

Ruth: A Love Song

A Modern Adaption of an Ancient Tale of Faith, Loyalty, and Love

NOTE/PLEASE READ --

ACT 1 TIME: *1:14. All text read dramatically and songs played (estimated 1:17)*

EDITS: *The author is considering cutting 10-20 minutes from the play (song/text -- 5%) but is holding off on final cuts pending input from directors, actors and people like you.*

Act 1 Potential Cuts: *Dream Girl, Vs. 2 of Trouble, Dialogue at start of Scene 4, 1 vs.*

Farmer's Life, all or portions of Men!, Your Love is Sweeter (prelude), and Poppi subplot.

FORMAT. *This story has was written in WordPerfect (DOS!) and transferred to Word and WordPerfect Windows so others can read. Some codes and formatting may not transfer.*

Cast

- Ruth: Age from 21 to early 30s, ideally 24-26. A classic heroine (like Belle in *Beauty & the Beast*), but still girl enough to flirt and hope for Prince Charming.
- Naomi: Age 45-60. Eastern European accent, a touch of *Yente the Matchmaker*.
- Boaz: Age from 38 to early 50s.
- Levi: Age 30-45. Foreman/old war buddy of Boaz/flim-flam man and Spinach King *(should have slight -- or full -- Brooklyn or Jersey accent)*
- Rachel: Good/bad girl, friend of all, girlfriend of Levi. Age 30-45.
(Some of her solos are to sound like they are being sung in a smoky bar.)

Secondary

- Simon: Bigoted Shopkeeper/Farmer
- Sadie: Bethlehem's leading Grandmother and busybody
- Phyllis: Grandma, friend of Naomi
- Hannah: Young girl from 6-12 (preferably about 8)
- Poppi: (like Poppieseed) Young, strong, Arnold Schwarzenegger wannabe, with a touch of Gaston, Jethro Bodine, and Popeye the Sailor.

The Rest

- Orpah: A Paris Hilton wannabe, able to pull-off "Valley Speak". About 25.
- Debbie: Southern Gospel Singer (Ideally, a Black actress, with Gospel background)
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|--|---|
| Zeb (Zebulem) City Elder | Zack (Zachariah) City Elder |
| Servant Girl #1 | Girls #1-4 |
| Townspersons #1-3 (chorus) | Grandmothers #1-4 (Act 2, Scene 7) |
| Man #1 | Old Man |
| Older Woman | Farmers #1-5 (Act 1, Scene 2) |
| Farmers #1-3 | Crew Member #1 (Ben) |
| Sylvia, Clara, Older woman, friends of Naomi | Kids -- about 6-15 for <i>We Love Spinach</i> |

Sets/Music

1. **Primary.** The farm in Bethlehem -- well side stage. Tables to be moved in and out as necessary. Background of stone walls (painted background and/or constructed) and painted fields. Should have an apple tree which will have either flowers that fall off or are replaced by small green apples for Scene 8 to convey a scene a few weeks to two months after Ruth's arrival.
2. Naomi's house -- may either construct simple house or use a black background with a few shelves and a sparse table. The house should be in a little better shape for Act 2, which takes place later.
It has to have a "wardrobe" (shelves rather than hanger racks are preferred) that is suitable for Ruth to use in Act 2 Scene 6. The wardrobe is in bad condition in Act 1 (ideally the door should be half off a hinge) with the top of it busted out (so Ruth can put her head through it in Act 2). The wardrobe should have a false back so Ruth can exit to quickly change clothes.
3. Threshing floor. Appears as a stone incline a few feet high, park bench height.

Orchestra Requirements

The music has been scored for Orchestra, with an emphasis on the following primary instruments: Piano, Flute, Oboe, B flat Clarinet, Trumpet in B Flat, Horn in F, Violin (1 &2), Viola, Cello, Bass, Percussion.

The play can be successfully performed using only the rehearsal piano score (as an example the demo tapes for *I Know* was done with piano only). Additionally, the author has been informed that a nearly full orchestra sound can be obtained using 2 or 3 modern keyboards and about 3 other live instruments.

Other orchestra instruments are included in many of the songs but, but given theater budget constraints, they will probably only be used for community/educational theater productions where volunteers are available.

A Love Song (Ruth)
Story Synopsis

Ruth and her mother-in-law, Naomi, move to Bethlehem in an attempt to rebuild their lives after the death of both of their husbands. Ruth's loyalty and love for Naomi leads her to seek the God of Abraham.

She meets and falls in love with a shy local farmer, Boaz. He's always dreamed of a girl like her. But, being older, he feels she deserves someone younger and stronger than him. Naomi declares: "His heart is thumping but he is doing nothing!"

Men! *Oy vey!*

Boaz's foreman, Levi, is having problems of his own. His long-time girlfriend, Rachel, has given him an ultimatum – marry her, or else. He wants to sell spinach. So she dumps him and, on the rebound, puts the moves on Boaz!

Ruth is not amused.

Fortunately, Naomi has an audacious plan that will either secure Ruth's future or get her ostracized by the town's moral guardians – the feisty Jewish grandmothers.

There are surprises and plot turns throughout. But, in the end, faith, hope and love triumph over prejudice, fear, and insecurity.

Background

This story is loosely based on the short book of *Ruth* in the Bible. I am using that story as an outline from which to gently poke fun at, and comment on, our modern world. In the tradition of Musical Comedies, the play tips its hat to flim-flam men, frustrated girlfriends, and Jewish grandmothers.

In general, this is a love story. Of two couples. Of a young woman for her "Mom" and of that mother for her "daughter". Of God for His people.

The primary modern theme explored in the play is that of abortion. In Act 2 we find out that Rachel is pregnant. I am trying to present a sympathetic portrait of Rachel's plight (*Every Choice I Lose*) while still allowing the conservative Ruth to be true to her values as she encourages Rachel to wait (*Hope in the Darkness*).

Rachel and Levi are not in the Biblical account. They were created to represent a contemporary couple most of us can relate to. While faith is central to the fabric of Ruth and Boaz's lives, Rachel and Levi have a more subdued "show up on Holy Days" faith.

I hope this play will entertain and inspire you. That you will chuckle, laugh, and perhaps cry, as you share the world inhabited by Ruth, Boaz, Rachel and Levi and, in fact, by all of us.

Thank you so much for letting me share this story.

Dennis L. Dunn

Collaborators and "Thank Yous"

I always hate those sections in books where the author seems to thank everyone under the sun for their help. Those pages are like the genealogies in the Bible -- I feel a little guilty for not reading them, but I still turn the page after a glance.

But I also remember the story of the painful demise of one of the Herods (Acts Chapter 12) and treat it as a parable: "Give credit where credit is due". (Herod was struck down by an angel and eaten by worms -- a nicely Shakespearean demise -- when people praised his speech as that of a god and he didn't stop them.)

Therefore, here are a few "thank you" to those who made this possible:

1. **To God and the Holy Spirit.** I probably should follow the example of athletes and wait to be successful before I credit God. But I can't dunk or hit a home run and I doubt I'll ever see my name on Broadway. This will have to do for now.

I believe God gave me a gift and I frankly don't believe I'm a good enough musician to create some of the songs in this play. Thanks, too, to the unknown ancient writer(s) who first recorded the story of Ruth -- I wish I had your gift of brevity.

2. **My Primary Collaborators:** Kara Leinonen (piano arrangements, encouragement, initial recordings, sounding board), Tommy Leinonen (arranging, orchestration), and Chris R. Hansen (orchestration).

Kara has the ability to listen to my off-key singing and figure out what I'm getting at, reproduce the melody on piano, and then create an accompaniment track to go along with it, all within minutes -- I frequently shook my head in wonder.

Tommy and Chris (Hansen Musical Services, Grand Rapids) are incredibly talented musicians who worked for far less than they are worth to contribute to this project.

3. **Secondary Collaborators:**

Piano Arranging. John Pattison, John Livingston, and Brian Swearingen. John Pattison did the very first work on the play, which was an incredible encouragement. John

Livingston is a friend and like a son to me -- I've loved having him involved. He's hardworking, supportive, and an outstanding musician.

Arranging & Orchestration. Michelle Tamir and Karleen Cohen (Notable Score Transcription, Tacoma) and Hannah Campbell. These young ladies did both arranging and orchestration work. The efficiency of the people at Notable Score is incredible. Plus, they have been incredibly supportive and encouraging.

4. **Support.** My wife, Marsha, has been the primary support of our family while I struggle to finish this. What I thought would take a year has slogged on month after month after month and now year after year. Way too long.

One of my friends, the late Shirley Tripp, left me a bequest that provided the means to pay the musicians listed here when my savings were getting slim. Also, thank you to my family, friends and Sunday School class for their prayers.

5. **Recordings/Singers.** Most of the recording for demo tapes were done efficiently and inexpensively by Ky Fifer (Portland) and David Walker Studio (Nashville). We have had over 40 different singers on the demo tapes. I'd like to thank all of them but will list only the primary soloists here: Barbara Richardson (Ruth/Chorus), Jessie Stanley (Ruth/Rachel/Chorus), Mandy Cook (Rachel/Chorus), Ky Fifer (Boaz/Chorus), Jan Powell (Naomi), Thomas Slater (Levi/Chorus), Megan Murphy Ruckman (Naomi/Chorus).

If you've got a song or story to tell, I would recommend using any of the above people.

PROLOGUE

Staging: *May either use a blank stage (or be done in front of the curtain, perhaps with a park bench) or the main farm scene with a park bench beside it.*

Setting: *The lights go on. A park bench. Phyllis is sitting at the bench knitting. Naomi will enter carrying a baby (a doll in a blanket) bundled up in her arms and a purse/knitting basket that is difficult for her to carry.*

Naomi:

Hello, Phyllis. What brings you to the park?

Phyllis:

I'm watching Rachel's oldest.

Naomi:

How quickly they grow! Oh, look at little Obed!
Is he not the cutest child that God has ever placed upon the green
earth? And oh, so smart.

(Phyllis who looks in. Cooing noises are heard. Phyllis shakes a wooden rattle in front of Obed.)

Phyllis:

How can you tell?

Naomi:

Look how attentive his eyes are!
And he always listens to my stories, although some times he falls
asleep.

Phyllis:

I have the same problem at synagogue.

(Hannah enters and looks inquisitively. She may have one or more other children with her, but if so, she's in the lead. Naomi nods at her. Hannah realizes a story is about to be told and she sits down on the bench, or on the ground, to listen. She may "play" with Obed by showing him rattle. When Naomi exits, she will follow here and do a little ballet.)

(Looking/smiling at Hannah while talking to Obed. She's talking to Hannah more than Obed throughout.)

Naomi:

Don't we all.
Now, little Obed, would you like to hear a story?
You're welcome to listen.

(Below: Hannah may nod and/or gleam, rather than say anything)

Hannah:

Thank you.

Phyllis:

And how will the story go today?
It changes every time you tell it.

(Naomi gives Phyllis a bemused sneer. Hannah puts her hand to her mouth to hide a laugh.)

Naomi:

Humph! . .

Now, it happened right here in Bethlehem,
although it didn't start here . .
such a fool . . it was a spring day much like today. . .
But, once upon a time, when judges ruled the land
and everyone did what was right in his own eyes . . .

(Naomi waltzes to side-stage with Obed. Hannah does a dance to the tune with her doll.)

God Plays a Love Song

(Naomi:)

Oh little child, of Bethlehem
God calls you near.
From Grandma's knees
His stories, you'll hear.

(may also use "Grandmother's")

Of Abraham, and Isaac
and Noah's white dove.
You are covered
in a blanket of love.

For God plays a love song
that we sing off-key,
but He fills in the notes
in our harmonies.

And every girl is a princess,
every boy a king.
When they choose to live
under His wings.

For you are a child of the King.

If desired, music can be truncated going by starting song at M. 5 and ending by jumping from M. 46 to 57 and ending there.

Hannah sits down beside Naomi to hear story.

NOTE: We will return to this scene at the end of the play.

Stage darkens.

Back curtain raises as Moab scene is introduced or set from Moab swings into view.

ACT 1, SCENE 1 ***Decisions, Decisions . . .***

Setting: Outside a cottage in Moab (a background may be used). This may also be done by just using the house from Scene 3, but decorated slightly differently. Naomi is packing with the help of her friends, Sylvia and Clara. Side stage has three mounds of cardboard stones for the graves of the men. A cart (if you can afford it) is beside the cottage.

Scene/Character Motivations: *(More than you probably want to know -- sorry.)*

The Biblical account makes clear that all three of the women planned to go to Bethlehem together and suggests they were all close. Naomi knows it will be better for her if they join her. So she is thinking of their good and only reluctantly encouraging them to remain behind.

Naomi's statement to them to "go home" may be interpreted as:

- (a) A realization that her plan is not the best for the girls (hence the "sigh" as she enters the scene);*
- (b) Fulfilling the requirements of Jewish law/traditions requiring a person to be told twice of the risks/sacrifices involved before they are allowed to join the Jewish faith.*

*Ruth is only reluctantly arguing with Naomi. Ruth is soft, gentle, used to going along. But we see early on that there is steel behind her soft demeanor. Her dialogue to Naomi in **I Will Never Leave You** should be as soft as possible, beginning with her being tentative -- she may never have stood up to Naomi before. But nothing before has been this important.*

When Ruth says: "Do you remember when we buried my husband?" she must be as tender as possible. This was Naomi's son. Of course Naomi remembers it. But that Rainbow solidified in Ruth's mind that God's promise was for her, too. And she's not giving it up. No way. No how.)

Sylvia:

So, Naomi, you are really leaving . .

Naomi:

It is time, Sylvia. There is nothing for me here. I will go back home. Better to have trouble around family, than foreigners. With family, you can share in your misery . . then you're not so miserable.

Clara:

Our life is full of hardship.

Naomi:

Indeed. But I worry about my girls.

Clara:

May God protect them . .

(Naomi resigned, quietly.)

Naomi:

. . for I cannot.

(They continue to pack.)

(Lights darken on this scene and lighten on Ruth side stage, beside a mound of rocks to represent the unmarked grave of her husband, Mahlon. Mahlon will have died two months prior to this. There may be two other mounds, older than this one. Ruth puts a bouquet of flowers on the grave. Consider having her pull out a dandelion.)

Ruth:

Hi, Honey. I brought you some flowers.
I'm taking your mother back to Bethlehem . . .
the famines over . . . I don't know when I'll be back.

I could go home. . . but I won't . . can't live like that . .

I won't . . *(she shivers)*

I know you didn't want to be buried here, like this. Well, your
name's written on my heart.

I hope that's enough . . . for now.

(Orpah Enters and calls to Ruth. Naomi, Sylvia and Clara are inside the house and Naomi will eventually hear them.)

Orpah will sometimes look back offstage to her town, wistfully -- this will be a bit of a play off Lot's wife.)

Orpah:

Ruth, like, let's get on with it? OK?
Put the pedal to the metal and the sandal to the road.
This is gonna be a totally bitchin' trip, ya know?

(Ruth rolls her eyes. Goes to pick up suitcases/bundles of belongings.)

Ruth:

Have a little faith, Orpah.
Think of it as an adventure.

(The "gag me with a spoon" line below may be modified, depending age of character playing Orpah and vernacular used at the time of performance.)

Orpah:

An adventure? Like, gag me with a spoon.
We're going to Bethlehem, population 450.
All hicks, all the time. Are you really sure about this?
I mean, really? Bethle-hamburger?

Ruth:

It's Bethlehem.

Orpah:

Whatever.
And how can something with "ham" in it be Jewish?

(Naomi Enters side stage where she can hear the conversation but not be seen by the girls. Orpah's dialogue may be adjusted -- without including profanity -- if the Valleygirl rhythm does not seem natural for the actress.)

I mean, like, will anyone ever talk about *Bethlehem*?
I don't thinkkk so.
Hole in the wall, valley of the shadow of nothing.

(Ruth shakes her head in bewilderment. Naomi, Sylvia and Clara come from out of the house to joint them. Naomi has heard Orpah. Naomi sighs.)

Naomi:

You're right Orpah. . .
Trouble. That's all my life has been . . . trouble.
Left home in a time of famine. A husband.
Two sons. Hopes. Dreams.
All I wanted was a home, a garden -- maybe a grandbaby on my
lap. Was that so much to ask? I think not.

What do I get? . . Three graves.
Not 'nough money for tombstone.
But, you girls, you don't have to go.

Ruth:

But, we want to go! Orphie, tell her --

(Orpah shrugs)

Naomi:

No. Girls . . you have been good to me . . good to my sons. . The
time has come for me to be good to you -- GO HOME! Go home
to your families.

God has deserted me, you must, too.
It's worse for me than you.

What do I have? No hopes, no dreams,
no nothing - nothing but you.

(Intro music Trouble).

And the promise of a God who took away my happiness and gave
me instead . . a grave.

Trouble

(Naomi)

Trouble, trouble, toil and trouble
that's all I've ever known.

(Sylvia & Clara)

Don't ya know it!

To be with me, it's a sorry thing,
It makes you want to groan.

(Sylvia & Clara)

(May be sung "want'a groan")

Don't ya know it!

For the grace of God has deserted me,
His promise seems a lie,
for I went out full with a family
and all they did was die.

For my husband and both my sons
lie behind a cold, stone tomb.
And even if I marry another, vell,
would you wait for my womb?

(Sylvia/Clara look at each other, armed crossed, and roll their eyes)

Naomi / (Ruth, Orpah)

So get going!

(We ain't going!)

So get going!

(We ain't going!)
Please, leave me alone.

Just get going!
(We ain't going!)
Just get going!
(We ain't going!)
Just go to your home.

(Interlude)
Trouble, trouble, toil and trouble
you're all that I have left.
You're good girls and I care for you,
but I was born to be bereft.

So just leave me now to my sorry fate.
I'm going home to die.
But you should go to your families, dears.
Let this be our goodbye.

(Orpah is becoming convinced; Ruth will start to sing the "we ain't going" alone here, with quizzical looks at Orpah, Ruth's tone should change to not just declaring her intention to Naomi but to Orpah, too. Orpah, is starting to contemplate her future and the true cost of this venture.)

So get going!
(Ruth: We ain't going!)
So get going!
(Ruth: We ain't going!) (Orpah is mulling it over)
Please, leave me alone.

Just get going!
(Ruth: We ain't going!) (nudges Orpah to join)
Just get going!
(Ruth: We ain't going!)
Just go to your home.

(Interlude, music continues to play.)

(Orpah shrugs, hugs Ruth and then Naomi, takes a suitcase from the cart and starts to walk away. Suitcases -- if used -- may have stickers that say things like "I Heart Babel" or "Bethlehem or Bust". Ruth approaches Orpah. Orpah's words are not designed to inspire confidence.)

Ruth:

Orpah, will you put flowers on Mahlon's grave?

Orpah:

Like you can totally count on me.

Ruth:

I've loved having you as a sister.
If you decide to come later, you'll be welcome.

Orpah:

Uh, huh. . . Whatevver . . .

(Ruth turns back. Naomi makes her last pitch, consider a fist to the waist forming a triangle with the arm.)

(Naomi)

More trouble, trouble, toil and trouble
I hope for you they're through.
Your sister has taken the wisest track,
that I recommend to you.

So get going,

(Ruth: I'm not going.)

Leave me alone **(Ruth: I'm staying with you)**

So get going,

(Ruth: I'm not going.)

Go to your home. **(Ruth: I promised I'd be true.)**

Don't be stubborn and stupid.
Don't throw away your life
Find a man in your hometown.
Let him take you as his wife.

Just get going,

(Ruth: I'm not going.)

Please, leave me alone

Ruth: I won't leave you alone.

Just get going,

(Ruth: I'm not going.)

Go to your home!

Ruth: We'll make a home!

Naomi: WHY . . . VON'T . . . YOU . . . GO?!

(Naomi glares. Dramatic pause. Music from I Will Never Leave You starts;

Ruth -- slightly louder than a whisper.)

Ruth:

Mom, you've loved me as your own.
You've taught me of your God.
Don't send me back. I know what I want. .
And I know what I'm doing . .

I Will Never Leave You

(Ruth)

I cleave,
Please believe,
I am determined, I will never leave.

Where you go, I'll go.
Where you stay, I'll stay.
Please, don't ever send me away.

Where you die, I will die.
In the grave beside,
that is where I will forever lie.

Well, I've heard you tell of a promise,
of a God who cares for me.
Of a God who stilled Abraham's knife,
and then parted the sea.

So, I will never leave, you.
I'll never go away.
'Til the grip of death, takes away my breath
I will stay.

Naomi: You don't know what your doing --

Ruth: (Yes, I do.)

Naomi: You don't know what you'll face --

Ruth: (Anywhere with you.)

Naomi: You don't know how many will treat you with disgrace!

(Ruth)

Oh, I know what I'm doing -- the challenges ahead.
I know of the life I leave behind.
But I seek a city, I'd rather have instead.
And only way I'm leaving you,
is if they're take'n me out dead!

Naomi: *(spoken)*
Don't you want a husband?

(Spoken words become more lyrical, then sung)

A home, and family.
Don't you want a future?
Some security?

(Ruth)

Oh, I want to take hold of the Promise.
The one I see with my heart.
That the God who made the heavens and earth
of His Kingdom wants me a part!

Ruth *(Spoken)*
Do you remember when we buried my husband?
The rain came as we walked.
A rainbow fell on the mighty tomb
that stopped our feeble talk.

And as the teardrops lingered --
as the clouds cried in the sky.
I looked to the heavens --
from whence comes my help --
and I knew there is hope when we die.

So, I will never leave you.
Your land and God are my own.
For where there is faith and hope and love,
That's where I'll be home.

(Ruth may stomp her foot at/before "That's")

(Naomi finally nods agreement. She reaches down for her suitcase or pack of belongings. Ruth starts to pull the cart. A wheel falls off. She takes off the suitcases. Naomi tries to take one but Ruth stops her. Ruth will carry Naomi's burden. She nods at Clara and Sylvia who smile and nod back their support. Ruth starts to exit. She will not see Naomi's prayer below.)

Naomi:
(Towards heaven)

Thank you.

Act 1, Scene 2

Scene: A Farm in Bethlehem. Boaz and Levi and all workers, but not other farmers, have the red sash around their waist. A well is upper stage. Levi stands holding a small scroll on a clipboard with a pen. Looking concerned. Boaz approaches from the path.)

Boaz:
Samuel Levi!

(Levi turns)

Levi:
Boaz? What brings you to the humble hamlet of Bethlehem so early in the morning?

Boaz:
Doing the yearly circuit.
So, how have they been here on the farm?

(The following is to be done fairly rapid fire, like an Abbot and Costello routine. Farmers #3-#5 should be milling around.)

Levi:
You know. The usual.

Boaz:
Not enough rain.

Levi:
Too much rain.

Boaz:
Bugs.

Levi:
Locust.

Boaz:
Plagues.

Levi:
Thieves.

Boaz:
Tax collectors.

Levi:

Such language! Is there a difference?

(Together; Option: let all farms say this line in unison)

Boaz & Levi:

Why'd I ever go into this miserable excuse for a career?

Boaz:

So, it's the usual.

Levi:

Yep. Hey guys, what do you think of the farmer's life?

A Farmer's Life
(intro)

Farmer #4:

Hate it.

Farmer #5:

Despise it.

Farmer #4:

Great way to go broke.

Farmer #5 (or group):

But it's the only life for me. And besides. .

Farmers #2-5:

. . a farmer never complains.

(Farmers holding pitchforks and hoes. They are to hold them and tap to the last two beats. Consider having various farmers sing a stanza on their own, so that chorus people can have solos.)

A Farmer's Life

(Levi)

A farmer's life is full of worry and sweat.

(Boaz)

Will the crops come in?

(Levi & Boaz)

It's a Sucker's bet.

(Farmer #1 or small group)
We work 'til dusk just to grow the grain.
(Farmer #2)
Will the locust hit?
Will we get some rain?

(all)
Our backs are bent; we've got aches and pains.
But you'll never hear a farmer complain!

(Rakes and pitchforks up and down together twice on last beat; orchestra continues a little ommpa quietly while the below is spoken.)

Farmer #4:
Say, Levi, how's the crop?

Levi:
Filled with bugs and weeds.

(Boaz looks askew.)

Farmer #4:
But I thought you had a good crop?

Levi:
I do have a good crop. . . If I can sell weeds. *(To himself)*
Hey, maybe I can sell the weeds in the city as "organic salad."
Might get a good price.

Farmer #5:
Organic salad? That's a good one.
Levi, are you trying another scam?

(Incredulous but admitting it in his response.)

Levi:
Who me?

(All farmers & Levi, Boaz and Cast may join for Chorus, if desired)
(Listed voices are not critical, may be broken up further as to who sings which lines or whether several people join together.)

(Farmer #3)
A farmer works from dawn to setting sun.
(Farmer #4)
When the crop comes in, our work is never done!

(Small Group)

We pray for sunshine and then for rain.

(Larger Group)

Then we cut the hay and get hurricanes!

(All, Boaz optional)

Our backs are bent; we've got aches and pains.

But you'll never hear a farmer complain!

Farmer #3:

Hey, Levi, the barley harvest looks to be the best in years!

Levi:

Yeah, so the price'll collapse.

Farmer #3:

Yep. If the crop's good, the price is lousy and . .

(together)

Levi, Boaz & All Farmers:

. . if the price is good, the crop is lousy.

Levi:

There go the profits!

Farmer #5:

You know it.

(All Farmers & Levi)

(Farmer #1)

My neighbor's rich off some subsidy.

(Farmer #1 or #2)

Can't figure out why there's none for me.

(Farmer #4)

All year long we work the land.

(Farmer #5)

Who gets the profits?

(Small Group)

It's the middleman!

(All, Boaz Optional)

Our back are bent; we've got aches and pains.

But you'll never hear a farmer complain!

Boaz:

Uh, Levi, just how bad are these bugs and weeds?

Levi:

Well, the bugs are no worse than normal
and the weeds are not entirely weeds.

Boaz:

How can a weed not be a weed?

Levi:

Well, about a month ago I sent a teenager
to buy the seeds, see. .

(Incredulous)

Boaz:

You sent a teenager!?

(Levi uses his hands to indicate the placement of the spelt and salad seeds.)

Levi:

. . well the signs for "spinach" and "spelt" were right next to each
other. .

Boaz:

Didn't the workers notice the difference?

Levi:

.. well . . they wanted to ask me but . . . I was . . er . . occupied. So,
we've got about ten times more spinach than we can sell here.
Might as well be weeds . . .

Boaz:

How bad?

Levi:

. . we might make money . . . next year . .

Boaz:

(Resigned shrug)

(Levi sympathetic)

Levi:

It's farming . . .

(Farmers Chorus)

(Farmer #3)

A farmer is co-ver'd with dirt, crud and grime.

(Farmer #4)

Hey, we use manure! Is that a crime?

(Group of 2 or 3)

We live on hope as the seeds they grow.

(Alternative group of 2 or 3)

How it happens, God only knows.

(All)

Our back are bent; we've got aches and pains.

(Various groups/solos) (all)

But you'll never, never, never, never, never hear a farmer complain!

Boaz:

So, Levi, is there any way to dress up this salad disaster?

Levi:

Well, as you well know, I'm not just a farmer,
but a salesman par excellence. The key is marketing --

Boaz:

Marketing?

Levi:

Yep. I just got back from Jerusalem. . it's amazing
the people you'll see . . the stuff you can find to sell. . .

Now, a salad -- is just a weed by another name.
But, you put enough fatty dressing on it, you can eat
the stuff . . convince yourself it's healthy.

Boaz:

Levi, sometimes I worry about your crazy ideas.
Why don't you just settle down?
Marry Rachel . . have some kids . .
see if you can get *them* to eat spinach?

Levi:

Marriage equals children.
Children are expensive, messy and they cry a lot.
Means Levi's broke . . . Not gonna happen.

Boaz:

Well, she deserves better. She was the
sweetest, prettiest girl around here growing up.

(Playfully)

Levi:

You sure used to think so . . .
You could barely talk when she was around. What about you?
I thought I heard about a girl in Jerusalem. . .

(Levi, is concerned for his old friend.)

Boaz:

You know the routine.
Soon as her family found out about my family . . well . . .

(Levi shrugs.)

Levi:

Well, a lovin' family's better than a
respectable family that's not . .

(Boaz knowing nod.)

You know, we're quite the pair of ol' bachelors.
Hey, you know, maybe you still can find your
Someone -- you're relatively young.

Boaz:

Compared to Methuselah.

Levi:

Don't sell yourself short.
It's the First Rule of Selling: "Know your Product."
You've got something to sell: You're honest, dependable, and
you've got that "faith" thing. Some women like that.
Plus, you're sober.
When was the last time you had too much to drink?

Boaz:

Two years ago when I visited.
You didn't tell me just how hard the cider was.

Levi:

Umm, sorry about that.

Boaz:

Yeah.

Levi:

I, uh . . sell it, I don't much drink it, much.
(Schmoozing.) But . . if you're still in the market for a bride --

Boaz:
which I'm not . .

(Levi switches tactics -- pretends this is about him.)

Levi:
Look, Bo, let me level with yas . . much as I protest,
Rachel's been hinting about the dreaded M word.

Boaz:
Marriage? You?

Levi:
Please! Eight letters! A double four letter word!
Twice as bad.
But if you were looking -- not that you are, of course -- what would
you look for? . . it might help me to be sure . .

Boaz:
Oh . . well. . You? You're thinking?
Umm. . well she'd be patient, like Rachel . . .

(Levi smirking that he bought it)

Levi:
You know, you're right.
Boaz . . we need to open our eyes.
Prioritize.
Optimize.
Be surprised.

(May be sung a capella)

So, what would your "Dream Girl" be?

(Levi nods)

(You may notice that through the play, we see that Ruth and Rachel both have most features described by each of the men for their "Dream Girl" - Levi is earthier than Boaz.)

Dream Girl

(Boaz/"B") She's not concerned with social pedigree.

(Levi/"L") She'd let you steal a kiss under a tree.

(B) She'd always faithful, gentle and kind.

(L) And if she is pretty, Hey!

(B&L) We wouldn't mind.

(B) That's what my dream girl would be!

- (B) She'd be someone who'd fit me like a glove.
She'd care for her family.
- (L) All our fights would with us makin' love
She'd even put up with a jerk like me.
- (B&L) That's what my dream girl would be!

(Farmers/Men)

Oh, when you're dating they let you be.
They'll change when you're a "we".
Leave the seat up, she's gonn'a throw a fit --
Don't even think of saying . . .

(under his/their breath, annoyed) poop.

(All Farmers)

That's what your dream girl will be!

- (B) Someone who might challenge my intellect
She'd have wisdom, brains and flair.
- (L) But she'd very rarely ever get upset.
Farmers: I've never found a girl like that yet.

- (B) She'd worship and love the God I serve,
I'm sure she'd be someone I don't deserve
That's what my dream girl would be!

(Farmers/Men)

She'll take away your masculinity
She'll make ya into an emotional she.

(Solo)

Ya wish she'd make ya cookies, give ya a kiss or two.
But instead she's grip'n "Ya haven't a clue!"

(Farmers/Men)

That's what your dream girl will be!

(B)

When I want'a watch the game -- she won't mind!

(Farmers/Men)

You're dreaming of a girl you'll never find.

(Boaz)

Someone who is faithful, gentle and kind.

(Farmers/Men)

Buddy, you're out of your mind!

(Farmers)

Well, she'll spend your money 'til it's gone,
And then she'll ask for more.

When you say there's nothing left,
she's depressed -- she'll go and buy a dress -- at the store.
(*Puppet of a crow/raven -- "money, Nevermore" from Poe or ominous baritone/base*)
Aarawck! Money, NEVERMORE!

Ya want'a girl whose faithful, loyal and kind?
Why not get yourself a good canine?
Lassie's who your dream girl should be.

Farmers:
But the best advice is seldom took.
That's how so many guys get on the hook.
(Farmer #1) (Farmer #2)
She's always right! Your always wrong!
(All Farmers)
But your lost, why don't ya finish the song?

(Boaz)
Sometimes I wonder, "Does my Someone exist?"
Or, did my Someone I just miss?
God of Abram please part this sea
and somehow bring Miss Someone somewhere close to me!
(*All other than Boaz, barbershop harmony, on "me"*)
(That's what his dream girl would be!)

(*Orchestra short bridge*)

(**RUTH ENTERS** from stage right, bearing two suitcases, she leaves them at least 10 feet from the side stage or at the well, and then turns to go back to help Naomi, who is struggling. Boaz turns on last lines -- his voice may drop on the last note -- and sees her as she sets down the suitcases.)

His jaw drops as he sees her and stares. Levi may flick Boaz's chin -- Boaz retracts jaw. Boaz continues to stare in Ruth's direction but Exits before Ruth comes back with Naomi. Levi lingers as Ruth returns with Naomi. Levi extends his finger to the tip of his nose and almost imperceptively flicks in the direction of Naomi or nods at her before Exiting.)

(*mp*)
(Levi) Someone, so fetching you drop your jaw.
(*Boaz leans towards where Ruth exited*)
(Boaz) (p) She's about the prettiest girl I ever saw
 Could she be faithful, pure, devout?
(Levi) Muster your courage, Soldier, ask her out.

(Boaz) But, I dream of something that never can be
 Why would a girl like that, want'a guy like me?
 Someone who's faithful, gentle and kind
(Rit) won't work,
 no way,
 never mind.

(Boaz, deflated, starts to Exit.)

Boaz:

Didn't you say you had a new threshing floor, Levi?

Levi:

 Yep, out behind the barn.
 And in spite of the spinach disaster,
 this may be a very profitable trip for you.

(See Levi directions above)
(Levi & Boaz Exit)

Act 1, Scene 3
Coming Home

(Naomi and Ruth go over beside Boaz's well. The villagers start coming in as the scene develops with carts and farm tools. Phyllis may have a little flower stand or other stand already set up.)

Naomi:

Aw, the waters of home.

Ruth:

Are you sure we're allowed to drink here?

Naomi:

Until someone tells you different.

(Phyllis turns from her work, stage right.)

Phyllis:

Hold it . . . Naomi?

Naomi:

Yes Phyllis, it is me. It is good to see you.

Phyllis:

I thought I would never see you again. Has life been good?

Naomi:

No . . . Phyllis . . . life has not been good.
In fact, don't call me Naomi. Call me "Mara"! -- for "bitter"!
For the Almighty has made my life bitter.
I went out full. Now I am empty!
The windows of heaven opened with misery and suffering! . . .
God's judgment . . . with none of his mercy.

Man #1:

You shouldn't talk like that. It's sacrilege!

Naomi:

At my age, complaining's allowed . . . it is sorta like being a
teenager.
Ten years we worked scraping by. Bad soil! Weeds. Locust! -- I
fought them off with my broom and ax, I did! . . .
Eli died . . . Kilion, three years ago. . .
and then this winter . . . a plague.

(Quietly)

Ruth:
That's when Mal died.

Naomi:
Oh, Phyllis, I have forgotten my manners -- like everything else --
this is my daughter-in-law, Ruth, the only good thing I have
brought back from Moab, the land of my suffering.

Phyllis:
I'm pleased to meet you.

Ruth:
Thank you.

Naomi:
So, we finally left that God-forsaken land and came home.
Oh, how tired I am . . . carrying my burdens all the way here. All
uphill. What was it, 100 miles?¹

Ruth:
Uh, Mom, I think I carried the bags. .

Naomi:
You only carried them from when we left the city until here.
I carried them the rest of the way. You should remember that.
(Ruth bewildered.)
Besides, you are much younger and stronger than I.
Now, we will see how Leah kept up our old house. It's hardly
bigger than a tent but it is home.

(Ruth and Naomi Exit.)

Man #1:
I can't believe she'd go on that way -- about God cursing them. I'm
going to talk to the Rabbi.

(Man #1 exits stage left.)

Girl #1:
Who was that? Everyone'll want to know.

Phyllis:
Naomi and her daughter-in-law, Ruth, back from Moab.
It is Good News! God is bring his people home!

¹ If presented outside the states use "150 kilometers."

(Townspeople starting pouring in, Girl #1 will run in with the news to start News!)

Girl #1:

Ooooh! I've gotta spread the news!
A Moabite! One of our enemies! Right here!

*(Girl #1 shrugs. Townspeople start pouring in from both sides of the stage.
Women with water buckets, groceries.)*

NEWS

(Note: USE "HANNAH" for Girl 1 or Girl 2, If possible)

(Girl #1)

Have you heard the news?

(Chorus of 3-5)

Oh, what news?

(Girl #1)

Everyone is talking about what ensued.

(Chorus of 5 to 8 in a semi-circle)

You know we hate gossip.

It's all a bunch of rot.

We really shouldn't listen,
but please don't stop!

Girl #1

Well I heard it straight from Lisa,
who was told by Rabbi Rick,
You'll hear it from the crier on news at six.

(Girl #1; or vary with others)

Naomi left, and now she's back,

She feels cursed, under God's attack.

Poor and feeble, that's a fact,

Her fam'ly's dead, she's wearing black!

Chorus: Her fam'ly's dead, she's wearing black!

Girl #2

While in Moab, a locust attack!

They ate up all her wheat and flax.

Little Naomi, took her ax,

Tried to give every bug a whack!

Chorus: She tried to give every bug a whack!

(half chorus)
Oh what news!

(One man solo, finger to heaven, Eastern European accent)
Eyewitness news!

(all chorus)
Everyone is talking about what ensued.

(Interlude while a few more cast members Enter, Girl #3 turns to the newcomers)

(Girl #3)
Have you heard the news?

(half chorus)
Oh what news!

(Girl #3)
Everyone is talking about what ensued.

(Chorus)
(Chorus of 5 to 8 in a semi-circle)
You know we hate gossip,
It's all a bunch of rot.
We really shouldn't listen,
but please don't stop!

Girl #3
Naomi's back with her daughter-in-law,
the cutest girl you ever saw.
Dark clouds surround her pretty head,
She married a man and he woke up dead!

Chorus: She married a man and he woke up dead!

Simon:
That girl brings sin into our town,
Our good morals she'll bring down!
She's a yeast in holy bread,
The only good Moabite is one who's dead!

Chorus: The only good Moabite is one who's dead!

(1/2 chorus)
Oh what news!

(One man finger to heaven)
Eyewitness news!

(all chorus)

Everyone is talking about what ensued.

S.: Have you heard the news? Have you heard the news?

A.: Oh what news! Have you heard the news?

T:Eyewitness news!

S.: Have you heard the news? The news! The news! The news!

A.: Have you heard the news? The news! The news! The news!

T:The news! The news! The news! The news!

B: Everyone is talking, talking, talking, talking 'bout the news!

(Grandmas, using walkers/canes advance to Center Stage as below is sung, led by Sadie and Phyllis)

Grandmas:

We are the grandmas who raised you from the womb,
We won't bring about this poor girl's doom.
She cares for her Momma, as every girl should,
and we must conclude that she's awf'ly good!

Chorus: We must conclude that she's awf'ly good!

Old man:

Did you say that's she's awful?

Chorus:

We must conclude that she's awf'ly good!

Old man:

Oh, alright.

Sadie:

She's polite and loyal, an innocent dove,
and it's crystal clear, she's here for love!

Phyllis:

So perhaps in this gossip, you exaggerate
and we won't have our village ruled by lies and hate!

Chorus: No, we won't have our village ruled by lies and hate!

Lies and hate! Lies and hate!

We won't have our village ruled by lies and hate!

Hallelujah!

(from Handel's Messiah)

Aren't we special!

(Entire cast, except Simon, preen)

We won't have our village ruled by lies and hate!

Simon:

Well, I still say it's a bad wind that blows in people like that.
Cursed they are!

Older Woman #2:

God struck their husbands dead! We could be next!
It happened in Egypt, it could happen here!

Townsperson #2:

The death angel! The evil eye is upon them!

(Organ/orchestra may hit minor, sinister cords at mention of the death angel)

Simon:

War!

Townsperson #2:

Pestilence!

Townsperson #3:

Liberals!

All:

Eke!

Simon:

I say -- send her packing!

Sadie:

Fiddlesticks! We will give her a chance!

Girl #4:

Naomi now looks like a hag,
that girl may carry an awful plague!
The whole village died with them around,

Chorus:

We fear for the safety of our tiny town!
But we won't have our village ruled by lies and hate!

(1/2 chorus)

Oh what news!

(One man with hand in air -- OR may do with ALL to the tune of "Five Golden Rings" in the holiday song: Twelve Days of Christmas)

Eyewitness news!

(1/2 chorus)

Everyone is talking about what ensued.

(All Chorus)

The whole village died!

Everyone cried!

You can trust our story, 'cause we've never lied!

Amen!

(One cast may do a Catholic "crossing themselves" motion; several cast members may start sobbing at "everyone cried".)

(Curtain or lights off)

Act 1, Scene 4

A Cool Reception and a Friend in Need

Staging: Naomi's small house.

Shelves that used to be chicken nests. It may be appropriate -- but pushing it a little bit -- to have an egg roll down a ledge and fall on Naomi's head after she mentions the "chicken poop."

Ruth then leaves and faces farmers. Background a painted canvas of farmland with stone fence.

The "Wardrobe." *The inside of the house should have a primitive looking "wardrobe" commonly used in Europe a century ago (they probably still are). The door -- with wooden hinges -- is open and half off to show that the boards from the top of this wardrobe have broken and caved in. (The wardrobe will be used to hide grain in Act 2. It is to also -- unless a separate "fixed" wardrobe is used -- to have a false back door for Ruth to escape out of to change costumes in Act 2.)*

Ruth:

Well, we're almost in.

It's amazing how easy it is to move when you pack light.

Naomi:

Easy? You've been up since first light.

And I've been working myself to death. I can't believe Leah turned
the house into a chicken coop!

(Chicken clucking heard in the background.)

Hump! We're going to spend the rest of the summer smelling like
chicken poop.

Ruth:

Mom. At least it was still here.

We've a roof over our heads, spring has sprung, the birds are singing. It's like the whole earth is singing of the wonders of spring.

Naomi:

I don't know what you've drinking, but whatever it is you'd better cut back . . . and give me some.

Ruth:

Mom, we have no savings. I think I should try to find work. Maybe glean in the fields.

Naomi:

I will pray for you -- not that God listens to me.
But perhaps? . . . for you, He will listen?

(Ruth walks out and takes a deep breath as she surveys the fields around her. Lights on house fade.)

Setting: Backdrop painted of countryside with stone fences (how they marked their borders) with amber fields of grain, some ready for harvest (barley) others (wheat) still growing. It is a pathway. A portion of a stone fence is placed upper stage right for sitting on in scene 5. Farmers will enter with hoes or other farm tools.

(Ruth taking a deep breath.)

Ruth:

OK . . . find work. Wherever. Whoever.

(Approaching farmer lower stage right. The staging on this is that Ruth will be attacked from all sides. At the end the men will fade back away from her with Ruth left near tears.)

Ruth:

Excuse me. Sir, I was wondering if you are hiring anyone? Or if I may glean?

Farmer #1:

Are you crazy? There's only enough here for me and my family.
No one else sets foot on my land. Move along, trash.

(Ruth approaching Simon lower stage left.)

Simon:

Hey, aren't you the Moabite wench?
Did you bring one of your idols along with you?

Farmer #2:

Balaam's curse is on the whole Nation.

Farmer #3:

Or you can come over here if you'd like to do a little work on the
side.

Ruth:

No! . . .

(Ruth recoils. Backtracks. Farmers laugh in derision. Lights off them. They fade back and Exit. Ruth's whimpering, her voice will be breaking and sighing, as she tries to hold back the tears. To herself.)

Ruth:

Lord, what have I gotten myself into? . . .

(She continues to whimper. Rachel Enters.)

Rachel:

Excuse me, are you alright?

Ruth:

. . yes . . no . . I was just asking for work. .

Rachel:

Oh . . *(under her breath)* them. . .
please don't judge the rest of us by them . .
Hey . . aren't you the new girl . . Ruth? Who's helping Naomi?

Ruth:

You know of me?

Rachel:

It's a small town . .
Hi, I'm Rachel.

(She holds out her hand.)

And you're nice. I'd never do that for my mother-in-law -- not that
I'll ever have one.

Ruth:

Why are you so sure you'll never get married?

(Rachel sighs.)

Rachel:

I'm afraid a lion will lie down beside a lamb before I get *that* man
under a canopy. I should dump him.
Look, I work at the farm a half mile away. Why don't you join me?
I was running late . .

Ruth:

Sleep in?

(Rachel only slightly nervous)

Rachel:

. . touch of the flu. . If you don't see me tomorrow, just follow the
people wearing the red sash.
It's the mark of our farm.

Ruth:

It must be nice . . to belong. . . Uh, your landlord?

Rachel:

No worries. Sweetest guy you'll ever meet.
I grew up with him. Maybe a little too religious.
The foreman however . . .

Ruth:

He's bad?

Rachel:

Oh, he's loud, stubborn, greedy, manipulative, obstinate and
arrogant. In short, he's a man.

Ruth:

Sounds bad.

(Nodding)

Rachel:

Oh, it's worse than that. He's MY man.

(Ruth chuckling to herself.)

Ruth:

I know what that's like.

*(Ruth joins in the chuckle.
They Exit.)*

Act 1, Scene 5
A Little Spark

Setting: Boaz's Farm & Well.

Bucket in well with an old fashioned drinking ladle. Backdrop of fields with stalls going into the backdrop, where grain is stored. Ruth is to enter stage left carrying a small armload of grain on stalks. Levi has his clipboard scroll. Poppi is something like a muscle shirt getting a drink from the bucket. Levi should be in flim-flam man mode (think: The Music Man).

Levi:

Hey, you, come here ..

Poppi:

You wanted to see me?

Levi:

Well, of course, Peter.

I care about all of the workers here on the farm.

Poppi:

. . it's Poppi. What'daya want?

(Levi, returns to his Music Man routine.)

Levi:

Oh, well, Poppi I've been working for years to produce some healthy food.

Poppi:

Health food? You?

Levi:

Oh course, my boy, of course. And I'd like to offer you a once in a lifetimes opportunity -- let yas in on the ground floor.

(Interrupting)

Poppi:

I don't want to invest in one of your crazy schemes, Levi.

(Levi not paying much attention.)

Levi:

Now, now, you just don't understand. You won't have to invest anything. You just have to say how you've been eating my organic spinach and that's why you're so strong.

Poppi:

But I hate vegetables. I eat meat.
And I don't want any more work, Levi.

Levi:

Work? Who said anything about work? All you have to do is
make a few personal appearances -- farmer's markets, athletic
events . . . always keep a can of spinach with you . . . lift fake
weights . . . talk to people . . .

Poppi:

. . . and tell 'em?

Levi:

Weren't you listening? That you always eat spinach.
That's why you're strong. I can see it now: "Eat your spinach, and
you'll be as strong as Poop-ee."

Poppi:

Poppi.

Levi:

Uh, right. We'll put your picture on pottery, barns, storage bins,
everywhere.

(Poppi looks at wilted spinach leaf with disdain.)

Poppi:

But, eating weeds can't make you strong! I've always been big. I
got stronger oaring Philistine ships.

Levi:

I'll pay you.

Poppi:

How much?

Levi:

I was thinking 5% of whatever spinach we sell. So for every talent
of coppers we take in you'll be paid one copper.

Poppi:

Aren't there 50 coppers in a talent?

Levi:

So there are. So there are. See. . strong and smart.
(Poppi bewildered) I was never very good at math.
So we're agreed? A copper a talent's good?

Poppi:

I guess . . .

(Looking at green spinach leaf.)

And you think people will actually eat a weed?

Levi:

If you do, I'm sure they will . .

Poppi:

Not that I care . . but is this honest?

Levi:

It's selling my boy, selling -- one of the most noble professions in
world! Nobody expects you to use what you promote --
you just have to pretend to.

And . . girls from all over the kingdom will swoon.

(Poppi perks up.)

Poppi:

When do we leave?

(Poppi flexes and preens.)

(Poppi takes some spinach over towards the well. Ruth enters carrying an armload of grain stalks. Poppi bites on some spinach and spits it out as uncouthly as possible, possibly at her feet. He may try practicing his projection spitting -- ding as he hits something. Ruth is a bit appalled at his behavior. Poppi grabs a cup and fills it with water and rinses out his mouth then spits out all over. Levi continues working with his makeshift clipboard, side stage. Ruth places the grain in a stall a few feet to the right of the well. She picks up a small drinking flask she brought with her, feels it for weight -- sloshing it -- then turns it upside down. It is empty. She wipes her head to overcome the sweat. Looks down at the flask. Then over at the pail of water and wets her lip. She starts walking towards the water.

Poppi turns and sees her and attempts to turn on the charm -- think Gaston.)

Poppi:

Hey, you're new here.

Ruth:

Yes my, Lord.

(She nods a partial bow.)

Poppi:

I'm not a Lord. I'm just part of the crew.

(Filling up with pride.)

In fact, I'm the strongest one on the crew . .
the strongest in the town . . maybe the whole tribe.

Ruth:

Uh, huh. That's nice.

Poppi:

I'm so strong that Levi's got me doing personal appearances. . let
the girls squeeze my biceps. They love to feel my taunt body.

Ruth:

I'm sure. .

(He offers a bicep . .)

Poppi:

Would you like to feel my taunt . . . ?

Ruth:

. . maybe later. Is this a community well?

Poppi:

No, it's only for those of us here.
Hey, why don't you fill my glass, that's women's work.

(He sits down on the wall or the well while Ruth begins to pull the bucket from the well. It should reflect the water begin at least 20 feet down -- and the bucket plus water weighs about 10-15 lbs. When she brings it up -- wipes her brow, and pours a cup for him.)

Ruth:

Of course.

(She reaches down looking at the bucket and fills Poppi's glass.

Boaz Enters.

He glances at Ruth and perks up Then sees that she's talking with Poppi and nods/shrugs to himself as if to say, "Of course." His shoulders slouch as he deflates.

Ruth continues holding the bucket.

*Poppi continues to mouth a conversation, Poppi may be a little animated, **he knocks the bucket back into the well.** Ruth is annoyed.*

For Below: With Poppi -- consider at matinees having Poppi start calling himself "poopee", as if picked up Levi's statement. It should be a good laugh for the kids.)

Poppi:

I bet you were wondering how I got this strong.

Ruth:

Umm . . .

Poppi:

I used to row Philistine ships, they called me "Poppi the Sailor."

Ruth:

Why'd you quit?

Poppi:

Umm . . . I get seasick.

Ruth:

So, "Poppi the Sailor" never goes to sea?

(He shrugs. Lights down on them and switch over to Boaz and Levi)

Boaz:

Well, Levi, how goes the harvest?

Levi:

Pretty good. Say, Boaz . . . see that gleaner over there?
Quite a lady . . . All day long, hardly a break.

Boaz:

Hum, I think I saw her yesterday.

(Levi smirking)

Levi:

Really? I hadn't noticed.

Boaz:

So, what's her story?

(Levi soft selling.)

Levi:

Came in with Rachel this morning. Kind'a sweet.
Name's Ruth. Came from Moab.

Boaz:

Moab?

Levi:

Yep. Ya know, my friend, if the rumors are true, she's as devoted to your God as you . . . gave up everything for Him and to care for her poor, aged, mother-in-law . . .

Boaz:

Her *mother-in-law*?

Levi:

Yep, little old widow. You might remember her -- Naomi. Married to Elky or something . . .

Boaz:

Eli. Yeah. Short for Elimelech. Shirt-tail relations. I'm glad they're back. I'll invite 'em over.

Levi:

Well, that might be difficult. They died. (*Obvious Sigh.*) So Ruth's a widow, too. Sad, really. Pretty young thing, facing tragedy so young in life. So . . . vulnerable . . . scared . . . But, she just smiles and digs right in.

Boaz:

Look's like someone's taken an interest. Awe, to be young. . He's a horse of a man.

Levi:

Yeah, but he thinks his gift to the world is to be put out to stud.

Boaz:

Oh.

Levi:

Don't worry, she's not his type.

Boaz:

Why not?

Levi:

She's smart.

Boaz:

And you figured this all out in the 3 hours?

(Smirking)

Levi:

Try 3 minutes.

Boaz, I sell. And what he's selling, she's not buying. Umm, did I mention she's single?

Boaz:

Might'a come up.

(Levi Smirking through this section.)

Levi:

You should talk to her. It might even be part of God's plan. .

Boaz:

Since when did you worry about "God's plan"?

Levi:

Since I figured out it was your hot button . .
But still . . isn't there something in the Good Book about "care for orphans and widows who look good in a dress"?

Boaz:

What!?! . . . No! . . Oh! It's care for "widows and orphans in their *distress*".

Levi:

Humm, I bet He'd get a lot more volunteers my way . . .
But how many guys get a chance to do both? Huh? Huh?

Boaz:

OK! . . I'll talk to her . . . be hospitable . .

Levi:

You do that. And I still like my version better . .

(Levi exits or lights go on so he can watch from the side. Poppi is squeezing his biceps and Ruth is making a face like she's rather be eating stewed skunk cabbage.)

Boaz:

Excuse me . . . are you working?

(Poppi nervously jerks his water, spraying it over his chest. Ruth is apprehensive, too. She may recoil a bit when Poppi says "Master", as she's seen some farm owners.)

Poppi:

Master Boaz! Uh, hello, Sir, I didn't realize you were in town.

Boaz:

. . obviously . .

Poppi:

Uh. . I'm just going back to work. .

Boaz:

. . good idea. . .

(Poppi hurriedly exits.)

Boaz:

Uh, excuse me Miss. . . ?

Ruth:

Ruth. I'm sorry, Sir. I was just filling his cup . . .
If I need to leave I will . . uh . .
Would you like a drink?

Boaz:

Did you get any for yourself?

Ruth:

No, I . . . I was told it wasn't allowed.

Boaz:

Oh, well, as long as you're here, please take drinks
and breaks with the crew -- if you want to, of course.

Ruth:

Thank you.

*(He moves over to help and will pull the pale up or cranks the handle
if a bucket well after she agrees to let him.*

It should take enough effort that she has a reason to be thankful.)

Boaz:

May I help?

Ruth:

Umm, isn't that women's work?

Boaz:

Uh . . I won't tell if you don't . . And I think you've probably been working harder than me today. Here.

(He hands her the glass.)

Ruth:

Thank you.

(He starts to leave.)

Boaz:

uh . . I am pleased to meet you, Ruth.
I hope you'll stay here through harvest. . You'll be safe.

(He turns away from her back she comes after him. She may touch his cloak or arm. In the Biblical account she goes to her knees, which is a bit much.)

Ruth:

Sir -- why are you being so kind to me?
I'm a . . a foreigner. . from . . .from . .

Boaz:

Oh . . . uh,
I've been told about all that you're doing for your mother-in-law . .
living under the wings of the God of Israel. . .
you remind me . . . Well, may God bless you.

(A slight bow of her head. He fidgets to leave but -- maybe -- she likes his company.)

Ruth:

Thank you, sir. I don't deserve it. Thank you. .

(Boaz is a little taken back and embarrassed by this expression of gratitude. He looks down with longing. Frankly, he loves being a knight in shining armor. Just as Ruth seeks safety, he has sought an encouraging word from a woman for a very, very long time. A loud bell rings or horn is heard signaling the lunch break.)

Boaz:

Ruth, you do.
Ummm, look, it's almost lunch time. . if you'd like. . why don't you
join me and my workers? If you want . .
It's not anything special . . but sometimes they sing or tell stories,
you won't have to just listen to me . .

Ruth:

Thank you, Sir, I'd love to . . uh . . listen to you.

Boaz:

And it's just Boaz or Bo, just Bo. .

Ruth:

OK. Thank you, Mr. Boaz, I'd love to.

(He may react to the "Mr. Boaz" but he leads her, possibly taking her arm, to sit at the head beside him. Ruth quietly giggles with glee as he holds the chair for her, then she pretends to keep a straight face. Boaz leaves to get her some food. Some of the servant girls give her an envious eye as they pass. Others smile as they've hoped Boaz would meet someone. She nibbles on a grape or other food.

Boaz approaches, carrying food -- possibly more than Ruth can eat.

He attempts to talk like a waiter, including hopeless accent -- other foreign phrase may be used other than brûlé which isn't too hard to pronounce.)

Boaz:

Now, I have sampler appetizer tray: early season barley, mid-season barley, last years rye and -- my own special contribution to today's exquisite cuisine -- a brûlé barley roll -- which is to say:
I burnt it.

And you'll need something to wash this down --
Would My Lady care for fresh well water, watered down wine, or
perhaps our fall vintage cider?

Ruth:

Do you have a recommendation?

Boaz:

The Cider. Levi's secret recipe. He's even got a slogan:
"Have a bunch, it packs a punch!"

Ruth:

Then, the cider.

Boaz:

But go easy on it. The last time I was here . . two goblets, slept
like a dead man.

Ruth:

I shall drink in moderation.

(He goes over to get the cider jug. Rachel holding a small plate moves next to her.)

Rachel:

So, what brought this on?

(She shrugs.)

Ruth:

I don't know. *(smirks)* But I like it.

Rachel:

From gleaning to guest of honor to the Master --
not a bad day's work.

(Boaz reenters with glass and jug. He pours.)

Boaz:

Now tell me, how goes the gleaning?

Ruth:

Well, I've gotten a little.

(She proudly holds up a bag with about one quart or liter that she's gleaned.

Boaz tries to smile, but realizes how little she's earned -- hardly enough to feed herself, let alone Naomi. She will not pick up on his concern but be thrilled at the amount.)

Boaz:

That's a morning's work?

Ruth:

Well, half a morning . . . And it's all because of your generosity.
Thank you so much!

(He grimaces at little it is, tries to recover. He may take a sip of the cider.)

Boaz:

. . . now, how is it that you decided to give up everything to join
Naomi here in Israel?

Ruth:

Well, I grew to love her.

I was the daughter she'd never had.

Mal was sick . . . a lot . . . even before the plague . . . there were a lot
of long nights . . . Naomi and me -- we'd cry together. She'd tell me
the old stories . . . it helped me sleep.

Plus, I've tried to follow your God -- the God of Father Lot --
since I was a young.

Boaz:

Really? Why?

(Ruth shudders.)

I'm sorry. . . did I say something wrong? . . .
I didn't mean to pry. . .

Ruth:

No . . no, it's all right.

I know your secret . .

Boaz?

my secret? *(or quizzical look)*

Ruth:

. . that you do women's work -- you cook and draw water . .

Boaz:

That's hardly a secret -- and what I do in a kitchen can hardly be
called cooking . . pyromania maybe?

Ruth:

See another secret! I've never know a pyromaniac!

OK, now my secret . .

(He shakes head. She takes a deep breath, gets serious)

. . . when I was a kid, my best friend, Marta well she had the
cutest little sister -- Hannah.

We'd babysit. Give her baths.

Sing songs. . she'd coo. I babied her. . .

Then one day . . "They" came.

Boaz:

They"?

Ruth:

The priests of Chemesh. They said Hannah was "perfect."

I didn't understand. Her Mom started to cry.

They made us go to the ceremony . . at solstice . . .

Boaz:

I'm . . I'm sorry.

Ruth:

I had nightmares for years . . . Dad'd hold me while I cried. I told him I'd *never* bow to Chemesh. He said I didn't have to.

Boaz:

How old were you?

Ruth:

Seven.

I knew a few of the stories . . . Abraham . . . with his son on the mountain . . . that's the God I wanted.

But there aren't a lot of books about your God in Moab. So meeting Naomi and her family was one of the best days of my life.

(She smiles, a slight flirt.)

Sort of like today . . .

Boaz:

Hold it . . . you read?

Ruth:

When I can. But I'm not very good at Hebrew.

(She shrugs; tries to let him talk. He's realizing she's literate in several languages)

It must be wonderful to have been born into the promise -- like you.

Boaz:

. . . well. um . . . I know part of your story, I guess you should know mine -- everyone else does.

Um, my Mom wasn't an Israelite, either. When dad married her it was something of a scandal. If you've heard our history, maybe you've heard of Mom -- Rahab?

(Excited but catching herself before calling Rahab a harlot.)

Ruth:

Rahab? Rahab the Har . . .

Boaz:

That's right. Rahab the Harlot. At least that what people called her behind her back. I was the "half-breed" from Jericho.

Some parents wouldn't let their kids have anything to do with me.

Ruth:
I'm sorry.

Boaz:
It's OK. We had to live outside the
regular camp. . . like garbage.
But we had Joshua's promise and the Scarlet Cord of Faith. Mom
kept it in a place of honor.

(Servant Girl -- "Debbie" -- ideally a large black woman, enters, stage right, carrying plate of food; song is to be joined by a group of men who are field hands or can be sung by Boaz in the lead. Part may also be done by Rachel or another cast member.)

Debbie:
That's right . . . that's why we all wear the red sash.
It all goes back to Jericho.

(Style: Jazz/Southern Gospel)

(NOTES: Music has finger snaps throughout but they may be reduced or eliminated during the singing portions.

Female solo for what Mama said -- measures 48-is done in Southern gospel, preferably by a black singer. Singer should consider taking it up an octave and let loose.)

Jericho

(Men)

(Finger snaps)

We're walkin' and talkin' 'bout Jericho.
We're just walkin' and talkin' 'bout Jericho.

(Male solo)

Just walkin' and talkin' 'bout Jericho
and the legacy lives wherever you go.
How Rahab defied the king's command
and joined God's people in promise land.

(Men)

We're walkin' and talkin' 'bout Jericho.
We're just walkin' and talkin' 'bout Jericho.

(Male solo)

Now the people marched all around the town.
And the mighty walls came a tumblin' down.

(Woman Solo) (Those mighty walls came a tumblin' down.)

(Chorus): We're walkin' and talkin' 'bout Jericho,
we're just walkin' and talkin' 'bout Jericho.

(Men) And the legacy lives wherever we go.

(Male solo)

All the folks said, "Woman get out of town,
'cause we don't want the likes of you around.

(Chorus)

"You're a sinner, a stain! You're not like us!
So, get your 'bod off the Promise Land Bus!
"Hus -- so get your 'bod off the Promise Land Bus."

(Debbie)

But Momma said, "No! I won't go!
I punched my ticket at Jericho."
For I'm tied by the ribbon.
I'm tied by the blood.
I'm tied by my heart to the God I love,
so, I won't leave the Promised Land, Bus,
Gus.
No, I won't leave the Promised Land Bus."

(Women)

She won't leave the Promised Land Bus, Gus.
No, she won't leave the Promised Land Bus.
(Debbie): (You know I'm go-in')

(Men & Soloist)

We're walkin' and talkin' 'bout Jericho,
we're just walkin' and talkin' 'bout Jericho.

(All)

Just walkin' and talkin' 'bout Jericho,
and the legacy lives wherever we go.

(Interlude)

(Male solo)

Now, people build walls with other stones
that are so much higher than Jericho's.

(Female solo -- may be Debbie)

There's walls of hatred and prejudice
there's lying lips, incredulous.

(Duet: Debbie/Male Solo)

But God has a powerful, mighty plan,
before his love, those walls won't stand.

(Debbie)

I have a dream that's in God's plan
of all God's people standing hand in hand

(Chorus) (Chorus may raise hands to the sky)
(I Have a Dream!)

(Duet or Soprano/Baritones #2)
So, hop on the Promised Land Bus, Gus
just hop on the Promised Land Bus!

(Measures 110-113)

F Solo: Hop on . . . the Promised Land

T & B: We're walkin' and talkin' 'bout Jericho, we're just walkin' and talkin' about Jericho.

S/A: Just hop on the Bus! Promised Land

(Measures 114-117)

F Solo: Bus Hop on the Promised

S/A: Bus! The Promised Land bus!

T & B: Walkin' and talkin' 'bout Jericho, we're just walkin' and talkin' about Jericho.

M. Solo: Hop on the bus! Hop on the Bus!

(Measures 118-121)

F Solo: Land Hop on the Promised

S/A: Walkin' and talkin' 'bout Jericho, we're just walkin' and talkin' about Jericho

T & B: Walkin' and talkin' 'bout Jericho, we're just walkin' and talkin' about Jericho

M. Solo:

(Measures 121-125)

F Solo: Just hop on the

S/A: Talkin'

T & B: and the legacy lives wherever we go! Walkin' We're

M. Solo: We're walkin' and talkin' 'bout Jericho and the

(Measures 126-128)

F Solo: bus The Promised Land Bus!

S/A: Talkin'

T & B: We're Walkin'

M. Solo: and legacy lives wherever we go.

(Measure 129-132)

T & B: We're Walkin' We're Walkin' nnnnnnnnn

(Fade out)

Ruth:

That was wonderful!

Boaz:

I'm glad you liked it. Hey, would you like to see the original sash?

(Enthusiastic.)

Ruth:
You've still got it?!

Boaz:
Yep.
Hey, Levi, could you bring over Mom's sash? . .

When Mom got sick I thought she'd want to be buried with it. But she said: "No, the Promise is for you, too. This is God's gift and mine."
When I visit her grave, like today, I sometimes get it out.

(Levi brings over the box with the red sash. Boaz opens it. Ruth stares like she is looking at a fragile heirloom.)

Boaz:
It's OK, you can touch it.

Ruth:
It's like touching a piece of history.

Boaz:
I know. And after all these years, the fabric's never faded. Sometimes when I'm felling bad. I just hold it.

Ruth:
I'm glad it all worked out for you.

Boaz:
Um . . well, I was only tolerated. In a way, I've always lived outside the camp. It wasn't just being teased as a kid . .

Ruth:
Oh . .

Boaz:
. . when I got older . . well, who wants their daughter to marry into a scandal? . .
Would like some more grain?

(When he mentions not being married Ruth perks up, the wheels are turning. Her YES should give away to the audience that's she's interested.)

Ruth:

YES!

Boaz:

. . that was an enthusiastic.

(She catches herself and feigns innocence.)

Ruth:

Oh, it's just so good.

Boaz:

Thanks, look, why don't you take the leftovers home to Namoi. A
"welcome home" present?

Ruth:

Thank you.

(He gets up to partially leave. Ruth picks up her sack or shawl and prepares to exit. She may look over in Boaz's direction and smile. Will this be a one time meeting or will the sparks catch fire? Boaz motions for Levi, who leaves his place beside Rachel. Levi is a bit smug.)

Boaz:

Levi . . . about that girl . .

Levi:

Uh, huh.

Boaz:

Um . . let her gather the first cutting with the men. In fact, have
them drop a few stalks from the bundles and let her pick them up.

(Levi looks at him with a questioning gaze.)

Boaz:

. . it's the widow and orphan thing. I've been blessed,
outt'a be generous.

Levi:

Uh, huh. You like this girl, Boss?

(Shrugs)

Boaz:

Gott'a admire her. . faith . .

(He exits)

(For below line, Levi, pumps his fist back -- almost like he just made a perfect putt.)

Levi:

And I'm sure the only thing you see is her faith.

Well, there go the profits . . .

(Levi chuckles, Exits.)

Scene 6: A Protector

(Setting. Naomi's home. Naomi is pacing. Lights are dim, it's twilight or later.)

Naomi:

Oh, why did I let that girl go out on her own. Without a chaperon.
Without friends. She's probably lying in some ditch.

(She wags a finger at heaven on the last line.)

Oh, if something happened to her, I'll never forgive
myself and I'll never forgive you either.

(Ruth enters. Dragging. She's tired.)

Ruth:

I'm home!

Naomi:

What have you been doing up out so late! I was worried sick. I
should have given you a curfew! With nothing to eat!
And on a school night, too!

Ruth:

I don't go to school anymore, Mom.

Naomi:

And what difference does that make to a poor Momma,
worried about the only child she has?

Ruth:

I've been working, Mom. They let me eat there. I threshed the barley
after I finished up. It took awhile . . . Oh, my muscles. . .

Naomi:

How long can that take? Trashing from a picked over field?

(Ruth drags in a bag of about 5 gallons in her shawl -- or 20-25 lb feed bag -- of grain.)

Naomi:

Holy, Shilo! Ruthie? How did you do this?

(Sheepishly)

Ruth:

Well, I worked *really* hard.

Naomi:

Ruth, I know you work hard. But that's enough food for two
week's work! Now, far be it from me to pry. .

Never would I do such a thing . . .
But, did a man noticed you?

Ruth:
Motttther!

Naomi:
Ruthie, some work their backs, some bat their eyelashes!
Whatever works. We have to eat.
Well, come on -- What happened? Who was he?

(Slightly embarrassed, gleeful).

Ruth:
Well, I came to the field of a man named Boaz. He's nice.

(Hand to her mouth)

Naomi:
Boaz! . . . He's a relative! A kinsman -- a protector!

Ruth:
Uh . . a 'kinsman'? protector?

Naomi:
Oh, you do not know? You who can read and know everything!
Moses said we must help widows and their children.
Family leaders -- kinsmen -- are to protect them.

Ruth:
I have a protector?

Naomi:
Your greatest protector is God -- not that He did me much good. .
perhaps the Almighty hasn't turned his back on us -- *(quietly)* or at
least you.

Ruth:
I'm supposed to go back there tomorrow.

Naomi:
Go! Go every day! You will be safe there. May God bless him for
taking notice of you!

(Lights Fade)

Act 1, Scene 7
Men Are So Stupid

(Scene: At the farm/well.

The apple tree changes to summer foliage -- the blossoms either fall or are replaced with an overview of the tree with small apples. A few merchants are set up for business. Signs may "cherries" crossed out and "barley" and "plums" added.)

Phyllis:

Naomi, what brings you this way.

Naomi:

I've made fresh bread for my Ruthie. I thought I would come down
and give it to her for her lunch.

Phyllis:

Naomi, Ruth has been eating with Boaz and his workers for two
months. You can't fool me -- you're spying.

Naomi:

Spying, never would I do such a thing! But she brings home so
much grain. Everyday singing. I think it long time past when I
should see what she is singing about. No?
Perhaps I should knit . . . and wait . .

Phyllis:

and watch?

*(They sit down stage left and mostly in the background for most of the remainder of the scene.)
(Levi and Poppi enters, Poppi carry weights. Levi with a cart proclaiming that Spinach is the
Wonder Vegetable. He'll hold up ceramic jars with Poppi's face on it. "Poppi Eats It!"
"Become as Strong as Poppi!"; "Lose Weight!"; "Spinach -- The Secret of Long Life!"
Other options include signs on the tree and banners.)*

Levi:

Step right up ladies and gentlemen! See the amazing Poppi!
He can lift 10 times as much as a normal man!
Why? Because he eats a new amazing MIRACLE FOOD!
Spinach!
Yes, Spinach, friends, it makes you as strong as Poop-ee!
It'll help you lose weight! Improve your love life!
Increase life expectancy!
It's the miracle food that Methuselah used to eat! And he was
practically immortal.
Kids love it! Moms swear by it!

(Rachel is to do the following with a bemused annoyance and a bit of a chuckle, she can't help but smile at his exploits.)

Rachel:

Levi, what are you doing?

Levi:

Selling, my dear, selling.

(To crowd)

So you don't forget!

Call us today and order Levi's Organic Spinach!

Don't accept a substitute! Get the best! The one Poppi eats!

Rachel:

As strong as Poppi? It helps you lose weight?

Levi:

Absolutely -- I hired one of the servant girls to eat it and she lost five pounds in two weeks!²

Rachel:

That's because she found it so disgusting she hardly ate.

Levi:

See .. it worked.

Rachel:

Levi!

Levi:

And if you're so indignant, why are you smiling?

Rachel:

'Cause, much as I hate to admit it, I love hearing your schmuck, you schmuck. You don't think anyone will believe this, do you?

Levi:

We've sold 10 cases so far. Sweetheart, let me tell you . . the world is a cruel place and if you sell a little hope --

Rachel:

But it's a fraud!

² If done in a country that uses metric, then convert but use an integer.

Levi:

Such language! It's business. You give'm something to smile about, something to hope and dream in, and pretty soon you've got either a great new product or a religion.

Rachel:

A religion?

Levi:

I don't want to start one of those. Might get stoned. Like ours fine. Look, I'm not pretending to be holy -- I'm not that good a hypocrite.

(rolling her eyes)

Rachel:

Well, I'm glad there are some limits . . .
But Levi, it's just not right!

Levi:

What? Have I forgotten something? . . . Oh, of course, *music!* . . .
Which reminds me, how about you and me getting together tonight
and making our own sweet music?

Rachel:

Levi! Keep it down!

Levi:

Hey, it was just an idea. It's been awhile.

Rachel:

Well, you just want me when *you* want me.

Levi:

Hey, you gott'a make hay when the sun shines and make green
while the spinach is fresh.
We'll have plenty of time in winter.

Rachel:

When it's convenient for you.

(She turns and leaves in a slight hump while he's trying to explain. Ruth and crew come in and drink from dipper at the well. The last line is under Levi's breath.)

Levi:

Rachel, it's . . . Boy, I've gotta work on my delivery. . .

(Crew including Ruth starts coming in. Rachel steps back to await another opportunity to plead her case.)

Crew #1 (Ben):

Say, Ruth, Jacob here dropped another bundle in the back field.
You'll have to clean it up.

Ruth:

Thanks for mentioning it, Ben. But you really should be more careful, Boaz isn't going to make any money at this rate.

Crew #1 (Ben):

Yeah, we'll watch it. Boaz's got a real head for figures.

(He snickers. She's not sure whether to be insulted or flattered.)

Ruth:

Well . . . thanks again.

(All go to the table Ruth goes over and gets a drink. Boaz meanders over. Below Ruth is to be bit flirtation and a touch embarrassed. She knows what's going on and she wants to encourage him. Boaz is a bit embarrassed and pleased at the same time. He should leave his coat -- or something, such as a scroll -- side stage, so that he has to separate and return.)

Boaz:

So how is the work today, Ruth?

Ruth:

It's so good. I've already gotten a bushel. You know I'd heard that gleaning was really hard work, but since I first talked to you, you'd be amazed how much you can get . . .

Boaz:

You don't say. . .

Ruth:

If I didn't know better, I'd say a wonderful and generous landlord might just have put his employees up to dropping things on purpose.

Boaz:

I'm sure I don't know anything about that.

(Intro music for Your Love is Sweeter starts during Ruth's comments below.)

Ruth:

Uh humm . . . I'm sure you don't. You know it was really nice too,
the way all the girls started getting flowers with their pay on
Fridays. They even gave me some, too, and I'm just a gleaner . . .

(Perking up / sheepish --)

Boaz:

Really? Did you like 'em?

Ruth:

Daisies they're my favorite . . . now. So, yesterday you promised to
tell me about fighting with Gideon.

Boaz:

It was nothing.

Ruth:

Nothing? You were part of the 300. You were outnumbered a five
hundred to one!

Boaz:

Well . . . yeah, but . . . mostly I just stood around and yelled . . . look,
let me get my coat.

*(I've used "coat" below. Can be jacket, paperwork, tea, cider, anything, so long as he has
to go side stage away from her.)*

(He walks side stage. Ruth puts some daisies in a vase. Ruth and Boaz to themselves.)

Your Love is Sweeter

(Prelude)

(Ruth)

Can you see the way I'm looking?
The longing in my eyes?
Can you feel my heart beating?
Can you hear my muted signs?

(Boaz)

How, hopeless my yearning.
How feeble my prayers.

(Ruth & Boaz)

Every night on my pillow,
dreaming you might care.

(Boaz & Ruth)

You are the one I've always dreamed of.
Kind and so caring, so filled with love.

(Boaz)

I stumble, I bumble, never felt like this.

(Ruth) *(frustrated)*

Put your arms around me, I long for your kiss.

(He walks back over.)

Ruth:

Now, tell me everything --

(They exit together as he tells the story.)

Boaz:

Well, Gideon put out the call, and I wanted to prove myself -- I was
tired of living under a cloud . . .

I just felt I needed to drink . . . differently.

That's about all I did, other than scream my lungs out.

And it sort'a worked out 'cause after we won -- well, it's been
easier.

(They exit side stage. Ruth looks at her him with love in her eyes. He looks the same at her but turns flushed at his reaction. Naomi now talks to Phyllis. Levi moves in behind them.)

Naomi:

Did you see how they are together?

Phyllis:

Yes, every day they talk like that.

Naomi:

Just look at her eyes. She used to look at my son like that.

Phyllis:

And he's looking at her, too. I've never seen Boaz so at ease with a
girl before.

(Levi comes up behind them.)

Levi:

And what are you two up to? Spying?

(Fake indignation, together)

Naomi/Phyllis:

Spying? Never would I do such a thing.

Naomi:

I was bringing Ruth some fresh bread.

Levi:

Funny how you let her eat without giving it to her.

Naomi:

. .I . uh . . lost track of the time. . knitting . . look, Levi, would you care for a loaf of homemade bread in return for keeping the quiet and peace?³

(She hands him the loaf.)

Levi:

Thanks. I could use a little peace and quiet around here myself.

Naomi:

So, tell me, is there a fire with all the sparks I see?

(Taking a bite in between sentences as he talks. The crew should be coming in.)

Levi:

Well, Boaz normally stays a week . . it's been 2 months . . .
But I think a girl could show up at his door gift-wrapped and he
wouldn't have the foggiest idea what to do with her.

Naomi:

You could give him a few pointers?

Levi:

Hey, what do I know about women?
And, then he'd harp on me 'bout Rachel.

Phyllis:

Well you should marry her . .

Levi:

It's a conspiracy! Look marriage means kids. They're noisy,
messy, *and* expensive. And what do I know about raising 'em?

³ *This line may be stated as:* The peace and quiet?

Naomi:

What did any of us know? Ya give 'em love, some discipline, most of the time it works out -- except when it doesn't -- then you blame their fathers. But you still worry.
It is a mother's lot to worry.

Levi:

I don't think he can believe a girl like Ruth is interested.

Naomi:

Why? Can't he see the way she looks at him?
Men are so *stupid*. Men. *Humph!*
His heart is thumping but he is doing nothing!

Phyllis:

Naomi . . . do you have a plan?

Naomi:

A plan? Now, far be it from me to ever be pushy. But the secret is to dangle the bait in front of our fish. He will bite.

Levi:

You think so? This ain't your common alley cat man.

Naomi:

Oh, God has made her a tasty dish, and she will have him as I wish.

Levi:

As you wish?

Naomi:

Uh, "As she wishes."
Never would I try to enforce my wishes on the poor child.

Levi:

That's reassuring. Now, back to work.
(He stands up to address the crew and then will present Naomi to them.)
Alright you lollygaggers, let's finish up and back in five.

Oh, and everyone, I'd like you to meet Ruth's mother-in-law, Naomi. She aspires to be our town's newest matchmaker.

Except for her. . .

Tell us, Madam Naomi -- great advocate of holy matrimony -- would you ever tie the knot again?

Naomi:

Ummph! Let me tell you, I am done with men. Let the young follow their passions. For me, it is all cooking and cleaning and cleaning and cooking. Why should I have to do it for someone else, too?

Men!

(Naomi)

(spoken) Oh, (*or Oy!*)

Men --

I'm better off without them.

Why did God create them?

What's a women to do?

(Naomi)

They want you to support them in their foolish dreams.

All they've got are delusions and get rich schemes!

And all the time you knew!

Women & Naomi:

What's a women to do?

(Music continues)

Naomi: Ummph . . get rich! . . von vay ticket to poor house!

Oy! -- Men! . . Sometimes, I wonder why God created them. . .

He made Eve because after Adam, He looked down and said,

"Humph! I can do better!" . . . (It's an old joke, but I like it.)

(Note: "Woman #1" may be sang by any cast person, other than Ruth, with a good Jazz voice, including Rachel.)

(Women #1)

Men,

Why did God create them?

(Women #1 & Naomi)

What was He thinking of? Love?

(Women #1)

When a pretty girl goes by and wiggles her hips,

Just look at their faces, there is drool on their lips.

(Woman in Crowd)

Tell it like it is, Sister!

(Line may be adjusted slightly: e.g., "preach it, Sister"; "Ain't it the truth" or omitted.)

(Women #1)

When they're done lookin', say,

"Hey, watch those roamin' eyes

(Group Men)
(roamin' eyes)

No matter what they tell ya,
you'll get nothin' but lies
Women: (nothin' but lies from Men)

(Women #1)
Why did God create them?
What was he thinkin' of?

(Women, all)
Ya can't live with 'em,
Or without 'em.
Whatcha gonna do?
I can't believe that God made you!

Guy #1
Women, what's the matter with them?
What was He thinkin' of?

When you're late after work,
they call you a "jerk",
and then they want to talk
until ya gone berserk!

(Pause and insert spoken, possibly in falsetto)
Man #2
(Please tell me what you're feeling
Does our relationship have meaning?)

Men, all (chorus)
Ya can't live with 'em
Or without 'em.
Whatcha gonna do?
I can't believe that God made you!

Women, all
Men, why did God create them?
What was he thinking of?

(Woman #2) (consider with kid and/or pregnant)
When they pick up a shirt,
they think they've moved heaven and earth --
They oughta try out just giving birth.

(Honkey-Tonk Interlude)

Spoken by Woman #4

You know the problem today is we don't have any real men. Like those cowboys.
(switch to bad john Wayne impersonation) I want a man who'll stand tall, partner....a real man...strong...determined...a man who'll think for himself...and then do it my way...

All (Chorus) (Guys & Gals)

Ya can't live with 'em
or without 'em
Whatcha gonna do?
I can't believe that God made you!

Man #3

When you go on a date, it's, "We've gotta wait."
Then ya get married and they've got a headache!"

Woman #3 or all Women

Whatever they get they're never satisfied
And if they get rich they want a younger bride.

Man #4

They nag and complain, and drive ya insane
I think it's a lot of rot!

(several guys or solo) (Oh yeah!)

Guy #5

I'd rather face an army of Philistines than a woman who says,
"We need to talk!"

(all men, most cowering in fear) AWK!

Men: I can't believe that God made...

Women: I can't believe that God made...

All: I can't believe that God made...

(Women) (Men)

Men Women!

Men! Women!

Men! Women!

Men!/Women!

YOU! YOU!

(Optional: Last note may be held.)

(Rachel and Levi stare back and forth, he may hand her a rose, she turns to smell it, sighs and leans backwards for him to take her in his arms, both facing audience. As they sing the rest of the women of cast go up to various men with their arms folded in front of them then finally turn and are held by the men so the last stanza of the song is sung with the men holding the women

facing the audience.)

(Rachel) (sighs)

Then they hold ya tight,
and it's alright.

(Levi)

Maybe we could overlook
our differences tonight.

(Rachel)

Perhaps it's a sin,
but I still love men,
Tho' they've gone and hurt me
again and again.

(Levi)

Leggy and winsome.

(Rachel)

Hunky and handsome.

(both)

They smile and your heart comes alive!

(all)

'Cause you can't live with 'em,
or without 'em.

What ya gonna do?

I'm glad that God made me for you!

Act 1, Scene 8
Put Up, Shut Up, Break Up

(Rest of crew exits various directions. Rachel puts her hands on Levi's hand to hold him a little longer from "Men" end. She swoons in his arms and he lingers on holding her then gently lets go.)

Levi:

Rachel, we need to get back to work.

(She turns to leave then turns back. On the "we've got to talk" a number of men will cringe and exit quickly.)

Rachel:

Levi . . . we've got to talk.

(If he is holding something, he drops it. He looks stricken. Poppi drops his dumbbells, he looks scared, too. Men scurry away. Rachel continues. .)

Did I startle you?

Levi:

Woman, I love you, but of the things most likely to instill fear in a
guy are: "I'm from the government and I'm here to help" and a
woman saying "We need to talk."

Personally, I'll take my chances with the government. . .

Alright, what is it you want to talk about?

Rachel:

Did you mean it about "your heart comes alive" when we were
singing?

(He pauses)

Levi:

Sweetheart, it was *a song* . . . you knows I love ya.

Rachel:

Look, it's not anything new. It's just I'm not getting any younger.

And I've been noticing how other men behave around woman.

Levi:

You mean, Boaz?

Rachel:

Yes, I mean Boaz -- when Ruth's around his face lights up. How
long's it been since you did that? Levi, I want a family. I hate the
looks I get from the busybodies.

Levi:

Honey, I've always been honest with you.

(She gives him a raised eyebrow and/or elbows raised with a fist against her waist.)

OK, pretty much honest with you. I can't settle down until I'm made at least a small fortune. I'm from the family of Priests -- that means no inheritance -- I don't think people'll stand in line to hear me preach on righteous livin'.

I know the hours are long. But the sacrifices are for you, too.

Rachel:

Sure. Look, how much more do you have to have?

Levi:

Idon'tknow. Just a little bit more.

Rachel:

It'll never be enough! My life is slipping by.
Didn't Boaz promised you a field someday?

Levi:

Well, I'm in his will. When he buys the farm, I get the farm --

Rachel:

And you've got a field!
First, you wanted a house . .

Levi:

. . it's a shack.

Rachel:

. . when you got that, some land, and when you got that you wanted more land. How much more do you have to have?

Levi:

I don't know . . 'just a little bit more' . .

Rachel:

Well, I can't wait any longer. Levi, money has become your god. And gods demand sacrifices and, well . . I guess . . . I'm it. You can have all the time think about it you want . . . alone.

Won't Regret

(Rachel)

We had a nice dance.
A fine romance.
Some laughs and some playin' around.

Some passionate nights,
everything was right,
and my knight I thought I'd found.

So, I won't regret the heartache.
Won't regret the tears.
Won't regret the nights spent in your arms.

Won't regret I shared your bed.
My reputation shred.
Won't regret I succumbed to your charms.

But I regret that I must leave you.
Regret that I must go.
Regret I won't believe your lies,
but, you ought'a know . . .

(that. . .) You were the only one for me.
When I awake you're the face I want to see.
You're the one I pined for.
You're the one I'd die for.
You're the one I waited for -- too long.

Levi:

Rachel . . please not like this . . I . . I love you.

Rachel:

I know. I love you, too. But I'm not living like this any more. Oh,
and by the way, just so we're clear --

(she raises her ring finger and points to it)

see this finger? -- you can forget about making any more *music*
with me until you see a ring on this finger.⁴

⁴

Optional dialogue:

Rachel: I know. I love you, too. But I'm not living like this any more. Oh, and by the way
(she raises her ring finger and points to it) -- see this finger, Mr. Farmer? -- you
can forget about planting any more seeds in *this* field or making any more *music*
with me until you see a ring on *this* finger.

Levi:
Rachel.

Rachel:
Don't "Rachel" me. Go sell some spinach!

(She turns and sits down on the bench. Ruth and Boaz enter stage right. Rachel does a pretty good job of keeping it together. Levi stands staring and stunned. Ruth comes beside Rachel to support her.)

Boaz:
Levi, you all right?

Levi:
I think I've become the Spinach King and a court eunuch all in the same day.

(Boaz grimaces.)

Boaz:
Painful.

(Levi nods. Switch to Ruth/Rachel)

Ruth:
You going to be, OK?

Rachel:
I'm fine. You'd better get to the fields.
You'll need to save for winter.

Ruth:
Well, alright.

(She exits, hesitating and looking back.)

(Levi exits in a slight huff. Rachel sits down on bench in near tears. Boaz, hesitates, moves over towards her. He may put his hand on her shoulder.)

Boaz:
Rachel, are you sure you're alright?

(Sniffle)

Rachel:
I'm fine.

(He sits down, hands her a handkerchief.)

Boaz:

If that's fine, I'd hate to see bad.

(She smiles and looks up.)

Rachel:

It's what I expected. He never loved me.

Boaz:

Of course he loved you, he's never had eyes for anyone else.

Rachel:

You're sweet. But I knew this is where I'd be . . .
you give yourself to a heartless, greedy man . . .
think he'll change . . . grow up. They never do.

Boaz:

He's not that greedy. He's got a good heart.

(Rachel is skeptical)

Rachel:

Sure. . . love's a mirage. . .
You just keep running for something that isn't there.

Boaz:

It's there. . . I think . . .

(quieter)

I hope . . . for you.

(She moves in to his chest and he hugs and comforts her as he says this, she contentedly sighs, he pats her back, she moves slightly back at some point in the below dialogue.)

Rachel:

Boaz, are you going to marry Ruth?

Boaz:

Ruth!? Marry her? I'm sure she wouldn't be interested in an old
coot like me.

(Bemused)

Rachel:

Oh, I think she is.

Boaz:

Naw. There are tall, dark and handsome guys out there -- young guys -- for her . . .

Rachel:

Anyone for you?

(Sighs)

Boaz:

Probably not.

Rachel:

Boaz, back when we were young . .

Boaz:

Uh huh . . .

Rachel:

I'd get up in the morning and sometimes there would be flowers in a cup of water outside my door. . no note. .

The first time I thanked Levi he seemed a little surprised. . When we started getting flowers with our pay a few weeks ago -- I remembered those flowers, back when. .

Boaz, did any of those flowers -- when we were young? -- come from you?

(Slight hesitation.)

Boaz:

. . . Every nice girl deserves flowers once in a while, Rach'. Just to let her know she's special. What I started, Levi finished . . he catches on pretty quickly how to sell himself.

(She shakes her head.)

Rachel:

I can't believe I didn't figure it out. Boaz, if things don't work out with Ruth, think of me.

(He moves back a little to look at her.)

Boaz:

You? But you and Levi . . .

Rachel:

Are through. I need a man who'd bring me flowers.
A man who'd take care of . . . me . .
not go off chasing rainbows.

Boaz:

Rachel . . I . . don't know what to say . .

Rachel:

I know . .

(She touches his cheek)

Don't say anything. Now. But let me give you
the 'thank you' you deserve for all those bouquets.

(She takes her other hand, holds his head and kisses him. Boaz will keep his arms mostly down, then holds her tentatively, he knows he shouldn't, but he wanted to do so long ago Ruth may enter with Levi or from the opposite side of the stage, carrying a pitcher; Levi will be talking from offstage as he enters. He's still carrying his cider jug.)

Levi:

Woman, we've got to ta . .

(The "talk" at the end will be cut off at "ta.." Ruth drops the pitcher, which should break, words catch in her throat and she may put her hand to her mouth.)

Ruth:

Uh . .!

Levi:

Boaz?!?

(Rachel and Boaz pull apart. Boaz looks at Ruth who has a look of horror. Ruth puts her hand to her mouth, turns and exits. Rachel should be annoyed at the pain she's caused Ruth but a little proud that she's still "got it" when it comes to attracting men and the knife she is turning in Levi back.)

Boaz:

Levi . . I didn't mean . .

(Rachel gets up and stomps over to Levi. Fists down.)

Rachel:

You know: THIS IS ALL YOUR FAULT!

(Rachel, turns, stomps out. Boaz is dumbfounded and horrified and somewhat exhilarated.)

Boaz:

Levi, I swear . . . I didn't mean . . .

Levi:

I know, my friend . . . I know . . .

(he sits down on the bench, shakes his head, and looks at his jug)

You want a swig?

Boaz:

How much you got?

(Boaz may takes a big gulp -- and then/or holds the jug dejectedly -- looks off to where Ruth left and shakes his head.)

Levi:

A lot. . . but not enough to forget.

(Curtain or lights darken.)

End of Act 1