

# Love Like A Wheel

By Steven Blacksmith

## CHARACTERS

PHYLLIS .....Sixties. Matriarch.

CAROL... ..Late forties. Phyllis's daughter.

ANNIE... ..Late forties. Carol's wife.

MARCUS... ..Late forties. Carol's ex-husband.

PATRICK... ..Mid twenties. Carol and Marcus's son.

CHEYANNE... ..Mid twenties. Carol and Marcus's daughter.

SETTING: A hospital room.

Phyllis's hospital room is sterile and plain. It is not a room where one waits to heal, but rather where one goes to die. Basic life support machines surround the bed. Maybe a cup of ice chips sits on a nearby table? Jello? Anything to set the mood of the hospital.

*(CAROL enters cautiously. She walks up to the bed – teetering on the edge of tears.)*

CAROL

Mom?... I'm sorry that it took me so long to get here... The nurse said that you might be able to hear me. That I should still talk to you and tell you that I'm here for you. Even if you aren't able to respond... Anyway, I just wanted to say that... Jesus... I love you, mom. I am so sorry that we didn't spend more time together.

*(Carol wipes a tear from her eye.)*

*(ANNIE enters.)*

ANNIE

How is she?

CAROL

She's... Beautiful, isn't she?

ANNIE

She always was.

*(Annie hugs Carol and they share a short kiss.)*

Did the doctors say how long she has?

CAROL

Not long. All we can do is wait. They are making her "comfortable", as they say. Just pumping her full of drugs so she doesn't feel the pain. Apparently, she can hear us, though she's so out of sorts that I doubt she knows what we're saying.

ANNIE

I'm sure she does. As long as she can hear you she will know that you are here with her and that you love her.

*(Carol smiles and places her hand lovingly on Annie's cheek.)*

*(MARCUS enters and Carol quickly takes her hand away.)*

MARCUS

Uh... Sorry. I didn't mean to interrupt anything.

CAROL

Interrupt? What would we possibly be doing here in front of my sick mother?

MARCUS

I didn't mean it like that.

CAROL

Sure, Marcus.

ANNIE

Will you two relax? You've be in each other's presence for all of ten seconds and you can't be civil?

MARCUS

As much as I hate you, Annie, I suppose you're right. We probably shouldn't fight in front of Phyllis anyway.

CAROL

Speaking of my mother – why are you here?

MARCUS

Look, I know we're not on the best terms, but I figured I should be here for the kids. And for Phyllis. I know she's your mother, but she was always very nice to me. I want to be here.

*(Carol takes a moment to calm her mind.)*

CAROL

Fine. She always kind of liked you anyway.

*(Marcus cracks a small smile.)*

MARCUS

How is she?

CAROL

Sedated. She can hear you though. The nurse I talked to said we could tell her stories or just assure her that we're here. Or, even sing, if you're up for it.

MARCUS

I have a terrible voice.

CAROL

I know. So did she.

MARCUS

Not like she cared. What I would give to have that kind of freedom.

CAROL

*(To Annie)*

Mom would always sing whenever she could. Even if we were in public, she would belt out her favorite showtunes or random songs from ancient movies. The problem was – she couldn't sing for a damn. It was so embarrassing! We would be in the checkout line at the market and she would sing *Let's Misbehave* for the poor cashier.

ANNIE

Must have been a sexy cashier.

*(Carol laughs and holds Annie's hand.)*

CAROL

*(Beat.)*

I wish you could have heard her sing. When she got sick, she just didn't want to anymore. Everything was painful – even the things she used to love.

*(Annie holds Carol's other hand to comfort her. Marcus sees this and moves to the bed.)*

MARCUS

*(To Phyllis.)*

Hey, Stranger.

*(The lights fade out on the bed, and up on an empty part of the stage. Marcus walks into the light.)*

MARCUS

Hello? Is anyone here? I'm here to get the rest of my stuff, but my key doesn't seem to be working.

*(Phyllis enters wearing a karate gi.)*

PHYLLIS

Hey, Stranger.

MARCUS

Hi, Phyllis. What's with the getup?

PHYLLIS

Just practicing my judo. Want me to flip ya?

MARCUS

Oh no, I'm fine.

PHYLLIS  
Come on. It'll be fun! And it barely hurts.

MARCUS  
I'm not really a karate kind of guy.

PHYLLIS  
Okay...

MARCUS  
What are you doing here, anyway?

PHYLLIS  
Carol changed the locks.

MARCUS  
I can see that.

PHYLLIS  
Well, she had to go to work and needed me to come over and let you in.

MARCUS  
Oh... So?...

PHYLLIS  
Doors open.

MARCUS  
Okay?

*(Marcus senses something strange, but shrugs it off. He walks past Phyllis and toward the door, but before he can get past her she grabs his arms and flips him onto his back.)*

Ow! God!

PHYLLIS  
See? Barely hurts.

MARCUS  
What was that for?

*(Phyllis helps him up.)*

Carol didn't tell you *I* was the reason for the divorce, did she?

*(Phyllis laughs.)*

PHYLLIS

No, no. You just seemed a little down. I thought I'd get a little adrenaline in you. Speaking of adrenaline - I hear you're single now...

*(Marcus shares a laugh with Phyllis.)*

MARCUS

Maybe some other time. When I'm not in physical and emotional pain.

PHYLLIS

I'll hold you to that. Your stuff is in the living room. She boxed it up already.

MARCUS

Thanks.

*(Marcus walks through the door.)*

*(Phyllis starts stretching in a meditative pose.)*

*(After a few beats, Marcus returns with a medium-sized box.)*

PHYLLIS

Got everything?

MARCUS

I thought I had more things than this.

PHYLLIS

Who needs things? They just weigh you down. You think I need this gi to practice karate? I'd practice naked if the homeowners association wasn't so prude in Carol's neighborhood.

MARCUS

I guess I just thought that my life here was more than this.

*(Phyllis stops meditating and moves to Marcus. He takes a defensive stance.)*

You're not going to flip me again, are you?

PHYLLIS

I will, unless you stop feeling so damn sorry for yourself.

MARCUS

Excuse me?

PHYLLIS

My daughter left you, Marcus. I know, it probably hurts like hell. When Harold left us, I didn't know what to do with myself. One day, I came to the realization that life doesn't stop just because someone disappears from it. I couldn't let him hold me back anymore.

MARCUS

What did you do?

PHYLLIS

I started finding things to improve my mind, body and soul. I became a student of the world. Why do you think I'm on this Japanese kick right now?

MARCUS

You're asking me to just constantly be trying to fill this hole in my heart with random hobbies?

PHYLLIS

No. I'm telling for you to take charge of your circumstances. Live everyday with yourself in mind. You're a great father, and were a great husband. Now it's time to be a great Marcus.

*(Marcus takes a fighting pose.)*

MARCUS

Alright. I'll do it. How do I flip you?

PHYLLIS

I think that's a little advanced for now. But, how about this? The Japanese have a lovely form of poetry called a haiku. It's a poem of three lines. The first line has five syllables, the second seven syllables, and the third has five syllables.

MARCUS

Example.

PHYLLIS

Okay, um.

*(She thinks. As she says the poem, she counts the syllables on her fingers.)*

**ON THE SULLEN BEACH  
THE TURTLE LIES IN SLUMBER  
READY TO ATTACK**

*(Marcus can't help but laugh.)*

MARCUS

It's beautiful.



PHYLLIS

Never underestimate a turtle. They'll get ya.

*(The lights fade down. They come up on Annie and Carol, still staring into each other's eyes.)*

*(The rest of the lights come up on the bed. Marcus is there, holding Phyllis's hand.)*

MARCUS

I'll be seein' ya, Stranger.

*(Arguing is heard from the hallway. After a beat – Patrick and Cheyanne enter at each other's throats. They are about to scream when they see Phyllis lying motionless, and Marcus, Carol, and Annie's disapproving looks.)*

PATRICK

Oh, crap. Sorry, everyone. Sorry, grandma. Wait – can she hear me?

*(Louder.)*

I'M SORRY GRANDMA.

*(Cheyanne smacks Patrick's arm.)*

Ow!

CAROL

I guess some things never change.

*(Carol hugs the kids.)*

How were your flights?

CHEYANNE

Fine. But, then we ran into each other at the airport and thought it was a good idea to share a cab.

CAROL

How far did you get before you started fighting?

CHEYANNE

Not even five minutes out.

CAROL

Well, I hope you two can pull together while we're here. Your grandma doesn't need that kind of negativity right now.

*(Cheyanne looks at her dad, then back to Carol.)*

CHEYANNE

I'll try my best if you do.

CAROL

What's that supposed to mean?

CHEYANNE

Hi, dad.

*(Cheyanne hugs Marcus.)*

MARCUS

Hey there, kiddo. It's been a while. I'm sorry about your grandma. Why don't you say hi to her. She can hear you.

CHEYANNE

Okay.

*(Cheyanne hugs him again, but harder this time, before moving over to the bed.)*

*(Patrick walks up to Marcus.)*

PATRICK

Hey, dad.

MARCUS

Patrick.

*(Marcus hugs Patrick.)*

I'm sorry about your grandma.

PATRICK

I'm sorry for you. Having to be here with us with your ex wife and her new wife – man, that must be weird for you.

MARCUS

Thank you, Patrick. That hadn't crossed my mind at all.

*(Patrick laughs to himself, then crosses to Annie and shakes her hand.)*

*(Carol joins Cheyanne at the bed.)*

CAROL

Hey, honey. How are you holding up?

CHEYANNE

I thought I could just come in here and tell her I love her, but it's a lot harder than I imagined.

CAROL

It's not easy. She used to be so strong. Now, seeing her like this is just hard to understand. I mean, the last time I saw her, she was still cleaning her own house, making her own food... It's... It's hard.

CHEYANNE

I don't know what to say.

CAROL

You don't have to say anything. Just be here with her.

*(Carol moves back to Annie.)*

PATRICK

Hey, mom. Dad looks so uncomfortable.

CAROL

He's just sad. I think my mom is affecting him more than he's leading on.

PATRICK

Have you met his new girlfriend? She's pretty. And, young. Like, my age young.

ANNIE

What are you doing, Patrick?

PATRICK

Just talking. That's all...

*(Patrick moves to the bed. He gives Cheyanne a pat on the back.)*

She... Always liked me more than you.

*(Cheyanne shakes her head at Patrick.)*

CHEYANNE

Prick.

*(She moves toward the door.)*

CAROL

Where are you going?

CHEYANNE

I saw a vending machine out there. I think my blood sugar is a little low.

CAROL

Okay, honey.

*(Cheyanne exits.)*

PATRICK

*(To Phyllis.)*

Grandma. My partner-in-crime. I always told you one of us wasn't going to make it out of here alive. I figured it would be me... If there is one thing that I will never regret, it's how fun it was to be an asshole with you.

*(The lights fade down as another part of the stage lights up. Patrick walks into the light.)*

*(Cheyanne walks in. She HICCUPS every fifteen seconds or so.)*

CHEYANNE

Hi, Patrick. Where's grandma?

PATRICK

I think she went to the store.

CHEYANNE

Okay, cool. I think I'm gonna go to – HICCUP!

PATRICK

Oh, man. You stills have hiccups? It's been like an hour.

CHEYANNE

They won't go away. It's so stupid.

PATRICK

Have you tried drinking water upside down?

CHEYANNE

I've tried everything. It doesn't matter. They'll go away soon. I'm gonna head to the mall and meet some friends.

*(Cheyanne starts heading out.)*

PATRICK

The mall? Wait, Cheyanne –

*(She stops.)*

CHEYANNE

What?

PATRICK

Just be back before dark, okay?

CHEYANNE

Why?

PATRICK

You mean... You haven't heard of the serial killer?

CHEYANNE

What serial killer?

PATRICK

The news said he broke out of prison and has been on a rampage ever since. The cops think he's hiding some place in town – only coming out once a day to find a new victim.

CHEYANNE

You're an idiot and I hate you.

PATRICK

Look, I know I haven't always been the best brother to you, but I care about you. I just want you to be safe.

*(Phyllis sneaks up behind Cheyanne while holding a butcher knife and wearing coveralls and a hockey mask.)*

Cheyanne, I love y –

*(Patrick points to Phyllis.)*

Oh my god. Cheyanne, look out!

*(Cheyanne turns around and SCREAMS at the sight of the killer. She falls to the ground.)*

CHEYANNE

HELP! PLEASE DON'T KILL ME! HELP!

*(Phyllis starts to laugh, and is joined by Patrick. She lifts her mask up to reveal her face.)*

Got you!

PHYLLIS

What the hell is wrong with you two!?

CHEYANNE

Um... You're welcome?

PHYLLIS

For what!?

CHEYANNE

For curing your hiccups.

PHYLLIS

What?

CHEYANNE

We thought you didn't try that remedy yet.

PATRICK

I hate you both.

CHEYANNE

*(Cheyanne storms off.)*

You were pretty good, Patrick.

PHYLLIS

We make a good team. Speaking of which, I have this great idea to scare Annie. We can use the same costume, but I need you to hide in her car.

PATRICK

Maybe we shouldn't do that one.

PHYLLIS

Oh, come on. It's like a welcome-to-the-family kind of thing.

PATRICK

Or, maybe you could talk to her. Get to know her a bit. Then, after a few years of being a part of this family we can terrify her for fun.

PHYLLIS

A few years?

PATRICK

PHYLLIS

She's not going anywhere, kiddo. Might as well make her feel like she belongs.

*(Phyllis rubs Patrick's back.)*

Now, I better go check on your sister. And maybe apologize a lot.

PATRICK

Sure. You should probably lose the mask and knife.

PHYLLIS

Oh! Good call. I love you, kiddo.

*(Cheyanne exits.)*

*(Annie enters. She approaches Patrick. He is lost in thought.)*

ANNIE

Did you say everything you needed to say?

*(Patrick stirs.)*

PATRICK

I'm sorry, what?

ANNIE

Did you make your peace? With Phyllis?

PATRICK

There is no peace to be made. She always got me. Never judged or scolded.

ANNIE

No, I'm sorry. I meant –

PATRICK

Why are you here, Annie? She barely knew you.

ANNIE

Emotional support.

PATRICK

Well, you're doing a great job so far.

*(Patrick annoyedly walks away from a bewildered Annie.)*

*(Lights up on the hospital room. Phyllis is back in bed.)*

*(Annie crosses back to Carol.)*

You okay?

CAROL

Yeah.

ANNIE

Are you sure? You seem a little frazzled.

CAROL

It's just a... A stressful day. Anyway, why am I complaining? How are you holding up?

ANNIE

Annie. You can feel bad or sad or stressed. That's valid. We all love Phyllis and she loves us. We're a family. Don't worry about me. Allow yourself room to feel this.

CAROL

*(Annie nods as she holds back tears.)*

*(Cheyanne enters with an armful of snacks.)*

CHEYANNE

Okay, I got everyone their favorites. Or at least, the ones I knew about. I have a strong suspicion that most of us haven't eaten yet. Here, dad, barbeque chips.

*(She hands Marcus the bag.)*

Thanks, hon.

MARCUS

Patrick, I got you a rice krispy treat.

CHEYANNE

*(She hands it to him.)*

Nice.

PATRICK

For mom, trail mix.

CHEYANNE

*(She gives Carol trail mix.)*



CAROL

You really didn't have to do that.

CHEYANNE

It's nothing. But, I'm sorry, Annie. I wasn't sure what you liked or if you have any allergies, so here is some gum.

ANNIE

Oh... Thank you.

*(Annie takes the gum from Cheyanne.)*

CHEYANNE

You're welcome. I didn't know what everyone wanted to drink, but there are far less options than the snacks, so I figured I'd ask. They have water, green tea, and root beer.

MARCUS

You really don't have to do that.

CHEYANNE

No, no. I want to. I think we all need to stay alert right now and not be going into any blood sugar spikes, you know? At least before we can get some real food in our systems.

MARCUS

Well, then at least let me help you.

CHEYANNE

Okay dad. What does everyone want?

CAROL

This is nonsense. We'll all go with you. Come on, guys.

ANNIE

I... I think I'm going to stay here. You know, just watch our stuff. Make sure nobody comes in that shouldn't be here.

CAROL

Thanks, honey. We'll be right back.

*(Annie smiles as everyone but her and Phyllis exits.)*

*(The lights go down on the bed as an empty part of the stage lights up. Annie walks into the light. She starts nervously adjusting her dress.)*

*(Phyllis enters.)*

PHYLLIS

Nervous.

ANNIE

You could say that. Never been married before.

PHYLLIS

I have. This is actually the easy part.

*(Annie fidgets with her dress.)*

Here. Let me.

*(Phyllis adjusts Annie's dress.)*

ANNIE

Thank you... Mom.

PHYLLIS

Please. Call me Ms. Anderson.

ANNIE

Oh. Sorry.

*(Phyllis bursts out laughing.)*

PHYLLIS

I'm just messing around. Call me anything you like. Mom. Phyllis. I've even been told I look like a Frank from certain angles.

*(Annie lets out a small laugh.)*

That's better. Why are you so nervous?

ANNIE

I don't know. It's stupid. I know Carol loves me, but... I guess I never really felt like I fit in with the kids. And, Marcus is still around, so I have to deal with that. I just feel like I split up their family.

PHYLLIS

Nonsense. You couldn't help falling in love. Hell, Carol sure as hell couldn't help it either. Her and Marcus were great, once upon a time, but people change. People grow apart. The bond of family can be thin, but it can never break if we don't let it. And guess what?

ANNIE

What?

PHYLLIS

You're part of our family now. The kids will grow to love you.

ANNIE

Thanks... Frank.

*(They share a smile.)*

*(Lights fade down on the scene. Phyllis goes back to the bed and lays down.)*

*(Marcus, Patrick, Carol, and Cheyanne enter as the lights come up.)*

CAROL

Hey, hon. I got you a water, just in case.

*(Carol gives the water to Annie. Annie fights back tears.)*

What's wrong?

ANNIE

Nothing, I... I was just thinking about our wedding day. Phyllis came and talked to me and... Well, what she said was just really sweet.

CHEYANNE

What did she say?

ANNIE

It's... It's not important.

CHEYANNE

Come on, Annie. Don't be so closed off.

ANNIE

I'm not closed off. I just don't feel like sharing right now.

CHEYANNE

Don't be like that. I'm sure a nice story of grandma would be great to hear right now.

ANNIE

I said no, Cheyanne. Why are you pushing this?

CAROL

It's personal, Cheyanne. Let her keep this between her and your grandmother.

PATRICK

Because you're the patron saint of being honest and open, huh mom?

*(Carol is blindsided.)*

MARCUS

Come on. Don't do this here.

CHEYANNE

Why are you, of all people, defending her? We have barely spent any time together for years, because of what she did to this family.

MARCUS

No, Cheyanne. You're wrong.

CHEYANNE

Oh, there you go again. Sticking up for mom just so she could steamroll over you –

MARCUS

-- Do you think I wasn't invited to Christmas, Cheyanne? Or birthdays or Thanksgiving? I was. But, I couldn't bring myself to be in a room with people that were drifting away from me by the day. When I found out about your mom and Annie, I didn't know what to do. Hell, you and Patrick were almost adults, anyway. You had your own lives to live and I didn't want to stop the world with my problems. So, it became easier for me to drift as well. And, when I did see you two, I think I let some of the poison in my mind seep into you... Your mom didn't break up this family... I did.

*(Cheyanne is speechless as her anger peaks. She moves to a corner of the room as the lights around the bed and family dim, leaving only Cheyanne.)*

*(Marcus, Carol, Patrick, and Annie exit in darkness.)*

*(As Cheyanne angrily paces around, Phyllis enters silently. Cheyanne spots her.)*

*(Phyllis senses Cheyanne's anger, and moves to comfort her. Cheyanne pulls away.)*

*(Phyllis thinks for a moment, then curtsies to Cheyanne. Cheyanne stands up and curtsies back.)*

*(Phyllis then does a series of ballet moves and Cheyanne follows. It's as if Phyllis is teaching Cheyanne the moves. They do beginner moves such as plies and relevés. Then, they practice standing on point. At first, Cheyanne has great difficulty and even giggles at her trouble. Eventually, her point becomes strong and Phyllis moves to the side.)*

*(The lights come up on the empty stage as Cheyanne does a beautiful ballet routine. Phyllis watches her with delight. As Cheyanne dances, however, she becomes more and more upset. She gracefully walks over to Phyllis, touches Phyllis's face gently, then falls to her knees and cries.)*

*(Phyllis walks back to the bed and gets in.)*

*(Marcus, Carol, Patrick, and Annie enter the room. Carol rushes to Cheyanne's side and picks her up.)*

CAROL

Hey. It's okay, babe. I've got you. Just let it out, okay?

CHEYANNE

I can't see her like this, I can't –

MARCUS

I think, maybe, I need to go.

*(Marcus begins to leave, but Patrick stops him.)*

PATRICK

Dad. I think you need to stay... I think we all need you to stay.

*(Marcus nods silently. He moves over to Cheyanne and hugs her deeply.)*

PHYLLIS

Caro.l... I...

*(Phyllis turns subtly in bed.)*

CAROL

Mom? Jesus Christ.

PHYLLIS

No... It's just me... I can't... I...

CAROL

What are you trying to say. Don't struggle just, whisper it, okay?

*(Carol moves down to Phyllis's mouth. Phyllis whispers into her ear.)*

*(The lights fade until only the bed is lit. Carol stands up as Phyllis becomes livelier.)*

Mom.

PHYLLIS

Hi, dear. I was just taking a nap. What are you doing here?

CAROL

I needed to ask you something.

PHYLLIS

Of course.

CAROL

I just wanted to know... I just...

PHYLLIS

Where are my manners? Would you like to cuddle?

CAROL

Mom, I'm forty.

PHYLLIS

And I'm sixty-two.

CAROL

Oh yeah? How long have you been sixty-two?

PHYLLIS

Long enough to know when my daughter needs a cuddle.

CAROL

Fair enough.

*(Carol gets in the bed with Phyllis.)*

PHYLLIS

Now, what's wrong, kiddo?

CAROL

I was just... I was thinking about dad the other day.

PHYLLIS

What about him?

CAROL

Well... Did it hurt when he left?

PHYLLIS

Of course. It hurt more than any physical pain I've ever felt, and I once broke a leg skiing.

CAROL  
You never told me that.

PHYLLIS  
Why would I? It healed.

CAROL  
The leg or the pain from dad leaving?

PHYLLIS  
Both. In time. But, the pain from your dad lingered, you know?

CAROL  
No, I don't.

PHYLLIS  
Your dad, he... He didn't just leave me – he left us. Maybe that hurt most of all; just the fact that we couldn't do anything about it. When he moved, I knew you were never going to see him again. The thing about a broken leg is that it's still attached to you. You can still take the time to look down and see it. You can relax and do little exercises to help fix it. When your father left, it was like a part of us was missing.

CAROL  
How did you get over that?

PHYLLIS  
I had to realize that I was looking at love the wrong way. For so long I thought we couldn't be complete because we were missing a piece. But, I saw that if I kept thinking that way, then the love between you and I would grow weaker every day.

CAROL  
Why?

*(Phyllis takes out a sheet of paper. She begins folding it.)*

PHYLLIS  
Because... Love is like a wheel. Over time, after each turn around, this wheel is shaped by the world it touches. Of course, if you're not careful, the wheel can deform and degrade. Eventually, it breaks apart into pieces and no matter how hard you try, it can't be put back together again. But, if you learn to adapt with everything the wheel picks up – every scratch, rock, weed, whatever – you learn that none of these things can really hurt the wheel. We can reshape our love into anything we see fit if we just take the time to understand the things we affect and the things that affect us.

*(Phyllis makes one last fold and reveals a paper crane.)*

CAROL

What is this?

PHYLLIS

It's an origami crane. I'm on a Japanese kick lately.

CAROL

But, why didn't you make a wheel? It would have gone better with your analogy.

PHYLLIS

I haven't figured out how to make a wheel yet. So, here's a crane.

CAROL

Thanks...

PHYLLIS

Listen to me, Carol. Whatever it is you have to do – you can't let it break your love. Time will heal all wounds, but only if you work with time to mend them.

CAROL

Okay, mom. I love you.

PHYLLIS

I love you too, kiddo.

*(Phyllis kisses Carol's forehead.)*

*(Phyllis drifts off again, and Carol gets off of the bed as the lights fade up on the room.)*

CAROL

Mom?

*(Phyllis's pulse flatlines.)*

She's gone...

*(Marcus comforts the kids.)*

ANNIE

I'm so sorry, hon.

*(Annie puts her hand on Carol's shoulder.)*

CAROL

It's okay. It was her time.



PATRICK  
 What did she say to you?

CAROL  
 She said... “Love like a wheel”.

PATRICK  
 “Love like a wheel”? Hmm.

*(They all get closer to the bed.)*

CHEYANNE  
 Would anyone like to say anything?

*(Beat.)*

MARCUS  
 Sure. I’ll give it a shot.

*(Marcus clears his throat. As he talks he counts on his fingers.)*

**A NEW CHAPTER BOUND  
 FOR OUR LOVE IS LIKE A WHEEL  
 OUR ROADS LIMITLESS**

CAROL  
 Was that a haiku?

MARCUS  
 I’m on a bit of a Japanese kick.

*(Carol smiles as the family embraces each other around Phyllis’s bed.)*

*(Lights fade down slowly.)*