

Shaw audition

DREYFUSS. You know, there's a question I've been- wanting to ask you ...

SHAW. And what might that be?

DREYFUSS. Why do you drink so much?

SHAW. To cope with smart-arses like you, Richard.

DREYFUSS. No. Seriously.

*Shaw offers Scheider a dram.*

SHAW. Roy?

SCHEIDER. Uh ... just a finger.

*Shaw pours a finger.*

SHAW. I'm English. I have to drink-to cope with the climate. If the English didn't drink we'd have died out years ago.

DREYFUSS. Nah, I don't buy that. I've known plenty of Brits that don't hit the bottle. I want the real reason-what, is it the "artistic temperament" shtick?

SHAW. Why does anyone drink? Why do you smoke that stuff that makes you giggle? Why do you snort that powder that makes your eyes water? I've seen you coming out of the boghouse red-eyed, sniffing like a dog. Now why would you do that?

DREYFUSS. I'm not gonna deny I like getting high occasionally.

SHAW. Yes. I suppose that's how it starts. My god, I loved to drink when I was young. It was such pleasure going to the pub and getting smashed after a show. People talk about there being a cultural pressure to drink in England, but as a young man it felt natural, wonderful, it freed us up. We talked about art, politics, we were theatrical revolutionaries, we were going to change the world! ... Working with George Devine at the Royal Court, doing *The Long and The Short and The Tall* with Peter O'Toole ... Heaven.

SCHEIDER. I think you did change the world. It's just that the world tends to revert to type.

SHAW. Bless you, Roy. Anyway ... we were competitive. We'd pride ourselves on still being able to function after a tidal wave of booze! Still standing, like a bull peppered with banderillas. I don't know at what point drink became a part of me ... perhaps even before I was born. My father was an alcoholic, you know. A real alcoholic, not just a barroom brawler, or a dilettante drinker like O'Toole; a proper, hollow-legged drunkard ... Trouble is, these days I find that it interferes with my writing. I tried to quit last year ... but I found myself with a drink in my hand as a reward for a week of not drinking.