

KINDNESS WILL DO

by
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CAST OF CHARACTERS

<u>Naomi:</u>	Mother-in-law of Orpah and Ruth
Orpah:	She stays in Moab
<u>Ruth:</u>	She follows Naomi to Israel
<u>Boaz:</u>	He's related to Naomi's dead husband
<u>David:</u>	He supervises in the field
<u>Sarah:</u>	She is one of the gleaners
<u>Elias:</u>	Relative of Boaz
<u>Baby Obed:</u>	Child of Ruth and Boaz (may be a doll)
<u>Narrator:</u>	He tells the story
<u>Field Workers:</u>	They are rude
<u>Gate Meeting Participants:</u>	As many as you like

Time

Old Testament – way B.C.

Place

Moab, Ruth and Naomi's hut, the fields of Israel, the city gate and the threshing floor

Note: Jewish and Israelite are used interchangeably. Change this if you like.

Scene One

AT RISE: Moab is a pagan city where monkeys roam and exotic spires are seen.

NARRATOR

There was a great famine in Israel and people were starving. One Jewish family moved to Moab where they thought they would be safe. But Naomi, the mother in this family, lost her husband and two sons in Moab. She was left with two daughter-in-laws who were raised in Moab.

NAOMI

(in great distress)

I need to go back to Israel. It seems as if I've been wandering from home. I hate to go back to my birthplace empty-handed but the Israelites care about the poor. Things will go better for us there.

ORPAH

(haughtily replying)

You're right, Naomi. Everyone knows we're poor with this famine going on. You're different, you're Jewish. You go ahead and do what you want but I don't want to move where I can't find a husband.

NAOMI

Although it is most difficult for me to separate from you two, I know that you can find husbands here among your own people. Ruth, you stay here with Orpah.

RUTH

(clinging to Naomi's cloak)

No, mother, I don't care about a husband. The real problem is that I can't find another mother-in-law like you. I will follow you.

NAOMI

No, Ruth, I can't let you go. These are your people now and your future husband will take care of you.

RUTH

What do you mean? I am also your daughter and you were the wife of an Israelite. What is my future without family, without you? Leave you for this?

She waves her hand at the temples silhouetted against the sky.

NAOMI

Come on now girl. Why trail after a poor Jewish woman who has nothing? Here you can find a home and be with your sister. Without my husband, I am less than nothing here...a foreigner...and widowed at that.

RUTH

This may be my home, but home won't mean anything without you. You have taught me that home is the peace of God. No, Mother, where you go, I go, and where you stay, I stay.

NAOMI

(hugging Ruth)

Such loyalty in one so young. I can see you possess the heritage that your father taught you. But remember, though you are family to me, you will be a foreigner in Israel, as I have been in Moab.

RUTH

(hugging Naomi)

I am not afraid. Your coming here has brought me to you. What will my going to Israel bring? Only God knows. Oh Mother, I am looking forward to this trip.

NAOMI

I have been away many years and will be a foreigner, at first. I can't tell you what your company will mean to me.

RUTH

How can we leave you here, Orpah.

ORPAH

(smoothing her veil and looking out the window)

I will do just fine. I will take care of myself. You two go along your way. I have many friends. I cannot be torn from my homeland.

NAOMI

Orpah, you will always be welcome. You know the beliefs of my people as my son taught them to you. My prayer is that you will remember me to any of your children.

ORPAH

I cannot help but think everything is working out the way it's supposed to. I have a new prospect for marriage and I cannot leave him. Goodbye and God be with you.

Orpah leaves.

NAOMI

Now, we must dry our tears for we have a long way to go. We have plans. We will miss Orpah, as she was a good wife to my son. God, remember her always as you remember us.

Naomi hugs Ruth as they begin to get their things together.

NAOMI CONT.

This won't be easy, but if we hurry, we'll be in time for harvest. Times are not hard in Israel anymore. Since I left with your father, the famine has ended and great harvests have been coming to the Israelites.

Play the song "Lean on Me" by Lou Rawls

(END OF SCENE)

Scene 2

AT RISE: Naomi and Ruth have arrived in Israel, a place of large fields and dirt roads. They are living in a small room. They are both dressed in simple peasant dress, and basic sandals.

Naomi is cooking over a small fire.

NAOMI

Now that we are here in Israel, what will we do? We have a little food left but the future looks uncertain, at times.

(She wipes her brow and eyes with her sleeve.)

Oy vey. I wish Elimelech was with me now. He would have good plans. Here we are without a means of living, yet.

RUTH

(She puts her head on Naomi's shoulder and comforts her.)

Don't worry. Don't you always say, "Trust in the Lord"?

NAOMI

True enough girl. It seems so easy when things are going well. It seemed so exciting to come here but now the days seem so long.

RUTH

But God is our ever-present help in times of trouble. Let's sit and talk about our future.

They sit at a small wooden table next to two straw beds. A candle gives light in the middle of the darkness and Ruth closes the door to shut out the wind.

RUTH cont.

Mother, I have a plan. Let me think this out while we eat.

They quietly eat their humble meal.

NAOMI

You probably think you can find a husband here, but I don't know. According to Jewish law you are a widow who deserves to be taken care of along with other poor people. Since we are related, they will allow you some work. I am too old to stand on my feet all day. God has an answer to this if we could only see it.

RUTH

Is that all we can do here – beg like a couple of lepers.

NAOMI

Begging is respectable here in Israel. The Jewish people leave their extra grain for the poor. It is a part of their culture.

RUTH

I understand now, Mother. I will stand outside of our home and ask for help. Won't I be mocked and ridiculed?

NAOMI

No, you still don't understand. You will work for your income, as you are able-bodied. We won't be known as sluggards.

(She gestures excitedly.)

I know what you can do. You can glean in the field next door to us. It isn't far to walk and others will be there to show you what to do. Pick up the grain that is left from the harvesters. It won't be much, but it will supply us with food.

RUTH

Do you mean that I will be with other beggars? Will they be friendly to me, an outsider?

NAOMI

Yes, yes this will work out very well. Just be careful and don't tell them right away that you are from Moab, or the other workers may mock you. You will be a worker, not a beggar.

RUTH

This is so different from the life we had in Moab.

NAOMI

Don't look back, daughter. God leaves the past behind us for a reason. It is to be forgotten. God didn't promise us a life of ease but he will stay with us if we try to follow His will.

(She grabs Ruth's arm.)

Come here and I will point to the field so you can find it in the morning.

Ruth and Naomi walk over to the door and open it. They stand for a few moments while Naomi points in the direction. Then they go to their beds to lie down for sleep.

RUTH

(She mutters tiredly as she falls asleep.)

Can you imagine? The plan is unfolding and the answer was near our home.

NAOMI

(She gets up from her bed and looks out a window.)

God will bring so many good things to us. I know a relative owns property near here and I will tell Ruth to glean in that direction.

(She chuckles to herself.)

You never know what will happen when a Jewish mother tells her daughter what to do.

(She blows the candle out and lies down on her mat.)

(END OF SCENE)

Scene Three

AT RISE: The poor run for left-overs in the field. Ruth is working very hard but some of the others point to her, or hit their shoulders against her

RUTH

(She looks at the other harvesters.)

Say, I know I'm new to this field, but my mother-in-law need to eat too.

WORKER SARAH

You don't looks like you're from this land. Are you a believer in God?

RUTH

Yes, I believe in God. And I am in the same position as you, hungry and needy.

OTHER WORKER

Sarah is right. By our laws, only natives are allowed to gather leftovers in the fields. We can't feed all people.

RUTH

(She stands her ground with hands on her hips.)

I have married into your tribe. Do you think God loves only a few people?

SARAH

Don't be so proud woman. You can stay here only if we allow it.

The other gleaners shake their heads "yes" and shove Ruth out of the way..

RUTH

You might as well know the whole story. I am a Moabite taken into your Jewish tribes by marriage to Naomi's son.

SARAH

A Moabitess – why would one of us marry outside of his own culture. This is blasphemous. Throw her out of the field.

They push her to the side and she falls to the ground. A foreman arrives on the scene. He pushes the workers away from Ruth and picks her up.

FOREMAN DAVID

Say, what's going on? Obviously this woman is also gleaning.

(looking at Ruth)

You are welcome to glean in the field. There are no differences among the poor. Here comes our Master Boaz, and he'll agree with me.

The foreman goes to a cart where Boaz sits. Boaz is well-dressed and obviously wealthy. He looks with great interest at Ruth and then at his foreman.

BOAZ

David, who is this beautiful woman? I haven't seen her in my fields before this time.

DAVID

She is a foreigner and she's caused quite a stir here. She told the others that she was a Moabitess, daughter-in-law of Naomi, recently returned from Moab.

BOAZ

Yes, yes I have heard of Naomi's return. Her neighbors say that Ruth has been a great help to Naomi and has adopted our religion. Can you believe that she is also related to me, as Naomi's husband was my kinsman.

DAVID

I was right in telling the others to leave her alone.

(He raises his voice to the gleaners.)

Now hear what the owner says. Leave her to work. Also she is Boaz's relative.

BOAZ

(Also raises his voice to the gleaners.)

There's not going to be a problem in MY fields, with this woman or any other needy person. The law says that all the poor are welcome to the leftovers.

(looking at his foreman)

Bring the woman over to me. I want to talk to her.

DAVID

(He walks over to Ruth.)

Come on over here Ruth. The landowner Boaz wants to talk to you. Brush yourself off and clean your face in that water over there.

Ruth splashes water on her face and neck at a jug of water. The other gleaners go back to work and put grain in their bags. They leave the stage. The foreman sits on the side of the stage, yawning and resting.

RUTH

(Arriving at Boaz's cart)

I'm so sorry Sir. I didn't know I would cause trouble. My mother-in-law and I need food and I knew I had to work. My mother-in-law Naomi and I are just trying to survive.

BOAZ

Welcome Ruth.

(He holds out his hand to her.)

I've heard what a daughter-in-law you have been. And your mother and I are related by her husband, who was kinsman to me. You are welcome to glean in my field. If anyone bothers you, let me know. Drink freely from these jugs and my foreman will see to it that you can take home as much grain as you wish.

RUTH

(aside)

Surely, this is just what Naomi has prayed for. She said God would provide if I would make the effort.

(now looking at Boaz directly)

It's so different here from where I came. We had provision in Moab. But I am grateful you are giving me the chance to make my way.

(She bows to Boaz.)

BOAZ

There's no need to bow, we are related. I also thank the Almighty for everything here. Now, it's getting dark and you must be getting home.

Ruth picks up a grain sack that the foreman has loaded. It is heavy on her shoulder. The foreman comes to Boaz's cart and jumps up onto it. Boaz takes the reins and they ride off into the darkness. Ruth walks slowly toward home (offstage also) as she sings, dreamily, "Someone to Watch Over Me".

(END OF SCENE)

Scene Four

AT RISE: Ruth is returning to her home with Naomi. She is talking to herself just outside the door. Naomi is seen getting up and down from the table, looking anxiously out of the window for Ruth.

RUTH

Oh I have just about made it home. This bundle holds so much grain I didn't know if I could get it home. Mother is going to be so excited.

NAOMI

(running to the door as Ruth enters)

Oy vey. What a bundle of grain. Could this really be happening to us?

RUTH

Yes, mother, it's all ours.

NAOMI

(She dances merrily around the bundle.)

Malzatov. We have enough grain to fill a granary. But how did this happen? Sit down and tell me all about it. And then we shall eat.

RUTH

I met a man Boaz, the owner of the field you showed me. He let me take all the grain I wanted and is also allowing me to glean anywhere in his fields. I drank as much water from the jugs that I needed and then...I met Boaz. He's wonderful and he knows who we are.

NAOMI

Aha. That is what I prayed for. Boaz is a kinsman of my passed husband. Can it be that you have found favor with him? Are our prayers answered?

RUTH

I'm not sure how much favor I will find with the other workers. They pushed me around until the foreman felt sorry for me. Then Boaz opened the field to me.

NAOMI

This is interesting. It was possible that Boaz would have put you out of the field because of the trouble. He must have heard about us. Now be happy daughter, for we have found a relative and have been saved from our want.

RUTH

I'm beginning to see your ways even better, Mother. Though your people are ruled by so many laws, they also seem to be kind. I did not find that in Moab.

NAOMI

I am so sorry you were mistreated by the other workers. I was afraid of that. Now I will make you something to eat. Sit and relax and we will celebrate.

Ruth sits and looks dreamily toward the fields. The song "Where Do I Begin" (from the movie Love Story) is played or sung. Then the stage becomes dark signifying the passage of time. Naomi then lights candles and the room might be enhanced by curtains or animal rugs on the floor. A couple of months have passed and Ruth and Naomi are prospering. Ruth enters with grain and/or other food items.)

RUTH

(shouting to another neighbor as she enters)

Yes, yes, we will bake your bread for tomorrow. Just get the meat ready.

(looking at Naomi)

We have quite a business here Mother. I hope we can keep up with all these orders.

NAOMI

That's not what troubles me as much as...you can't go on as you are forever.

RUTH

What do you mean? Do you have too much work? Are we not comfortable living here?

NAOMI

No, it is not that. A young woman such as yourself needs a permanent home. We can't rely on the kindness of Boaz forever.

RUTH

Is this more of Jewish law? Is it a crime to continue to work and earn our grain?

NAOMI

It's not about grain or work. It's about you again, Ruth. You need a home and a family. You are at the marrying age and you can do better than just surviving.

RUTH

Oh now I know what you are up to. But who would marry me, a Moabite?

NAOMI

I've been thinking. I have seen the happiness in your eyes when you come home from the fields. This tells me how much you like it when you see Boaz. We know that he is a kinsman.

RUTH

Now you're talking about the idea of the "kinsman redeemer" who can redeem the property, including the wife, of his relative. I've heard you before...but I thought he had already done that by helping us with extra grain.

NAOMI

Yes, yes and he can also redeem us from our situation. Listen. Go to the threshing floor tonight.

RUTH

Tonight? But why Mother? Only the men and Boaz are there. Why would I want to be there?

NAOMI

We know that Boaz is not married and that he sometimes sleeps on the threshing floor. Lie yourself down at his feet and pull his cloak over you.

RUTH

His cloak? Why would I do such a strange thing? I bet that is part of Jewish law also.

NAOMI

My dear daughter...there are certain situations that the law does not cover but wisdom gives us. Lie there at his feet and see what happens. Now go, before it is too late.

RUTH

I want to be obedient in all things, but are you sure about this, Mother? Lie at his feet? Then pull the cloak?

NAOMI

Yes, to lie at a man's feet is part of our tradition. This action says that you are submitting to him.

RUTH

(She grabs her robe and rushes toward the door.)

Yes Mother, I will do as you say. But from now on, I think I can handle this situation.

(END OF SCENE)

Scene Five

AT RISE: Ruth arrives at the threshing floor. It's a stone floor with grain sacks strewn about. Boaz lies on the floor with his long cloak pulled over his body to keep warm.

RUTH

(Tiptoeing in quietly, she lies at Boaz's feet.)

Oh, his feet are cold and so am I. I hope I am doing what I'm supposed to be doing.

Ruth pulls the corner of Boaz's cloak over her, and, as she does, Boaz hears something and lifts his head.

BOAZ

What's this noise? Is this my horse? Is somebody taking my cart?

(He grabs his coat to stand up and sees Ruth.)

Is that you? Ruth?

RUTH

Yes, yes Boaz, it is Ruth.

(She stutters with fright and cold.)

Please don't be mad at me. Give me a little of your cloak. I am your kin.

BOAZ

Is this really you. You are much kinder than I thought. You have chosen to lie at my feet and show your loyalty to me. Though I am older than you, you have chosen me.

(He takes her by the hand and they stand.)

Oh, you aren't cold, are you?

RUTH

Now that you have spoken to me, I'm not cold. You amaze me: you don't question why I am here. This is one of those miracles Naomi has prayed for.

BOAZ

How well you understand the customs of our land, my beautiful one. Naomi has taught you well. And I choose you to become my wife.

RUTH

I hope I didn't confuse you or do anything wrong. I try to follow Naomi's advice.

BOAZ

As you can tell by the look in my eyes, this is much more than custom. I love you Ruth. I loved you when I first set eyes on you in the field.

Can sing "One Enchanted Evening" or another love song. When they finish the song, Boaz puts his arm around her.

BOAZ CONT

And now, my love, I will explain the next custom to you. I will go to the city gate tomorrow and make our engagement official. I need to ask whether any man in our village is a closer family member than I. If so, he has prior rights to his kinsman's wife. If no one speaks up, we can be married.

RUTH

How fortunate I am to find another Israelite husband. I must get home and tell Naomi.

BOAZ

Yes, my dearest one. I welcome you as your first husband did. But love is always new and is eternal. Love is the most powerful force in the world. It's strong enough to bring you all the way from Moab to again unite two cultures within one belief. I will talk about our future at the city gate and come to tell you immediately, the results.

Ruth hurries out of the granary and the stage is left dark. A moon may be seen hanging over the fields and lighting her way. Ruth returns to her humble home.

NAOMI

(hearing her entering)

Daughter, you are in such a hurry.

RUTH

Yes because I have a great story to tell.

NAOMI

What? What it is girl? What is all this excitement?

RUTH

Boaz accepted me at his feet and immediately told me that he loved me. He goes to the city gates tomorrow to propose his marriage.

NAOMI

Malzatov. You have found a kinsman redeemer. What laughing, dancing and singing. What gladness God is bringing.

(They are dancing in circles.)

We will get our mule ready to go to the gates tomorrow. We will wait until the meeting is over and meet Boaz there.

NAOMI

(walking forward to deliver soliloquy)

They'll never know what an influence I've been, though I'll probably tell Boaz. All this time I've been praying and planning. My prayers are answered as I thought they would be. Malzatov.

Stage lights out, then up as Boaz and a group of men are sitting by a gate.

BOAZ

I am Naomi, Elimelech's wife, kin and, therefore, am inheritor of his rights and properties. She has returned from Moab and her daughter-in-law Ruth has been working in my fields. She's a good worker, honest, and a credit to her mother-in-law. She lost her husband in Moab but has been willing to accept our culture and beliefs. I think so highly of her that I want to marry her.

One of the elders speaks.

ELDER

You are the kinsman redeemer, then, as you are a relative of Elimelech, that is true. But we know we must make sure there is no other kinsman who might be a closer relative.

THE RELATIVE ELIAS

The man you speak of is I.

The others look on in shocked surprise.

BOAZ

Do you, by these words, say that you will take Ruth as your lawful wife?

ELIAS

No, that's not what I meant. I already have property and a wife whom I love very much. I won't do anything to change this. You have the right to claim Ruth as your wife.

BOAZ

Then it's settled. I'll remove my shoe and thereby seal this matter.

(He pounds his shoe on the ground and the others surround to congratulate.)

The elders leave as Ruth and Naomi run in and begin to dance with Boaz.

BOAZ

How did you know that I would take too long to come and tell you?

They laugh together and lights go dark, then come up again in the granary as Ruth, Boaz and Naomi are gathered around a small baby in a manger. The Narrator speaks.

NARRATOR

Time passes with several new seasons of grain placed in the granary. Today the family has gathered to celebrate the harvest, and the recent birth of Boaz and Ruth's son, Boaz. Play the song "Sunrise, Sunset" from Fiddler on the Roof and the actors can sing along.

NAOMI

You are so sweet. You are worth more than all the riches in Israel. You are worth more than anything in the world.

RUTH

Naomi, since you took a poor Moabite with you on a long voyage, I have loved you. And love has brought Boaz to us, and this baby to all of us.

NAOMI

Ruth, your faithfulness and loyalty has been the vital ingredient to our home and this union of cultures. Boaz, you are a miracle for myself and Ruth.

BOAZ

This baby Obed is so special that he will be the ancestor of a king.

NARRATOR

Obed was the ancestor of a king, but not just any king. He was the ancestor of Christ the King.

(END OF SCENE)

(END OF PLAY)