

4 Part VI/Wednesday, February 5, 1986 ★

STAGEREVIEW

BOY MEETS GIRL IN 'DEEP BLUE SEA'

By DAN SULLIVAN, Times Theater Critic

He's 29 and brutal. She's 31 and needy. They meet, clash, go to bed, share their secrets (he's afraid he killed a guy last night; she can't get over a sexual experience with her father) and start to heal one other.

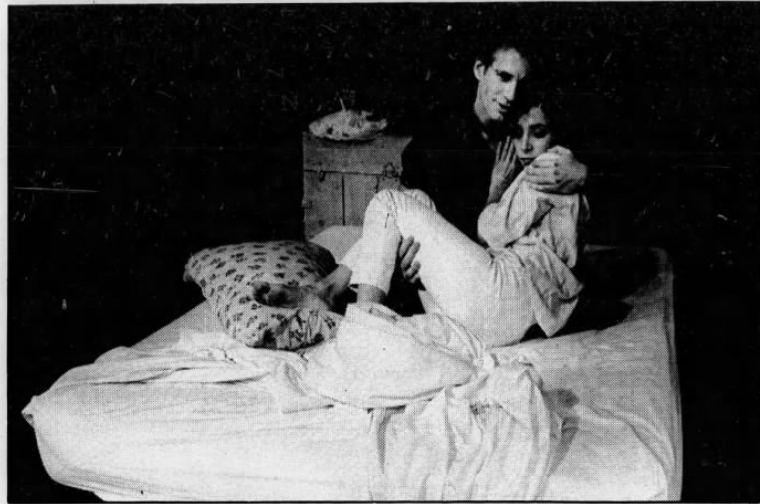
That's the ground plan in "Danny and the Deep Blue Sea" at the Back Alley Theatre, a 90-minute mood play that playwright John Patrick Shanley might easily have placed on Philco Theater or Studio One back in the golden days of live TV.

The sex and the rough language would have been a problem, but Danny (Paul Lieber) and Roberta (Didi Conn) are very much the kind of lovers that Marty and his girlfriend were—groping for the words to express the big feelings they are having.

They also might remind you of Rocky and Adrian. "I lock horns with anybody!" roars Danny, known to the guys at work as The Beast. "You got a nice nose," chirps Roberta, the battered gamine. "It looks at you and says hello."

Being street people, they go from one emotion to the other as quick as lighting. Even from one mental level to another. Sometimes Danny seems retarded, and Roberta pretty smart. Sometimes Roberta seems the out-of-it one, Danny the on-the-ball one.

We are pleased when Danny starts to soften and Roberta learns to trust. Two little people finding each other in the dark—only a



MONICA ALMEIDA

Paul Lieber, Didi Conn help each other make it through the night in "Danny and the Deep Blue Sea."

cynic would knock it. But underneath we're aware that, in the real world, which "Danny" is supposed to be a transcript of, people don't start spilling their inmost secrets within 10 minutes of meeting one another—especially not wary people like Danny and Roberta.

In the end it's a wouldn't-it-be-nice play. Wouldn't it be nice if we could heal our scars this easily? Wouldn't it be nice if one night with the right stranger could turn our lives around? Yes, it would, and taken as a modern fairy tale, "Danny" has charm.

Perhaps it's part of the charm that Lieber and Conn give such attractive and vivacious performances, under June Stein's direction. Danny's an adorable pug, not a stolid brute. Roberta's a smugged

waif, not a desperate neurotic. There's no danger that these characters will make any claims on us. We're dealing with lovable stereotypes who know their place.

The show is very capably mounted at the Back Alley Theatre. Director June Stein. Music David Shire, performed by Tom Scott. Set Leslie McDonald. Lighting design Orville Doc Ballard. Lighting consultant Leslie Sullivant. With Didi Conn and Paul Lieber. Plays at 8 p.m. Wednesdays-Sundays, with Sunday matinees at 3. Closes March 16. Tickets \$8-\$14. 15231 Burbank Blvd., Van Nuys. (818) 780-2240.

It's all so familiar that some will confuse it with life.

'DANNY AND THE DEEP BLUE SEA'
John Patrick Shanley's play, presented by L.A. Theatre Works at the Back Alley Theatre. Director June Stein. Music David Shire, performed by Tom Scott. Set Leslie McDonald. Lighting design Orville Doc Ballard. Lighting consultant Leslie Sullivant. With Didi Conn and Paul Lieber. Plays at 8 p.m. Wednesdays-Sundays, with Sunday matinees at 3. Closes March 16. Tickets \$8-\$14. 15231 Burbank Blvd., Van Nuys. (818) 780-2240.

FILM CLIPS: CAVE WOMEN

POWER
"POWER GETS A POWERFUL 10."