

Naomi Oh perhaps there is a reason...he is certainly aware that he would not be first in line.

Ruth What do you mean Mimi, "First in line"???

Naomi Oh, I speak of the custom of redemption. The ways of our people Ruth, you will learn them all in time. *(Naomi says the next line as an aside to herself)* Although, this one you may not yet be ready to hear. *(Ruth raises a questioning eyebrow so Naomi pacifies her with this partial answer)* It is the Holy One's provision for the young widow who has no child. *(In an effort to distract her she*

finally stuffs the apple in her mouth and takes a huge bite.) Ruth, you know that I can be a bit of a "mother hen".

Ruth NO, not you!
Naomi I just want the heart of my chick protected! You will closely guard your heart will you not daughter?
Ruth I will do my best. But, should we not honor his requests since he has shown us such charity? Boaz asked me, Mimi, to stay only in his fields, and to stay close to his men.
Naomi And in his fields you will glean, staying very close, *(Beat)* to his WOMEN.
Ruth Yes, Mimi, I will stick to the women like a bee to the honeycomb.

SCENE 3: BOAZ' HOME – NEAR DINNER TABLE

U Servant Master, I watched till I was sure that she was safely returned to her home.
Boaz Thank you, I am grateful for your constant faithful service and your friendship.
U Servant Ruth is a hard worker. I know she will be back tomorrow and every day until the harvest is complete for I understand she is totally devoted to her mother-in-law.
Boaz We must do all that we can to see that things go well for her. Let all the men know it is my command that she be allowed to glean, even among the sheaves. And make sure they all understand, that no one reproach her.
U Servant The men have already taken notice of her and are breaking their backs to get her to take notice of them.
Boaz Most likely the youngest, strongest fellow with the least brains will win her heart. Or it seems that is how it often happens in this town.
U Servant Perhaps her mother-in-law will step in and try to secure her future.
Boaz Perhaps. They have a close relative that would benefit financially from the redemption of Elimelech's property. At any rate, you my friend, have been a man of such character. You are always careful in your duties, so what I am about to ask you will not be natural for you.
U Servant Master?
Boaz I want you to act clumsy, or careless, do what you must...only make certain to let grain fall from the bundles that she may glean it, as well.
U Servant I understand Master, and I will carry out your instructions and do whatever I can to insure her success and safety.
Boaz God bless you.
U Servant Now Master Boaz, did you happen to notice at the meal, she ate only enough to satisfy her own hunger and then saved more than half of what was served her in her apron?
Boaz Yes, I too noticed this act of kindness. She was, no doubt wanting to bring food home to Naomi.
U Servant Oh I am glad that you *too* saw this. I was worried that your mind was so fixed on the work of the harvest, that you were unaware of such a plain and simple girl. *(Said tongue in cheek)*
Boaz She is quite beautiful is she not?
U Servant Yes, and a women of virtue as well, but I am quite certain you are *too* busy to notice such trivial things.
(They both laugh and slap each other's backs).
Boaz Perhaps it would not kill me to dream.
U Servant Then dream ...dream!
Boaz First we work; then we dream...
U Servant Yes, Master.

SCENE 4: RUTH AND NAOMI'S SHELTER

(Ruth and Naomi are readying to go to sleep)

Ruth Mimi, I have a confession to make before I can sleep.
Naomi Oy, I knew this day was too good to be finished! For the first time in weeks I have a full stomach, I was hoping to fall asleep with an empty head. *(Now seeing Ruth's hesitation she encourages..)* Clear your heavy heart, Little Bird.
Ruth Today, the head servant who is in charge of all the reapers and the Master's household...
Naomi I don't need his history; just tell me what you did to him.

Ruth No, not to him. You see, he told me I must go in the house and rest for a while.

Naomi Yes, very kind, yes unusual even... as if you were a guest in the home. (*Fearfully*) Did anything happen to you?!?

Ruth No, no Mother, nothing. Only, is this not such unusual hospitality especially for a servant? I did not tarry long. But while I was cooling my face, I happened to notice something on Master Boaz's desk. (*We will see this reenacted in shadow behind us*)

Naomi (*Eyes lit up with curiosity*) Really? What was... I mean Ruth, you should not notice things that are none of your business!

Ruth It was a scroll from the Torah, and I read all that I could from top to bottom. And, I stood still a little while there, and committed a portion to my heart for safe keeping. I know it was wrong to do this without permission from its owner.

Naomi Its True Owner has invited you! (*Now excited*) So tell me what did you read?

Ruth "Let them construct a sanctuary for Me, that I may dwell among them."

Naomi (*With a far off look in her eye*) The scroll was open to the book, Exodus.....

Ruth Yes! And further down I read, "I brought them out of the land of Egypt, that I might dwell among them, I am the Lord their God." You have told me about the long journey out of Egypt Mimi, about Israel's redemption. But Mimi, today, I learned that the whole purpose of this redemption, this Exodus from Egypt, was so that the Holy One might dwell in our very midst. So that He might be to us like no other god. Other gods are silent and cruel, demanding and powerless. But, He is instead loving, holy like no other and still loving.

Naomi (*Sung repeating the tune from scene two.*) That I may dwell among them ... (*Naomi speaks to God.*) You have brought me home to dwell with me once again. We have missed each other, no?

Ruth I have heard you say we must obey the Holy One's commands! But Mimi, I asked myself how could I, a mere woman, with nothing but my two hands build a sanctuary for the Lord? As I worked in the fields over and over I repeated these words I had just read.

Naomi (*A little teasingly*) From the desk of Boaz.

Ruth Yes. Well, I spoke them over and over. The Torah, the words, they occupied my thoughts all day and they made me giddy, like when I first fell in love with Mahlon. I wanted to dance up and down the rows of barley and shout into the wind. (*Naomi is looking disapprovingly with hands on both hips*) I didn't of course, not exactly...

Naomi This is a good thing!

Ruth Sanctuary. Sanctuary, build Him a sanctuary. What could I do? I have nothing with which to build. I found myself staring at the heads of grain, willing them to turn to wood and nails or stone that I might build. (*Naomi laughs*) Foolish, I know. Then Mimi, it was as if the Holy One spoke to me directly asking, "Is there a place for Me to dwell, in your heart?" A sanctuary for Him to dwell among us. I cannot build, but can I be? (*Last two lines said introspectively, but now Ruth begins again to sheepishly address Naomi*) Oh, these thoughts are too, too... (*Searching for words which Naomi supplies*)

Naomi Intimate (*Matter of fact*)

Ruth Yes? (*Embarrassed and with a question*)

Naomi Lofty (*Pointedly and accusingly*)

Ruth Yes. (*Now apologetically*)

Naomi Crazy. Blasphemous even? (*Now Naomi challenges*)

Ruth Yes? (*Humbled and confused*)

Naomi No. NO, no to all your concerens. Little Bird, you have found the secret!

Ruth Secret?

Naomi The Torah is able to make a foolish man wise. And a mere woman, (*Now standing behind Ruth to grab her hands and make them into "fists" on her last two words*) with just two hands, into a "Real Man". (*They giggle and embrace and while still hugging Naomi continues*) You told me, Little Bird that you had watched me in secret. You poked your nose into my business and eavesdropped on my prayers but, it caused you to see who I am. To see that I was in love with the Holy One. (*Looks into her eyes*) And it made me want to know Him as you knew Him.

Ruth The Holy One has answered my prayers, and your curiosity! Now Daughter- to bed!

Naomi Mimi, you told me on the journey that some day you would tell me why you call me Little Bird.

Ruth Ahh, yes, perhaps someday when you have not worked so hard, and so need to sleep!

Naomi Perhaps today.... (*Imploring like a child*)

Naomi *(This will be re-enacted in shadows behind the women)* Oh, it's simple really, When the boys were little, there was a tree just outside our home, where I would sit to cool the back of my neck, whenever I would bake bread. The birds loved that tree too. Now Mahlon would sit there, very still next to me. I would have to leave and go back to my duties, but he would sit quietly, sometimes for hours. The birds would fly down and come so close, curious little things. *(She gently clucks Ruth's nose)* Finally, if he was patient and very still, they would come and eat the crumbs right out of his hand. Oh how he loved the birds.

Ruth So that is why you call me Little Bird, because I too, took Mahlon's hand.

Naomi *(Responding to Ruth's embrace begins to say ahhhhhh which transitions into)* NO, that is not the reason. I call you "Little Bird" because I saw in your heart this same curious hunger. For when you saw the crumbs of Torah, in the Holy One's upturned hand, you left the safety of your nest and flew to His hand, and chose to trust Him. The Holy One puts His hand out to us all Little Bird, but only the wise learn to trust Him.

Ruth Oh Mimi, I want to shout and I could dance again!

Naomi Again???? *(Ruth shrugs)* I think I see a mouse. *(She play stomps and then begins to dance with Ruth)*

SCENE 5: IN THE FIELDS OF BOAZ

Boaz The harvest has been full, we are nearly finished, the Lord has indeed blessed us with His abundance.

U Servant Today we work and then tonight, we shall finish up and celebrate on the threshing floor.

Boaz I see Ruth *(Noticing Ruth cross to join the others)* and the women. There always seems to be a hum in the wind coming from their direction.

U Servant Ruth is always singing and teaching the women songs and I've overheard my men singing them too.

Boaz I have heard the songbird once or twice.....

U Servant Really, I hadn't noticed you staring, *(Beat)* much!

Boaz She makes it easy for me to stare...she never casts her eyes my way and so, there is no fear of being caught.

U Servant She keeps herself busy with her work and keeps to the women. I think your maidservants will truly miss her company when all the harvesting is finished and she is spending her days with Naomi once again.

Boaz Yes, they will miss her I am sure.
(Out in the Fields the women chatter as they reap)

Rachel Elizabeth, turn around slowly *(She wants her to confirm that Boaz is staring at Ruth)* and tell me if you see what I see. But, careful. Do not be so obvious.

Elizabeth *(Quickly assessing the situation with a giggle)* Why must I be so worried? He is oblivious to anyone but the Princess here. *(Touches/signals to Ruth and they both giggle, but now Ruth is sure of what they are talking about and is blushing)*

Rachel Oh Ruth stop your blushing, it only makes you prettier and that is so unfair. You are breaking the old man's heart.

Ruth He is not old!! He is wise and.... *(Stops quickly slightly exasperated that she fell into their trap)*

Rachel And???? And handsome?

Elizabeth And richer than a dozen farmers, with all their cows and chickens!

Miriam And able to steal Ruth's breath out of her chest when he passes.

Ruth And a harder worker than so many chattering women!

Rachel Oh Ruth, make no mind of us. It is our duty as women to be match makers.

Elizabeth It helps us pass the time. *(Popping something in her mouth, a younger girl giggles, to which Elizabeth replies :)* Hush, you're next on our list!

Sarah Let's sing again. The Master loves it when Ruth sings, and she cannot resist the chance to sing the Lord's praises. *(Pulls Ruth's arm)*

Ruth I am trying to finish this row; the sun is low in the sky. *(The women begin and soon Ruth, unable to resist, joins)*

Rachel Yes, and it is time to celebrate!!!

Sarah Another productive day in the fields.

HARVEST: "THE LORD, THE LORD OUR GOD (EXODUS 34:6)