SMALL MOUTH SOUNDS  
by Bess Wohl  

APF 18-19 Season Auditions  
Aug 10-12  

NED  
Night Two: Question & Answer  

Begin with, “Hello. Thank you [...].” Prepare entire monologue through end of side. In GENERAL auditions, you are not likely to present the monologue in its entirety; you will likely be stopped part way through or asked to present a certain part. Those invited to CALLBACKS will present more of it, possibly the entire thing.
Judy watches Joan swim. After a moment, she picks up Joan’s things to follow. Joan’s intention accidentally falls out on the ground. Judy picks it up and reads it. Her face changes. She sits on the ground.)

**NIGHT TWO: QUESTION AND ANSWER**

Ned stands in the great hall, at a microphone. He clears his throat a little.

**NED**

Hello. Thank you for taking my question. First I want to thank my fellow-- retreasers— for the great questions everyone’s brought up so far. I know it’s only been a few days but my mind is like (makes a gesture for “blown”). So...

(He clears his throat again. Laughs self-consciously. Nobody else does.)

On that note, I can’t really stand here without acknowledging... Wow. You've changed my life. I just, I love your books and tapes, and, and it’s an honor to be standing here. In front of you. I basically think you're a total rock star, so... I kind of wanted to put that out there.

Um... So, where to begin.

My question is sort of... Big. It’s, well, you know how—there’s the planet. Earth. And then there’s— okay, you know what, let me back up for a second here— I promise not to give you my life story. But... Just to give you a tiny little bit about where I’m coming from-- I’ve always been an outdoor enthusiast? Then—quick sidebar-- about four and a half years ago, I fell while rock climbing and shattered my skull in eight places. I just have, you know, it looks... (Gestures to his head.) Without the hat, you can tell.

I survived—obviously-- which was pretty much a miracle, truly, although I still have trouble remembering certain things. Like the day of the week sometimes-- which I think is pretty common, right? And how I like my coffee-- which can be more, you know, not that it’s a big deal. That’s generally, like, an easy process of trial and error.

Anyway, cutting to the chase, I was in the hospital for about two years, during which I lost my job at a major marketing firm-- and also my wife started sleeping with my little brother although of course I wasn't aware of it at the time. Then the week I got out of the hospital I was the victim of an armed robbery in which they took you know, my wallet, credit cards, social security card, which led to my identity ultimately being stolen, even though I wasn't aware of that at the time either, but later, after my house burned down, um, long story. I became aware that I have bad credit due to the identity theft and also some loans that I took out for my brother who is a recovering heroin addict and also
a “musician.” I gave him the money before I knew he was sleeping with my wife, obviously.

(A moment to recover.)

So yeah, I got divorced. Then both of my parents died, six months apart. I started drinking. I had thoughts of suicide that were, well pretty much constant? Then, another miracle, I got in the program, got sober, stopped wanting to kill myself-- but after that, ironically, my sponsor killed himself— by walking into traffic on the Long Island expressway. That was last year. The same thing actually happened to my dog. Hit by a car, I mean. That was a month later. I don't mean to equate the two. I just think it’s weird, the, like, synchronicities and patterns and stuff that are everywhere, you know, if you look for them.

I have my health. Except for the intermittent short-term memory loss. Which, given everything, may actually be a blessing.

And right, as I was saying, I got a new job— well, it's volunteer, for now— at this place EARTHWATCH, it’s an environmental— and it’s just that, at EARTHWATCH it’s just like, become very clear that... With what’s happening...

With the planet...

Well, just one example, there’s like, not going to be enough food left in fifty years.

Crops are going to die out, because of drought and stuff.

And there’s two billion more people projected to be on the planet by then which means we’ll have to somehow find more land to farm which means even more trees will be cut down which means with the greenhouse effect everything will just get even hotter-- and so we’re talking mass migrations of people, wars over dwindling resources species going extinct-- and the coral reefs are going, and the polar ice caps...

And anyway— it’s all going to be gone. It really is the end of the world. At least as we know it. So much suffering is in store, you know? It just is. And the truth is, it may be too late. I mean, it probably is already too late to do anything about it.

And, so, I mean my intention is just to breathe and find peace with all of this.

Stay in the present, you know... Stay present...

But I keep feeling like we should be, like, doing something—or--
I mean, maybe we shouldn’t be at peace, and just sitting around breathing, because the world is—like, fucked, so—sorry.

Or, like, maybe this is just all my mind analyzing too much. I know this is just a story I’m telling... And anyway, it’s all an illusion. I think.

And this is probably just my ego talking. If I could just wake up to enlightenment maybe I would understand that... That... None of this matters, but... I think I’m not really. I think I’m... I think I’m... Wondering... Given everything... You know, everything...

(He suddenly looks very lost.)

What was my question?

(Under his breath, but the microphone just barely picks it up.) Shit.