

Ruth

A Play for Pentecost
Adapted from the Book of Ruth

Cast

Boaz
Ruth
Naomi
Kinsman
Shallum (servant)
2 women servants/friends

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Narrator:

Long ago on a bright spring morning in the fields near Bethlehem, a bunch of people were resting in the shade of a leafy tree, after a long morning's work harvesting barley. The owner of the field and his servant soon arrived with bread and water for the workers.

SCENE 1: IN THE FIELD

(Boaz, Shalum, 2 women servants, Ruth)

Boaz (landowner): *(to his servant)*

Who is that young woman over there?

Shalum (servant):

She's the Moabite who came with Naomi. Do you remember Chilion?

Boaz:

Yes, I do, a fine young lad.

Shalum:

He died some months ago and that young woman is his widow. She sure is quite a worker; she's been at it all day.

Boaz:

Thank you. I'll go talk to her. It's not safe for her to glean elsewhere.

(Walks over to Ruth and two other women servants sitting eating)

Boaz: (to Ruth)

Greetings, I just learned from my servant, Shalum, that you are Naomi's daughter-in-law. Welcome to Bethlehem. I'm Boaz.

Ruth:

Thank you. I am Ruth. Naomi said it was your custom to allow gleaners. I hope that's alright with you?

Boaz:

Yes, of course it is. That's the law around here, you know. Anyone in need can freely help themselves to whatever grain we leave behind in the fields after we harvest. In fact, I'd advise you to stay here with the other young women. It's not as safe as it used to be. All my young men have been told to treat you with respect.

Ruth:

Thank you. You are very kind, especially seeing that I'm a foreigner.

Boaz:

I've heard about your kindness to Naomi and how you left your family and home to care for her.

Ruth:

She had no one else. I couldn't let her travel alone.

Boaz:

I hope the God of Israel will take note of your love and reward you for your mercy.

Ruth:

Thank you for your encouraging words

Boaz:

Come now, and eat with my workers. There's plenty of bread to share.

SCENE 2: NAOMI'S HOME

Narrator:

At home that evening after a long day of work and a long walk home, Ruth opens the door to find Naomi bowed on the table dejectedly.

Ruth:

Naomi, Naomi. You won't believe what happened today!

(Ruth takes a sack of grain off of her shoulder)

Naomi *(sits up, her eyes open wide and she stares at the grain)*

All that in just one day! Amazing. Where did you glean?

Ruth:

Here's some bread, too! They gave me so much I couldn't finish it all.

(gives the piece of bread to Naomi who eagerly accepts it, looks to heaven quickly, and then bites off a piece and chews heartily)

Naomi:

Mmmm.... This is good. So who treated you so well?

Ruth:

His name is Boaz. He was very kind and he asked me all about you and our travels to Bethlehem.

Naomi:

Boaz! Why, I should have guessed it. He always was a responsible, kind-hearted sort. He's a relative of your late father-in-law, Elimelech.

Ruth:

Oh! Perhaps that's why he told me not to go to any other fields.

SCENE 3: DARK/LIGHT ALTERNATES

CHORUS SONG

Day 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7,40

Every Morning, every evening, working in the barley field

SCENE 4: IN THE HOUSE

Narrator:

Day in, day out Ruth worked gleaned. First barley, then wheat. Finally, the harvest was finished. The Feast of First Fruits, Shavuot would be coming soon, and there was great excitement over the abundant harvest this year!

Naomi:

You have been such a blessing to me. Now we have enough food for the year and enough seed to plant for next year! What a miracle!

Ruth:

I've enjoyed working on Boaz's farm. He's such a gentleman, and all his workers love him. The other women have also been kind to me.

Naomi:

I am concerned about your future, my daughter. So here's my plan. Tonight, you must go to the threshing floor. Boaz will be there. You must wear your best clothes. When he is fast asleep you must lay down at his feet.

Ruth:

Really!?! But then what do I do?

Naomi:

The man will tell you what to do next. This is a custom with our people and Boaz will no doubt honour it. You do respect him don't you?

Ruth: Why yes, he's wonderful. I'll do as you say, if it is your custom.

SCENE 5: DARKNESS to LIGHT

Narrator:

That evening Ruth followed Naomi's instructions exactly. You can imagine that neither of them slept a wink that night, waiting and wondering what the outcome would be. Finally Ruth arrived home, just about sunrise.

SCENE 6: NAOMI'S HOME

Naomi: *(Ruth enters and lays a large sack of grain on the floor)*

How did things go? I see you brought back a huge sack of grain!

Ruth:

When Boaz woke up in the middle of the night he was very surprised to see me. But, when I explained that you had sent me, he wanted to hear my request. So, I said exactly what you told me to!

Naomi:

Well, don't keep me waiting. Will he marry you?

Ruth:

He said he would and he was very happy that I had asked. But... there's a problem. He's not the closest kin. There's another man. I'm worried that things will not work out as we had hoped. I feel very disappointed, and it's scary to think I might have to marry someone I've never met before?

Naomi:

Well, it sounds as if Boaz will get things settle today one way or another. So we must wait...and pray! Maybe God will show us favour.

(they kneel and bow their heads)

Great Father you have generously supplied our needs and protected us and now I pray for Ruth that you will bless her with Boaz, a god-fearing, most industrious, and considerate man, for a husband. Amen!

Ruth:

I do hope all goes well. Boaz is such a wise and discerning man. I admire his diligence and the way he is always concerned about those who work for him. Did I tell you that he gave everyone a special wineskin, cheese, and cake of raisins for the Holy Day! I think that being his wife would be delightful. He has such a generous spirit.

Naomi:

We must be patient and pray now for God's direction. We will know soon enough. Boaz may not be as handsome as our Chilion, or as adventurous as my Elimelech, but God's will seems to be first in his heart – and that's a good thing! It's so rare these days.

Ruth:

So what must happen now?

Naomi:

Boaz will go before the elders and judges of the city at the city gate and he will talk to the near kinsmen to see what deal might be arranged. I do not know this other man, but God does, and we will leave it in His capable hands to provide the best husband for you.

Not everyone would be as willing as Boaz to give me a grandson to replace the two sons I have lost and carry on the name of my dear husband Elimelech.

SCENE 7:TOWN GATE

Narrator:

Boaz was the first one at the city gate that day. But it wasn't long before the market day crowd arrived and his cousin, the nearest kinsman appeared.

Kinsman:

Hey Boaz! I haven't seen you for a while. How's the farm?

Boaz:

Very, very good. Great harvest this year for everyone in the district, you too no doubt. But today I've a special deal to offer you.

Kinsman:

A special deal, eh? What kind of deal? (*a little suspicious*)

Boaz:

Well, Naomi's back and she needs a family member to buy her land.

Kinsman:

Really? That's a sweet piece of property!
I'll take it if the price is right! I've been looking to expand my holdings.
Let's get the elders together and finalize the deal.

Boaz:

Good for you. But you must also know that Ruth the Moabitess will be part of the deal. It would be hard to refuse such a virtuous woman as your wife. I'm sure you have heard about her hard work and courage in caring for Naomi, and she's beautiful as well. You can't lose on this deal.

Kinsman:

Wait a minute. I don't like that part of the deal. Then my own sons wouldn't inherit that land—Ruth's children would! You sly old dog. Trying to trick me, eh? Why don't you do it yourself if it's such a good deal. After all you don't have any sons of your own?

Boaz:

Well, now that you mention it...hmmm....yes, what a good idea you have. Okay, let's do the deal. Let's go round up all the elders as witnesses.

(Boaz walks with kinsman arm in arm towards the crowd of city elders).

Boaz:

You are all witnesses that I have bought the land from Naomi and will take Ruth to be my wife so that the house of Elimelech, my kinsman, will have an heir.

(Kinsman removes his shoe and hands it to Boaz to seal the agreement)

People:

We are all witness. May Ruth be as Rachel and Leah and may you prosper and be famous in Bethlehem.

SCENE 8: NAOMI'S HOME

Narrator:

The time has flown and a new year and a new barley harvest has begun. But Ruth is not in the fields this year. She is at home nursing her new baby boy, Obed.

Friend 1:

Naomi, what a beautiful boy. The Lord has certainly blessed you with a grandson to wipe away all your sadness.

Friend 2:

Ruth has been better than seven sons to you and now you have this child in your old age! How wonderful.

Naomi: *(takes baby from Ruth)* There was a time when I was so sad and I thought God was punishing me, but now he's given me so much joy. I wanted to be called Mara, bitter, because I thought God was against me! But look what God has done. The Feast of Shavuoth will always hold such treasured memories for me.

Ruth:

When I left my home, saying "your God will be my God" I could not have dreamed of the blessings that He had waiting for me. His law has truly been a lamp to my feet and a light to my path. Naomi, you always reminded me in the tough times of God's blessings to those who love his way. You may have had your doubts and fears but you were always a shining example of obedience to God. I would not be here were it not for your love.

Naomi:

God is a father to those who love and faithfully serve him. He does give us the desires of our heart! He has certainly taken care of this old widow. *(holds and kisses Obed)*

Narrator:

And so Ruth the gentile from Moab, though a foreigner, came to be one of God's chosen people, the wife of Boaz, the mother of Obed, the grandmother of Jesse and the great grand-mother of King David, the Shepherd king of Israel. And who knows where some of David's beautiful songs came from? Perhaps straight from the heart of his great-grandparents.

Song: Sung by the cast and audience

Shelter To Every Generation by Maranatha

E B C#m A
You have been a shelter Lord
B A B A E
To every generation, to every generation, Lord
E B C#m A
A sanctuary from the storm
B A B A E B
C#m A
To every generation, to every generation, Lord

E B C#m
Though the mountains fall,
 A E
Though the earth should shake,
 B A
Though the seas should roar with all the heartache
E B C#m
Though our hearts should pound,
 A C#m
Though our throats be dry,
 F#m A B
We will lift Your Name on high

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