

*Chapter
One
FIVE YEARS LATER*



To whom do you belong? And where are you from?

1 SAMUEL 30:13

Everyone in the city of Kir-hareseth seemed to have descended upon the marketplace, making final purchases before the stalls closed down. Crowds. Why couldn't they just stay home? Ruth tried to ignore the jostle of too many bodies. Dragging a perspiring hand down her worn tunic, she took a deep breath to steady her jangled nerves; the scent of sweat covered thinly by oily perfumes hit her with the force of a blow.

Ruth's mother had sent her to buy dates. She eyed the mounds of brown sticky fruit in a stall, trying to calculate how to get the best price so she could avoid one of her mother's blistering set downs. Bending forward, she picked one and examined it with intensity. It looked like a date to Ruth, which exhausted the breadth of her knowledge on the topic. About to open her mouth to ask for the price, she was surprised when a gentle hand caressed her arm.

"You can find better," a soft voice whispered in her ear. Startled, Ruth turned to find the source of the advice. The woman was in her middle years, with smooth skin and thick grey hair that peeked from beneath her ivory headdress. Her faded blue tunic appeared clean, the only good thing that could be said for it. The leather of her sandals, visible beneath her ankle-length tunic, showed signs of long wear.

Brown eyes sparkled at her. "What a lovely young woman. May the Lord bless you, child."

Compliments and Ruth did not go together. Certainly, no one had ever called her *lovely*. Her eldest sister was the acknowledged beauty of the family. Ruth was the last born and the Great Disappointment. The last chance at her parents' hope for a son, unfulfilled.

Too tall. Too quiet. Too female.

"Pardon?" she said, fumbling with the empty cloth bag she held, trying unsuccessfully to swallow.

"Forgive me. My sons tell me I am too free with my tongue. But you are such a pretty creature, I had to tell you."

Ruth gaped at her like one of the cows of Bashan.

The stranger flashed a wide smile, displaying a full set of startlingly white teeth. "I've embarrassed you. I'm sorry. We are more forthright with our thoughts in Israel. I've never lost the habit."

That explained the odd lilting accent. And the strange blessing she had given Ruth. What had she said? The Lord. Not Chemosh, but the Lord bless you. "You are an Israelite," Ruth said, forcing her tongue around the words.

"Yes. My sons and I have lived here for some years. We came when Bethlehem went through a famine and we feared we might starve. My husband was with us then, but he died of a wasting disease some years ago."

"That must have been hard to bear," Ruth said. "Having to raise your sons alone and in a foreign land."

"Hardest thing I've ever done. But the Lord has seen us through."

Ruth, who knew nothing about this Lord other than a vague recollection that He was the deity worshiped in Israel, gave a short nod.

"I am Naomi. Naomi of Bethlehem, in Judah. And you, my sweet girl? What do they call you?"

"Ruth."

"Ruth." Naomi nodded. "I like it. Have you brothers and sisters?"

"Four sisters, all older."

Naomi raised her brows and made a gentle humming sound in her throat. An odd silence settled over them; Ruth felt the crowds receding from her senses, their incessant sounds and smells muted. She had a strange notion that the woman had gazed into her life and seen it, known its pains and sorrows, just from that one sentence. As if Naomi knew that four older sisters meant Ruth had grown up invisible. Unwanted. Never quite managing to please anybody.

Yet she had uttered no words. Just that gentle humming in her throat.

As if coming to a sudden decision, Naomi said, “You must come to my home and share supper with us. My sons will be delighted to meet you.”

Ruth’s jaw dropped open. “I . . . thank you. But I must buy dates. For my mother.”

“Ah. Try that stall over there. Mesha is almost an honest man. And his fruit is fresh. Don’t let him pick for you, though. Insist on picking the ones you want. He’ll grumble, but pay no mind. Your mother will be happy with what you bring home.”

You don’t know my mother.

“That’s kind of you. Thank you, Naomi.”

Before Ruth settled on a price with the vender Naomi had recommended, the woman herself showed up again, stationing herself at Ruth’s side. “Come, Mesha. What kind of price is that for a daughter of Moab? You can do better.”

Mesha complied by lowering his price a fraction. Ruth, who had no talent for haggling, gave the Israelite woman a grateful smile. “For once I’m returning from the market with a decent purchase. Not only do I thank you, my whole family thanks you.”

Naomi laughed. Ruth liked the sound of it, clear and pleasing, without drawing needless attention. She could imagine the hardships of the woman’s life. And yet Naomi had not lost her ability to find joy in small things.

“Will you come and visit me after you deliver the dates to your mother? It’s only my sons and me, and our house is simple. But you

would be most welcome. I'll give you supper and afterward walk you home so you won't have to worry about finding your way in the dark."

Ruth felt her skin turn warm as blood rushed to her cheeks. "I would like to."

Naomi patted her hand and told her how to find her house.

Before delivering the dates to her mother, Ruth hid two of the plumpest in her sash. For once, her mother had no sour comments when she examined her daughter's purchase. It never occurred to Ruth to expect praise for her success. Praise and her mother were not frequent companions. Not when it came to the woman's fifth daughter.

"Where is Grandfather?" Ruth asked.

"Where else? Slumbering on his mat as usual, expecting everyone to take care of his lordship."

Ruth flushed at her mother's bitter complaint. The only true kindness Ruth had received growing up was at the hand of her grandfather. Though everyone else in her family had found her wanting, her father's father acted as though Ruth were the most precious member of his brood.

In fond remembrance, Ruth fingered the luxurious linen sash tied at her waist. The old man had bought it for her years ago, after Ruth's sisters had teased her more mercilessly than usual. Unable to bear their mean words another moment, she had run into the field behind their house and hidden through the night, shedding her tears in private. No one had bothered to try to find her. Except Grandfather.

Late the following morning he had come upon her, crouching in order to see into her eyes. "There you are. I've been looking everywhere for you."

"I was here."

"So I see."

"Is Mother very angry?"

"No more than usual, shall we say? So long as you finish your

chores, I believe she will grow calm. Now, I have a present for you.”

“For *me*?”

“Yes, indeed. Because you are my adorable granddaughter and I am proud of you.” He proffered the most exquisite sash Ruth had ever seen. It had white and dark blue stripes, with lighter blue flowers embroidered through the edges.

She gasped. “This must have cost a fortune.”

The old man smiled. “It did. And you are worth it.”

Ruth let the memory fade, blinking back tears.

The grandfather she held dear had disappeared in the past few years. His mind had grown dim with time. Often he didn’t seem to recognize any of them. He had grown tangled in a shadow world, isolated, unable to grasp the ordinary things of life. He was with them and yet lost to them.

Ruth knelt by his mat and caressed his shoulder with a light hand. His eyes opened, faded and unfocused.

“I have a present for you, Grandfather.” Ruth handed him one of the dates, trying to keep the exchange hidden from the rest of the room with her slim body.

The withered man stared at the date in the palm of his hand, his expression blank. “Put it in your mouth,” Ruth encouraged. “It’s sweet.” She moved his hand toward his mouth, and obediently he took a bite.

He made a small sound of appreciation. “I told you you would like it,” she whispered. “Don’t let Mother catch you, or there will be great gnashing of teeth.”

A smile broke on the old man’s face and for a moment he looked like his old self, understanding and humor twinkling in the filmy eyes. Sometimes lucidity broke over him like the summer rains, sudden and inexplicable, and he became again the man she loved and missed like part of her own heart. But those moments were growing rarer with each passing day.

“Oh Grandfather.” Ruth gave him a hard embrace; by the time she moved away, the empty look had taken the place of the momentary

clarity. Ruth's shoulders slumped. Gently, she fed him the last date before leaving his side.

Her mother made no demur when Ruth spoke of her intention to visit Naomi. In truth, no one cared much if Ruth remained in the house or left it for hours, so long as she fulfilled her endless list of duties.

Ruth enjoyed the walk to Naomi's house. The streets were empty save for a few children lingering late to play one last game before being called home. It was her favorite time of day, just before twilight when the world became more still, when the intense bustle of the day drew to a close and the noise of the rushing crowds ceased.

The sycamore door to Naomi's house stood open, revealing one narrow room, the only chamber that the house boasted. The high lattice windows had been thrown open, allowing the pale, dying rays of the sun into the chamber, giving the place a cheery look. A few handwoven mats covered most of the bare, earthen floor, and two cushions with faded weaving sat against the far wall. A cluttered cleanliness marked the small space.

Ruth felt an odd peace as Naomi welcomed her inside. She could not explain it. But here, in this stranger's home, she felt more settled than she ever had in the house where she had spent her whole life.

Naomi took her hand and drew her farther into the chamber. "Aren't you tall? I have to tip my head back to look into your eyes."

Ruth bit her lip and lowered her face. Her height had been a source of unrelenting shame since she had turned ten and, without warning, grown into a pole. She managed to be taller than everyone in her family, even her father. Her sisters tormented her with names like *tree trunk* and *rooftop*.

Naomi gasped. "Oh my dear, I meant it as praise. You are like a willow, soft and full of grace. In Israel, tall women are much admired."

Then I should have been born in Israel. But she swallowed the words.

“Sit down here, dear Ruth. The cushions have gone flat, I’m afraid.”

Ruth sat, tucking her feet up to the side of her hip, arranging her loose tunic to cover her toes. “They are very comfortable.”

“My sons aren’t home from the field yet. They leave early and return late. Poor lads. Their work is hard. We’ll eat when they come. Do you like lentils?”

“My favorite,” Ruth said, as if she didn’t have to eat them every day. “May I help you with the bread?” Before Naomi could respond, she rose to go to her. Naomi was making cakes of dough with ground barley flour, and after rinsing her hands with water, Ruth took a large handful to knead.

“Such light flour,” she said, allowing admiration to color her voice. She knew the effort it took to grind the barley grain into a fine powder. With Naomi the sole female occupant of her house, she could not share the burden of grinding with another woman, which would allow her to use a larger, more efficient hand mill.

Naomi smiled. “I fear I’m vain when it comes to my cooking. So if you want to win my heart, you’ve started on the right foot.”

Another compliment? Ruth was losing count of them. She looked down and kneaded harder.

“The stone is hot. As soon as Mahlon and Chilion return home, we will bake the bread, so we can have hot barley cakes with our soup. Won’t they be surprised to see you?”

Ruth gave Naomi a sharp look from under her lashes. “So you don’t bring the daughters of Moab to supper every day?”

The older woman dissolved into peals of laughter. She wiped a hand against her cheek, leaving a white trail. “Not every day, no. But a woman with two unmarried young sons can’t sit about doing nothing. The boys toil in the fields of their master most of the day long. What chance have they of meeting eligible young women?”

Eligible young women? Unmarried sons? What had she entangled herself in? Ruth swallowed a deep breath and pointed to Naomi's face. "You have flour smudged on your cheek."

Naomi lifted a cloth to wipe away the smudge of flour.

"I don't think this will work." Ruth tried to keep the panic out of her voice. The thought of meeting two strange men for the express purpose of being weighed as a possible bride turned her stomach into a big knot. They would only reject her. "Perhaps I should go home." She started to wipe her hands on the cloth next to her when the sound of conversation made her freeze mid-swipe. She frowned as she heard a feminine voice, softly responding to a man's comment.

The older woman spun toward the open door, her hands fluttering in the air.

"Mother, we have brought you a guest," said the shorter of the two young men. "This is Orpah. We met her at the field and asked her to supper. She . . . She . . ." His voice trailed as he spotted Ruth.

Naomi broke the tension by bursting into peals of laughter. "The Lord be praised. I have also asked my friend Ruth to supper. What a blessed night, to have two new friends join us."

Ruth gulped. It would be offensive to leave now. She would have to stay and see the evening through. At least the other girl, Orpah, would share the burden of attention. She was a pretty girl, no older than seventeen, with rounded cheeks and thick, long black lashes.

They sat on the floor around a well-used mat to eat supper. When Naomi introduced her sons, Ruth did not even lift her chin far enough to see which name belonged to whom. She busied herself with dipping her warm bread into the bowl of aromatic lentils and listened carefully to the conversation flowing around her.

Her attention strayed to Orpah as the girl fanned her face. "I can't abide the heat. This afternoon, I thought my head would bake in my headdress and drop right into the field. That would have been a mess. Knowing the foreman, he would have made me clean it up myself."

In the Field of Grace

Ruth laughed, her outstretched hand forgotten where she had moved to dip her bread into the olive oil. To her surprise, her fingers bumped into solid flesh. She raised startled eyes and collided with a warm brown gaze.

Chapter Two



A friend loves at all times.

PROVERBS 17:17

His skin shone pale as bleached ivory against his dark beard. It was his smile that first caught Ruth's attention. His mouth, too wide for beauty, softened his otherwise ordinary face into the sort of friendliness that made her feel welcomed to the soles of her feet. As if she had known him for years. And she could not even tell his name! Mahlon or Chilion?

Guessing her thoughts, he said, "Mahlon."

With a sudden jolt, she found herself wanting to giggle. "I was going to guess Chilion," she confessed.

"I forgive you. Which is generous of me, considering when we were introduced, you disdained to look upon me even once."

"I thought it polite not to stare."

"Don't worry. I did enough staring for us both."

Ruth felt the rhythm of her pulse speed, making her breathless. "I don't think your mother has the measure of you."

The wide mouth flashed another winsome smile. "How so?"

Ruth nibbled on her lower lip, caught between laughter and embarrassment. "She believes you are helpless and lonesome. I think you know your way around many a Moabite maiden's heart."

He shook his head, looking tragic. "I hardly know any Moabite maidens."

"How many?"

"Counting you and Orpah? Two."

Chilion, overhearing his brother, shoved a shoulder into his brother's arm. "Not for lack of trying."



Naomi and Mahlon walked Ruth most of the way home. They finally turned back when she pressed them, just before she arrived at her house. As the outdoor enclosure of her home came into view, Ruth could hear the screech of her mother's raised voice. Frowning, she picked up her steps. Though her mother's temper bore a legendary sting, it rarely grew so noisy as to rouse the interest of the neighbors.

She shoved open the door, which someone had had the forethought to close. A wave of nausea pressed in on her as the scene inside unfolded.

Her mother was screaming, midsentence, ". . . and cannot abide it one more day. You are a disgusting old man. What is the matter with you? Why won't Chemosh strike you down?"

Her grandfather stood with his head bowed, his sparse lashes lowered. His fragile hand, resting against the wall, trembled so hard that Ruth could hear the sound of his flesh beating a rhythm against the mud brick in spite of her mother's thundering voice. On the back of his old tunic ran a long, wet stain, extending from below his waist to mid-thigh.

"You stink, old man! You're reeking up my house."

For an infinitesimal moment, Grandfather lifted his eyes. They were clear and filled with so much shame, Ruth stopped breathing. She wanted to beat her head against the wall. Of all the times for him to regain self-awareness!

"I'll clean him, Mother." She tried to inject a soothing tone into her soft voice. "It's all right. I will take care of him."

"You! What do you know about it, an unmarried girl?"

"I'll manage. You're tired. Rest. Leave him to me."

For a moment the older woman seemed disconcerted. She smoothed back her hair, once. Twice. "It's not my fault. He drives

me to it. Worse than a baby, he's become. And with your father never home to give a hand, everything lands on me."

"I'll take care of him," Ruth whispered again, and took her grandfather by the hand and drew him outside, grabbing a towel, pitcher of water, basin, and a fresh tunic on her way. No one else offered to help. They never did. Her sisters had no interest in an old man who had little to offer them save exasperation and extra labor. Their mother, protective of them in a way she never had been of Ruth, did not insist that they help with Grandfather. They had their chores, of course. Sewing, mending, cooking, and washing. Lighter work compared to Ruth that left their hands soft and feminine, free of the calluses that plagued Ruth's palms.

She was grateful for the lengthening darkness, which gave her work a semblance of modesty. "I'm sorry, Grandfather," she said. But to her relief, the old man had retreated into his shadow world again. After cleaning and changing him, Ruth took him back into the house and helped him to lie down on his mat. She covered him with his old cloak and returned outside to wash his tunic with lye.

That night as she lay sleepless on her mat, the discordant snores of her sisters filling the hot chamber, Ruth thought of Naomi's welcoming manner and Mahlon's encompassing smile. It occurred to her that if Grandfather lived with *them*, they would treat him with kindness. They would seek to comfort him as he grew increasingly lost in the twilight of his waning mind.

Instinctively, she knew that Naomi would bear the burden of a man who had become so much less than himself. And Mahlon would not run away to avoid the unpleasantness of it, as her father did. He would not hide in the fields, seeking the excuse of work as a way to shirk the hardship of caring for an aging parent. Life with Naomi's family would be very different from her experience in her own home.

Ruth pushed the thought aside. It was an impossible dream. *The only thing I ever wanted was to belong.* She sighed, and buried the rising tide of that impractical longing as best she could.

For the next five days, she had little time to dwell on dreams. Grandfather took a turn for the worse, and she spent every spare moment trying to make him comfortable, trying to lift some of the weight of his care from her mother's exasperated shoulders. On the sixth day, close to the noon hour, an unexpected knock on the open door arrested everyone's attention.

Naomi stood near the entrance, her pleasant face wreathed in a tentative smile. "Peace," she called out. "I am Naomi. I have come to ask after Ruth."

Ruth ran to the door. "Naomi! Come in. How good of you to come."

She shook her head, remaining outside. "I won't intrude. You seem busy. I have brought your mother a fresh loaf of bread to thank her for allowing you to visit us."

"How thoughtful." Ruth took the cloth containing the still warm loaf. The aroma of freshly baked wheat made her mouth water. "I doubt the pharaoh of Egypt has bread so fine. Won't you come inside and meet my family?"

Naomi's gaze met with a frosty reception from the mistress of the house, who was crouching by the indoor fire, stirring an old pot while coldly surveying the scene before her. "Another day, perhaps," she said.

"My grandfather has been very ill. I have had no time to visit again."

"I am so sorry to hear it. Looking after a sick relative can be a heartache. But it can be a comfort too, knowing that you can help carry a little of their burden in their time of need."

"Thank you. And for this, also," Ruth said, holding out the bread. "I know my family will enjoy your baking as I did."

"Come back and tarry with us when you can."

As soon as Naomi left, Ruth's mother pulled her to the side. "That woman does not hail from Moab. Not with that bumpkin accent. Where is she from?"

"Bethlehem of Judah, in Israel."

“Israel? Have you lost your mind, running about with those people? They are backward, Ruth, and worship a strange God no one but they understand. More importantly, did you see her clothes? Ragged as a beggar’s. I don’t want my daughter associating with such people.”

“She is kind.” Ruth’s words came out stiff as a wooden plank. “She sent you this bread.”

Her mother rolled her eyes and turned away.

Every day after that, Naomi made the time to visit Ruth, always with a present in hand: a cake of raisins, a small earthenware pot of pickled capers, an armful of wild onions, loaves of barley bread. At first she refused to enter. Although she did not say so, Ruth knew that the Israelite woman could sense her mother’s hostility. In time, her mother was softened by Naomi’s persistent generosity, and while she did not descend into true hospitality, she did invite her in. The older woman’s visits became so regular that no one save Ruth paid her much heed anymore.

Naomi would bide with Ruth next to Grandfather, sometimes in comforting silence, sometimes sharing fascinating memories from her native land.

“It’s true,” she told them one late afternoon. “Once, long before my time, a woman ruled in Israel. Her name was Deborah.”

Ruth, who had learned that the Israelites had no king or prince, sucked on her lower lip. “A *woman* reigned over you?”

“She proved herself one of our best judges. We had forty years of unbroken peace thanks to her wisdom. She would sit under her palm tree in Ephraim and help people resolve their conflicts.”

“What if there had been war? How could she have coped?”

“War did come. Jabin, king of Canaan, had cruelly oppressed the Israelites for twenty years, and the commander of his army, Sisera, remained undefeated. He had nine hundred chariots fitted with iron, if you can imagine such a wonder. Who could stand against that army?”

“Then Deborah, who was a prophet as well as a judge, heard

from the Lord concerning the hardship of our people. God wanted Barak, the head of Israel's army, to go up against Sisera. It was time for Israel to vanquish its enemies. Do you know what Barak said?"

"*What?*" Grandfather cried without warning. Ruth and Naomi stared at each other with round eyes.

Naomi cleared her throat. "Barak said he would go, but only if Deborah went into battle with him."

"A mouse?" Grandfather interjected.

Ruth and Naomi looked about them, alarmed.

"Or a man?" Grandfather continued.

"Oh, you mean Barak?" Naomi laughed. "A cross between the two, I imagine. This war required faith. Faith that the Lord had more power than the iron chariots of Canaan. Faith that God could overcome in the midst of an impossible situation. Deborah had enough faith to cover Barak's lack. She told him that she would certainly go. But she also foretold that he would lose the highest honor in spite of winning the victory."

"She rode into war?" Ruth's voice came out high. "What happened?"

"Deborah didn't actually fight in the battle, but she went with the army and gave them the confidence of her faith. Sure enough, as God had promised, Israel routed Sisera's army in spite of his nine hundred unconquerable chariots."

"That's an astounding victory. Did she offer a great sacrifice to the Lord? One of her children, perhaps?"

Naomi's face scrunched as if she had drunk sour milk and desperately wanted to spit it out. "We don't sacrifice humans in Israel. Life belongs to the Lord. It is not for us to destroy."

Ruth gave a slow nod of her head. "You serve a merciful God."

"Yes. Thankfully."

"Tell me, what became of Sisera and Barak?"

"In the midst of the melee, Sisera managed to flee on foot. His heart must have brimmed with relief when he made it unharmed to the tent of a woman named Jael. Sisera imagined himself safe,

surviving to fight another day, because Jael's absent husband was on friendly terms with King Jabin. But he miscalculated. Exhausted, he fell asleep, and Jael killed him with a tent peg. So you see, the great commander lost his life to a woman, and Barak lost the glory of vanquishing his greatest enemy."

"So Deborah prevailed?"

"She did. The name of Deborah lives on for all generations as a woman raised up by the Lord to deliver our people."

"Your God used a woman to fulfill His plans for your people?"

"You never know who the Lord will use. Perhaps one day, it will be you, Ruth."

Ruth chuckled. "Not unless He is very desperate. By the sound of Him, I don't believe He is. What do you think, Grandfather?"

"The Lord," he said.

"Yes indeed," Naomi said, giving a broad grin of approval.

The interaction seemed to have exhausted the old man and before long he had sunk into a deep sleep.

The next day, Ruth rose before sunrise to fetch water. The well, located an hour's brisk walk from their house, would congest with long lines of chattering women later in the morning. To avoid the lines—and the crowd—Ruth had grown accustomed to awakening early each day, and arriving at the well when most women were just rising out of bed.

She drew water into her large clay pot, grunting as she swung the heavy jar over and up to settle snugly against her slender hip. She had performed this chore so often since childhood that she could manage it with a wool blindfold.

Her mind roamed as she walked home. She thought of the chores that still awaited her: weeding and tending the garden, making bread for the evening meal, washing the floor mats, which had grown dusty with use. No doubt her mother had more work in store for her as well.

She wondered if she would be able to sneak a few raisins to her grandfather with his noonday meal. He had slept through the

night without having an accident. Ruth could not help but feel that Naomi's visits had somehow helped the old man.

After washing the mats and sweeping the floor, Ruth turned to the hard work of helping her mother grind flour in the hand mill. When she finished, she checked on Grandfather and found that he had dragged in mud all over the newly washed mats. She groaned and threw her grandfather a vexed glance where he lay in the corner of the room. Bending, she started to wipe the mats clean again before her mother saw the mess and lost the last of her patience.

In truth, on occasion, even Ruth found it a challenge to contend with Grandfather's unintended disarray. Love alone tethered her frustration and made bearable the numerous inadvertent blunders of the old man, which increased her already heavy workload. She cherished him too much to give in to anger. Because of that love, her heart never grew cold and resentful toward him the way her mother's had done.

At noon, not only was Ruth able to bring Grandfather a small pile of raisins, but she also managed to fill his bowl with an extra portion of lentil stew, skimmed from her own share.

As she placed the raisins in Grandfather's hand, the old man turned and looked full into her eyes. "My beautiful Ruth," he mumbled and patted her cheek. "I missed you."

Ruth felt her throat tighten. "Oh, Grandfather. I love you so dearly."

The old man stuffed all the raisins in his mouth at once. "Good!" he declared after he had swallowed them.

Ruth wiped a thin rivulet of spittle from the side of his chin. "Sweet, aren't they?"

A gnarled hand rested on her head for a fleeting moment. "Like you."

Grandfather had not spoken so many clear words together in months. Ruth swallowed tears of joy. He was improving.

"Naomi will come and visit you this evening. Perhaps she will tell us more amusing stories."

“The Lord,” Grandfather said.

“Yes!” Ruth felt a smile rise up from deep inside. “She will tell us stories about the Lord. Now, would you like me to tell you about Chemosh?”

“The Lord,” he said again. He laid his head against her shoulder.
“My Ruth.”