*Spoon River Anthology* – Audition Materials

*Spoon River Anthology* is a collection of poems, spoken by the deceased residents of Spoon River, Illinois. They rise from their graves and talk about the triumphs and failures, regrets and accomplishments, memories and recollections of their lives.

*To audition: please select one of the following monologues from the script, record yourself performing it, and submit online.*

LUCINDA MATLOCK (ACTRESS FOUR)

I went to the dances in Chandlerville,

And played snap-out at Winchester.

One time we changed partners,

Driving home in the moonlight of middle June,

And then I found Davis.

We were married and lived together for seventy years,

Enjoying, working, raising the twelve children,

Eight of whom we lost

Ere I reached the age of sixty.

I spun, I wove, I kept the house, I nursed the sick,

I made the garden, and for holiday

Rambled over the fields where sang the larks,

And by Spoon River gathering many a shell,

And many a flower and medicinal weed—

Shouting to the wooded hills, singing to the green valleys.

At ninety-six I had lived enough, that is all,

And passed to a sweet repose.

What is this I hear of sorrow and weariness,

Anger, discontent and drooping hopes?

Degenerate sons and daughters,

Life is too strong for you—

It takes life to love life.

SEARCY FOOTE (ACTOR THREE)

I wanted to go away to college

But rich Aunt Persis wouldn’t help me.

So I made gardens and raked the lawns

And bought John Alden’s books with my earnings

And toiled for the very means of life.

I wanted to marry Delia Prickett,

But how could I do it with what I earned?

And there was Aunt Persis more than seventy,

Who sat in a wheel-chair half alive,

With her throat so paralyzed, when she swallowed

The soup ran out of her mouth like a duck—

A gourmand yet, investing her income

In mortgages, fretting all the time

About her notes and rents and papers.

That day I was sawing wood for her,

Reading Proudhon in between.

I went in the house for a drink of water,

And there she sat asleep in her chair,

And Proudhon lying on the table,

And a bottle of chloroform on the book,

She used sometimes for an aching tooth!

I poured the chloroform on a handkerchief

And held it to her nose till she died.—

Oh Delia, Delia, you and Proudhon

Steadied my hand, and the coroner

Said she died of heart failure.

I married Delia and got the money—

A joke on you, Spoon River?

ROSCOE PURKAPILE (ACTOR ONE)

She loved me. Oh! How she loved me!

I never had a chance to escape

From the day she first saw me.

But then after we were married, I thought

She might prove her mortality and let me out,

Or she might divorce me.

But few die, none resign.

Then I ran away and was gone a year on a lark.

But she never complained. She said all would be well.

That I would return. And I did return.

I told her that while taking a row in a boat

I had been captured near Van Buren Street

By pirates on Lake Michigan,

And kept in chains, so I could not write her.

She cried and kissed me, and said it was cruel,

Outrageous, inhuman!

I then concluded our marriage

Was a divine dispensation

And could not be dissolved,

Except by death.

I was right.

IDA FRICKEY (ACTRESS FOUR)

Nothing in life is alien to you:

I was a penniless girl from Sumum

Who stepped from the morning train in Spoon River.

All the houses stood before me with closed doors

And drawn shades—I was barred out;

I had no place or part in any of them.

And I walked past the old McNeely mansion,

A castle of stone ‘mid walks and gardens,

With workmen about the place on guard,

And the County and State upholding it

For its lordly owner, full of pride.

I was so hungry I had a vision:

I saw a giant pair of scissors

Dip from the sky, like the beam of a dredge,

And cut the house in two like a curtain.

But at the “Commercial” I saw a man,

Who winked at me as I asked for work—

It was Wash McNeely’s son.

He proved the link in the chain of title

To half my ownership of the mansion,

Through a breach of contract suit—the scissors.

So, you see, the house, from the day I was born,

Was only waiting for me.