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Dramatic Publishing



The Stuck Pot

A PLAY IN THREE ACTS
BY ROGER GARIS
BASED ON A STORY
BY KATE McNAIR

THE DRAMATIC PUBLISHING COMPANY



Alice Ann is determined to turn herself into an unattractive disaster of a date for the Academy dance—and she's got a good reason for this.

The results are hilarious, and the Academy dance becomes a delightful event no one can ever forget.

***THE STUCK POT**

ISBN 10: 0-87129-528-8
ISBN 13: 978-0-87129-528-6



9 780871 295286 >

The Stuck Pot

Code: S-54



printed on recycled paper

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BY

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(THE STUCK POT)

ISBN 0-87129-528-8

The Stuck Pot

A Play in Three Acts

FOR EIGHT MEN, FIFTEEN WOMEN AND EXTRAS

CHARACTERS

DEAN LOUISE TAGGART.of Worthington
Women's Academy

GRACE SEDGEWICK }
WILLARD SEDGEWICK } . . .parents of Alice Ann

ALICE ANN SEDGEWICK. .a student at Worthington

MARY JANE THOMPKINS.her roommate

GAIL TREAT }
KAY EMERSON }her friends

DR. JACOBY. . . .headmaster of Jason Boys' School

AMY CALDWELL }
LUCILE COULTER }teachers at Worthington

JULIA }
RUTH }
ALBERTA }
EUNICE }Worthington girls
IDA }
JOAN }
MARTHA }

EDWARD MOTT.student at Jason

HUBERT FARRELLY.Mary's boy friend

GRANT WESTON }
BOB }
JIM }Jason boys
BILL }

OTHER BOYS AND GIRLS AT THE DANCE

SCENE

PLACE: Worthington Women's Academy

TIME: The present.

SYNOPSIS

ACT ONE: An afternoon in April.

ACT TWO: Several nights later.

ACT THREE: The next day.

NOTES ON CHARACTERS AND COSTUMES

DEAN LOUISE TAGGART: Dean Taggart is perhaps forty, pleasant-looking though not pretty. She can be severe on occasion, and while she may not be as dedicated as some, she has an interest in her charges. She is a spinster, but she still hasn't given up the idea of being married, which status might be considered her primary goal. She is, however, a fairly good dean, and takes pride in her position. She wears businesslike but attractive clothes. In Act Two, for the dance, she is garbed in a party dress.

GRACE SEDGEWICK: Grace Sedgewick is about Dean Taggart's age but has--she hopes--far more social poise. In fact, society and its strata are quite important in Grace's life. She thinks of herself as the social leader of Branston, a rather social small town some fifty miles from the school. Grace lavishes much care on her figure, her face, and her breeding, and has done quite well with all three --although, technically, the last was hardly within her control. She wears clothes of the finest quality and in excellent taste.

WILLARD SEDGEWICK: Grace's husband is about fifty, portly, not quite so socially-conscious as Grace--but, nevertheless, he knows what should be done, and when. He is president of the Branston Country Club, and a member of the Chamber of Commerce. He went to a small, little-known college, but he took some courses at Columbia, so when anyone asks him where he went, he says simply, "Columbia." On the whole, however, Willard isn't a bad guy, and if it weren't for Grace he might

turn out to be pretty "regular." He is clothed in well tailored suits.

ALICE ANN SEDGEWICK: Alice Ann is the daughter of Grace and Willard. She is what might be called an unusual child. At sixteen she could be a budding beauty--except for the fact that her own beauty, at this stage of her life, doesn't particularly interest her--and the "budding" doesn't, either. Alice Ann isn't exactly a tomboy, but concerning dress and social deportment she's like the mule which, when his owner tried to demonstrate his running ability to a prospective buyer, ran slap-bang into a tree. The prospective buyer claimed the mule was blind, but the owner said, "Man, she ain't blind, she just don't give a damn." And that's about the way it is with Alice Ann. With regard to social correctness, she "just don't give a damn." When she first appears, she wears a shirt and blue jeans. At the very end of the act, she may try on the dress which her parents have brought her, or simply hold the dress up in front of her. In Act Two, she wears the dress because she has to. She is truly lovely in it. In Act Three she is dressed for traveling.

MARY JANE THOMPKINS: Mary is Alice Ann's roommate. She isn't any particular type. She is seventeen, somewhat taller than Alice Ann, fair in studies, fair in sports, fair in practically everything. She'll never set the world on fire, but the world won't set her on fire, either. In Act One, she is dressed extremely casually. In Act Two, for the dance, she wears a voluminous dress and has on "corrective" glasses. In Act Three, she is back to her normal self.

GAIL TREAT: Gail is sixteen. She is a bit like Alice--somewhat off-beat. Like the other girls, she's very casually dressed in Act One. In Act

Two, she is dressed for the dance. In Act Three, she is again casually dressed.

KAY EMERSON: Kay is seventeen, and is reaching out a long and eager hand for Life. She has bleached hair and uses a goodly amount of make-up, including eye shadow. She enjoys being dramatic. In Act Two, she--like the other girls--is trying not to be too attractive. As a result she isn't as smooth as she would usually appear on such an occasion, but she is still pretty, still the beauty, even though she wears sneakers.

DR. JACOBY: Dr. Jacoby, the headmaster of Jason School, is about forty-five, robust. He has achieved--probably with difficulty--a headmaster image of himself. He is inclined to be somewhat pum-pum-pum. He's afraid that if he lets the image slip, he may never get it back. But he's taken with Dean Taggart, and she--in a restrained way--with him. He may represent for Dean Taggart a Last Chance. Dr. Jacoby is very well tailored.

AMY CALDWELL: Amy is about fifty--slender, astringent, but a good Joe. She has been around girls' schools long enough to know the score, and could have been Dean if she were a little more politic. She is dressed for the dance in Act Two, conservatively but nicely.

LUCILE COULTER: Lucile is a new teacher--young, rather pretty, still somewhat insecure, and quite naive. She is dressed for the dance.

JULIA, RUTH, ALBERTA, EUNICE, IDA, JOAN, MARTHA, MARILEE, JUNE, LILIAN: All are students at Worthington Women's Academy. They are around sixteen or seventeen, and attractively dressed for the dance. Ida is somewhat of a gamin. Martha is tall and athletic-appearing. Lillian wears a dress which is somewhat too large for her, with a voluminous skirt.

EDWARD MOTT: Edward is a Jason student. However, in Act Two, he is not as smooth as the other boys at the dance--in fact he doesn't quite fit the Jason model. He is too thin, and his sleeves are too short. And he seems shy. In Act Three, he looks far different, although he is still shy. He is nicely and correctly dressed; in fact, he is quite the gentleman.

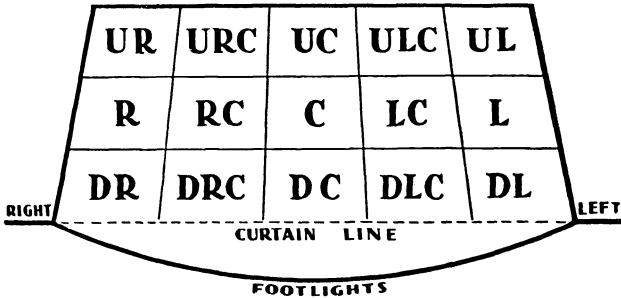
GRANT WESTON: Grant also is a Jason student. He wears glasses, is skinny, and is the chatty type.

HUBERT FARRELLY: He is one of the Jason School boys--not too smooth. He is Mary Jane Thompkins' special interest.

OTHER GIRLS: All the Worthington girls at the dance are sixteen or seventeen years old.

BOB, JIM, BILL and OTHER BOYS: The Jason boys are sixteen or seventeen, dressed for the dance and well groomed.

CHART OF STAGE POSITIONS



STAGE POSITIONS

Upstage means away from the footlights, *downstage* means toward the footlights, and *right* and *left* are used with reference to the actor as he faces the audience. R means *right*, L means *left*, U means *up*, D means *down*, C means *center*, and these abbreviations are used in combination, as: U R for *up right*, R C for *right center*, D L C for *down left center*, etc. One will note that a position designated on the stage refers to a general territory, rather than to a given point.

NOTE: Before starting rehearsals, chalk off your stage or rehearsal space as indicated above in the *Chart of Stage Positions*. Then teach your actors the meanings and positions of these fundamental terms of stage movement by having them walk from one position to another until they are familiar with them. The use of these abbreviated terms in directing the play saves time, speeds up rehearsals, and reduces the amount of explanation the director has to give to his actors.

PROPERTIES

GENERAL: DEAN TAGGART'S OFFICE: Desk and chair, two chairs for visitors, other furnishings as desired. Act One: Dress box containing ballroom dress, behind Willard's chair; papers, etc. on desk. Act Two: Two suitcases. DORMITORY ROOM: Two cots, two dressers and mirrors, record player and rock-and-roll record, chair, lamp on desk or dresser, other furnishings to suit. In Alice Ann's half of room: Graphs, charts, formulae, etc. scotch-taped to wall; two vials in dresser drawer (liquid in one). In Mary's half of room: Pennants from men's colleges, pictures of boys, fastened to wall; bank under bed. OTHER ITEMS: Dance decorations--streamers, ribbons, etc.; several chairs.

LUCILE: Wrist watch.

JULIA: Handkerchief.

GAIL: Water pistol, filled.

DR. JACOBY: Handkerchief.

WILLARD: Handkerchief.

DEAN TAGGART: Handkerchief.

ACT ONE

SCENE: The action of the play takes place in Worthington Women's Academy, a private girls' school somewhere in the East. The girls are between the ages of fifteen and eighteen. The set for Act One is divided into two sections. On stage R is the office of Dean Louise Taggart. Stage L is the bedroom of Alice Ann Sedgewick and her roommate. These are lighted separately, and are not shown together during the play. Dean Taggart's office is shown first, so description of Alice Ann's bedroom will be deferred until the action is transferred to that section. Dean Taggart's office is what any office of a dean in a private girls' school would be: The main articles of furniture are a desk, behind which is Dean Taggart's chair, and two chairs in front of the desk for visitors. There may be a picture or so on the wall, and perhaps Dean Taggart's diploma and degrees, framed. There is a window, or opening, at the left. There is a door at the rear.)

AT RISE OF CURTAIN: DEAN TAGGART is in her chair back of her desk. She is perhaps forty, pleasant-looking but not pretty. In the visitors' chairs before the desk sit GRACE and WILLARD SEDGEWICK. Grace and Willard are the parents of Alice Ann. As we see them now, it is obvious that some sort of crisis has brought them to the

office of DEAN TAGGART. There is a sense of strain. They are anxious about something, but aren't sure they want this anxiety to be obvious. GRACE speaks first:)

GRACE (leaning slightly forward in her chair). You understand, Dean Taggart, we don't want Alice Ann to know we've been here. She'd hate it. DEAN TAGGART (smoothly). Don't worry, Mrs. Sedgewick, Alice Ann won't know a thing about it.

GRACE (nervously). It isn't as though we wanted to keep it a secret. We're not doing anything underhanded. We just feel that it would be best for Alice Ann not to know about our visit to her school. Sometimes Alice can be . . . (Her voice trails off.)

DEAN TAGGART. Indeed she can, Mrs. Sedgewick. I quite understand.

WILLARD (rather pompously). You'll have Dean Taggart thinking we consider Alice abnormal. After all, Worthington Women's Academy would never have accepted her if she weren't--well--everything a carefully-brought-up young lady should be!

GRACE (hastily). We know that Worthington Women's Academy has the highest, absolutely the highest, academic and social standing! (Laughs, trying to make light of this.) But Alice Ann is only sixteen----

WILLARD. She'll be seventeen next month.

GRACE (she rather enjoys a filibuster). I know. I'm her mother. Last year I gave her a pearl necklace. Willard thought I was too extravagant. But I say a daughter should realize that she has a certain social position. My mother used to say to me, "Grace, remember that your great-

great-great grandfather was with the Lewis and Clark Expedition, and hold your head high."

WILLARD (his impatience mounting). Please! We're wasting Miss Taggart's time! Let's find out about this dance! (To DEAN TAGGART.) It's an annual affair, I suppose?

DEAN TAGGART (enthusiastically). Indeed it is, Mr. Sedgewick! It's the annual affair! The girls plan it for months! You see, the boys from Jason School--that's eleven miles from here--are invited over, and we do our best to make the occasion as formal as possible, so the young people will know what is expected of them when they grow up. Of course we don't have a real orchestra--we use a record player--but except for that, the dance is both correct and formal.

GRACE. This Jason School--that's a preparatory school?

DEAN TAGGART. The very best. Admission is most difficult. It is said that the parents' inclusion in the Social Register is more important for a boy's admission to Jason than his scholastic aptitude. (Then, with irony.) Peculiar as that may seem to some of us.

GRACE (relieved). Good. Then Alice won't meet anyone--ah--inferior.

WILLARD (this is a bit too much for him). It's all right if she happens to say "hello" to the man who parks the cars, isn't it?

GRACE (offended). Really, Willard.

WILLARD (back to business). Let me explain why we came to see you, Miss Taggart. Alice isn't exactly what I'd call adapted to society. Since she was old enough to read, she's immersed herself in things like chemistry and physics.

When she was eleven she wrote to the President and demanded that Newton's law of falling bodies be made the twenty-fourth amendment to the Constitution. We think it's fine for her to be interested in science, but the trouble is---- GRACE (breaking in). The trouble is, she isn't interested in boys!

WILLARD (anxious to get it over with). We want Alice Ann to be a success at this dance, Miss Taggart. We both feel it's important to her--important to her social growth.

GRACE. It's her hair. She lets it hang down. I don't know how many times I've said to her, "Alice, why don't you brush your hair back?" She always answers, "Mother, Eve Curie never bothered about her hair."

WILLARD (curiously). Who's Eve Curie?

GRACE. Willard! She invented radium!

DEAN TAGGART. Well, at least she helped discover it. . . .I do see your point, Mr. Sedgewick. Of course we are very proud of Alice Ann. She has a record of practically straight A's, and her physics and chemistry teachers are mad about her. When looked at in a sixteen-year-old context from an adult point of view, an active and effective mind like Alice's may seem a bit odd. But think of what she might be in another six or seven years! She could easily become a fine teacher, a research chemist, or anything she sets her mind to. I do hope you both know what a real treasure you have in Alice Ann.

GRACE. We are proud of her. But if she would only get interested in a boy and stop doing those horrible experiments with milk of magnesia!

WILLARD. I think you mean magnesium sulphate.

GRACE. Well, whatever it is.

WILLARD (going on with his previous thought). So what we've done, Dean Taggart, is to buy Alice a special dress to wear at the dance. (Rises, reaches back of his chair and brings out a box.)

GRACE. It's a lovely dress, Miss Taggart, and frightfully expensive! Not that we mind the expense if it serves its purpose. (WILLARD has placed box on Dean Taggart's desk.) Do you think you could persuade Alice Ann to wear it?

DEAN TAGGART. I'm sure I could. It was very thoughtful of you to buy it for her.

WILLARD. Just say we sent it--so she won't know we've been here.

DEAN TAGGART. Of course.

GRACE (rising). You've been so understanding, Miss Taggart. I knew we made no mistake when we decided on Worthington Women's Academy. Mr. Sedgewick thought that a public school might be better, but I put my foot down.

WILLARD. You certainly did.

GRACE (ignoring this--on her way to door). So we'll leave everything to you, Miss Taggart. I just know Alice Ann is going to be the belle of the ball!

DEAN TAGGART (also rising). I'm sure she will.

WILLARD (following his wife toward door). And you won't mention that we've been here?

DEAN TAGGART. Not a word.

GRACE. Good-by, Dean Taggart--and thank you! (Then, in a disappointed undertone.) Eve Curie. Why couldn't she pick someone like Grace Kelly, of Morocco?

WILLARD. Monaco, not Morocco! Morocco's in Africa! (Both exit.)

(DEAN TAGGART, standing, stares after them. Then , with a little shake of her head, she sits down and begins to sort some papers on her desk.

For several moments there is silence. Then, slowly, ALICE ANN comes into view outside the open office window. She walks hesitantly, peeking in through the window at DEAN TAGGART. She wears a shirt and blue jeans. For several seconds ALICE ANN watches DEAN TAGGART, then she walks upstage to the door of the office and, without knocking, enters. DEAN TAGGART looks up.)

ALICE ANN. Hello, Miss Taggart. May I come in?
DEAN TAGGART (about to say, "You are in," but checking herself; one doesn't bandy words with ALICE ANN). Of course.

ALICE ANN. Thanks. (Takes a single step forward, then stands silently.)

DEAN TAGGART (after rather an awkward pause). What can I do for you, Alice?

ALICE ANN. Well. . . (Moves uneasily. She can't quite find the words. Finally:) It's pretty cold out for this time of year, don't you think so, Miss Taggart?

DEAN TAGGART. Oh, I think it's fairly normal-- for New England.

ALICE ANN. I thought it might rain this morning, but it didn't.

DEAN TAGGART. No, it didn't

ALICE ANN. Maybe it will rain tomorrow.

DEAN TAGGART. Perhaps it will.

ALICE ANN. Or the day after.

DEAN TAGGART. Alice, I don't mean to seem inhospitable, but there is some work I must finish. So if you could tell me what you want . . .

ALICE ANN. Oh. Oh, sure, Miss Taggart. I just wanted to ask you . . . (Trails off.)

DEAN TAGGART. What, Alice Ann?

ALICE ANN (blurting it out). My parents were just

here, weren't they?

DEAN TAGGART (taken by surprise.) Why--how did you--as a matter of fact, Alice----(Deciding, then, that evasion is useless.) Yes. They were.

ALICE ANN. I saw them as they were leaving. I didn't speak to them, because I thought they wanted to keep their visit a secret.

DEAN TAGGART (embarrassed by the child's forthrightness). I wouldn't exactly call it a secret, Alice--it was just that--well--they thought it might be better if you . . . (There is no way to complete the thought, so DEAN TAGGART grinds to a halt.)

ALICE ANN. It might be better if I didn't know they were here. Is that what you were going to say, Miss Taggart?

DEAN TAGGART (there is no avoiding the issue). I guess that's about it, Alice.

ALICE ANN. Uh-huh. I thought so. (Points to box on Dean Taggart's desk.) Did they bring that for me?

DEAN TAGGART (brightly, relieved that the conversation has taken a more conventional turn). Why, yes, they did! It's a present!

ALICE ANN (not having any of it). Uh-huh.

DEAN TAGGART (not giving up, still brightly). It's a dress! They bought it for you to wear to the dance! Wasn't that thoughtful of them?

ALICE ANN (same lack of enthusiasm). Uh-huh.

DEAN TAGGART. I'm sure it will look lovely on you! You know, Alice, you're very pretty when you fix yourself up.

ALICE ANN. Uh-huh.

DEAN TAGGART. And with a new dress, you could be the most popular girl at the dance!

ALICE ANN. Look, Miss Taggart----

DEAN TAGGART. Yes, Alice?

ALICE ANN (in utter desperation). Do I really have

to go to that old dance?

DEAN TAGGART (putting it on a bit--ALICE ANN'S protest does not exactly come as a surprise).

Why, Alice Ann! What a thing to say! It's going to be a wonderful dance! The gymnasium will be decorated, and we'll have special refreshments, and the boys from Jason School will be here, and it will be just marvelous!

ALICE ANN. But, Miss Taggart--I'm doing an experiment!

DEAN TAGGART (blankly). An experiment? You mean in chemistry?

ALICE ANN. It has to do with carbon dioxide. I pour dilute hydrochloric acid on pieces of marble, and note the reaction. I have it arranged so that the hydrochloric acid goes drip, drip, drip--you know? So I can measure the amount of carbon dioxide produced. So unless I can work on it all week end, the whole experiment will be ruined!

DEAN TAGGART. I'm sure you can do it another week end, Alice. This week end is set aside for the dance. It's a tradition.

ALICE ANN. Then I have to go?

DEAN TAGGART (firmly). I'm afraid you do. Your parents would be terribly disappointed if you didn't wear your new dress to the dance.

ALICE ANN (sadly). Yeah. I guess they would.

DEAN TAGGART. You take the dress to your room and try it on. I'm sure when you see how nice you look in it, you'll change your mind.

ALICE ANN. Miss Taggart--can I say something?

DEAN TAGGART. Of course.

ALICE ANN. I think I'm kind of a misfit. To be normal at my age you have to giggle all the time, and keep calling up boys on the telephone until somebody yells, "For heaven's sake, get off that phone!" And you're supposed to get all thrilled

and excited whenever anybody mentions the dance or the boys from Jason School, and you've got to make a love affair out of every "Hi" the delivery boy gives you as he hands you a package at the door! And half the time he doesn't even look at you!

DEAN TAGGART. Don't you do any of these things, Alice?

ALICE ANN. So I'm not normal! It's hard for the school to cope with my kind of problem, isn't it, Miss Taggart? I do swell on intelligence and aptitude tests, but my behavior patterns drive the counselors crazy! Why don't I adjust to the group? Are my parents too strict? Doesn't my father love my mother? Was I an unwanted child? Have I got a platypus complex?

DEAN TAGGART. I think you mean "Oedipus." No, Alice Ann, I don't think any of those things are true. I think you're perfectly normal.

ALICE ANN (desperately). I can't be! I'm supposed to have frustrations--and I don't! If I over-ate, or smoked, or did things like that, the school could put Plan A into effect--"How to Approach the Gluttony Problem." Or Plan B--"Tobacco and Its Relationship to Frustrations." You've got all those things on file, ready to use. But me--I don't fit any of the plans! Even if a school is supposed to be for study--and learning--anybody who likes to study or to learn is away out in left field! (DEAN TAGGART stares at ALICE ANN a long moment. There was a note of sadness in ALICE ANN'S voice. DEAN TAGGART likes ALICE ANN--and despite the girl's protestations, she feels that ALICE ANN may not be truly content. DEAN TAGGART rises and goes around the desk to ALICE ANN.)

DEAN TAGGART (putting her hands on ALICE

ANN'S shoulders). Alice, listen to me. You are perfectly normal.

ALICE ANN (stubbornly). My parents don't think so.

DEAN TAGGART. Of course they do. They just want you to grow up into a--well--into a well-rounded personality.

ALICE ANN. You mean to be normally abnormal.

Like the other girls.

DEAN TAGGART (smiling). If you want to put it that way--I suppose so.

ALICE ANN (sighing). I don't think I'll ever make it. (DEAN TAGGART drops her hands, takes the box, and gives it to ALICE ANN.)

DEAN TAGGART. As a favor to me. Put the dress on and look into the mirror.

ALICE ANN. All right.

DEAN TAGGART. I think you'll be surprised.

ALICE ANN (not meaning what DEAN TAGGART means). I'll bet.

DEAN TAGGART (pulling it up). I mean it! I don't think you realize how pretty you are, Alice Ann--I don't think you ever really look at yourself!

ALICE ANN. I don't--unless I can't help it. Like in store windows when I pass.

DEAN TAGGART (firmly). Then do it. Look at yourself in the mirror, wearing this dress. Promise?

ALICE ANN. I promise.

DEAN TAGGART (patting ALICE ANN'S shoulder). Good girl. (ALICE ANN drifts to the door, while DEAN TAGGART watches her. She is sympathetic to ALICE ANN, and at the same time hopeful--or at least gives this impression. At the door ALICE ANN turns. DEAN TAGGART flashes her a great big encouraging smile. ALICE ANN smiles back--it's rather a sickly smile. Then, heaving another tremendous sigh,

ALICE ANN goes out the door.)

(DEAN TAGGART'S office dims slowly, and out. As it does so the lights come up in Alice Ann's bedroom, stage L, which she shares with Mary Jane Thompkins. The bedroom as we observe it is somewhat schismatic. One side of the room-- Alice Ann's--has fastened to the wall with Scotch tape plots, graphs, and formulae. The other side--Mary's--has pennants from Harvard, Yale and Dartmouth, and perhaps some boys' pictures. There are two cots, either stacked or on either side of the room, depending on the dimensions of the set. There are other objects usually found in a bedroom of a girls' school. In one of the beds is MARY THOMPKINS, her legs sticking up in the air. Mary isn't any particular type-- she is seventeen, somewhat taller than Alice Ann. In the other bed, sprawled like a relaxed octopus, is GAIL TREAT. Gail is a bit like Alice--somewhat off-beat. She is sixteen. A record player is playing rock-and-roll.)

GAIL. For Pete's sake, do we have to listen to that tune all day?

MARY. It's only the fourth time.

GAIL. After three times I get hypotrochoid.

MARY. What's hypotrochoid?

GAIL (as though reciting). It's a spur wheel which revolves inside the circumference of an annular gear wheel of twice its diameter and in gear with it.

MARY (impressed). Gol-ly!

GAIL. I learned that in physics.

MARY. Oh, you and Alice. You're both so hot about sciences.

GAIL. I'm not hot. I'm only lukewarm. Alice is