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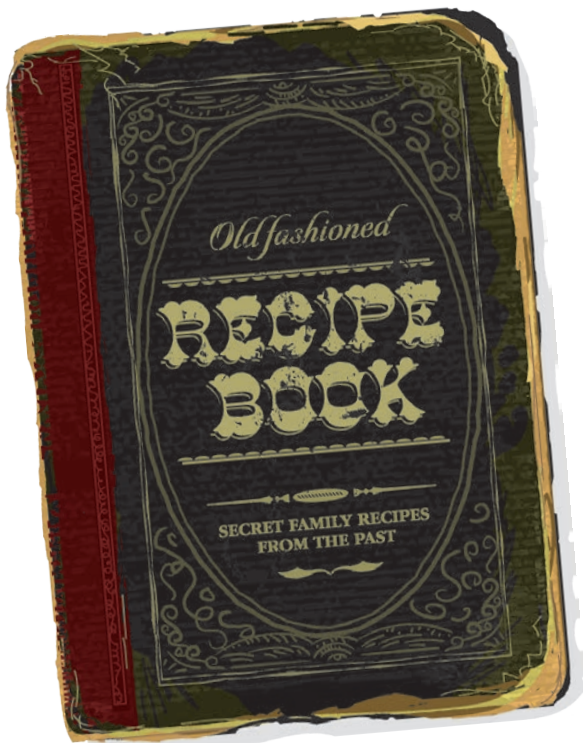
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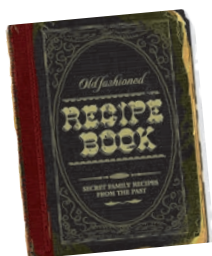
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Dramatic Publishing

TWO WITCHES, NO WAITING



COMEDY
BY
PAT COOK



TWO WITCHES, NO WAITING

Comedy. By Pat Cook. Cast: 3m., 5w. Arlene Marcus and her sister, Elzbeth, are known far and wide in South Texas as friendly, charitable and a little eccentric. This is understandable, because it is also known that they are witches. At least, that's the story, especially the one spread by their housekeeper, Opal Dunn, just before she vanished without a trace. Sheriff Jeb Abercrombie seems a little shy about investigating for some reason, which bothers Elzbeth, who has a crush on the lawman. Arlene's son, Jeremy, tries to keep a lid on things by trying to get the sisters to sell their house. And who wants desperately to buy the property? Eustace Sternwood, his fiancé's father. Of course, Sternwood didn't reckon on dealing with people who read bumps on his head, a "recipe book" full of spells and potions and getting lost in Elzbeth's "mystery room." Jeremy already has his hands full, so what happens when he seems to be falling in love with Bonnie, the new housekeeper? And just who is she? And why does she keep making reports to someone over her cellphone? It's a heady brew of twists and turns, where barn owls spy on people through windows, closets fly open and even the house itself seems alive. Of course, it's all par for the course, especially when you have *Two Witches, No Waiting*. *One int. set. Approximate running time: 90 minutes. Code: TUI.*

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Dramatic Publishing

311 Washington St.
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Two Witches, No Waiting

A two-act comedy by

PAT COOK



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Two Witches, No Waiting

CHARACTERS

ARLENE MARCUS: An easygoing 60-year-old.

ELZBETH: Arlene's eccentric younger sister.

OPAL DUNN: A panicky housekeeper with a secret.

JEREMY MARCUS: Arlene's overly tactful son, 30ish.

BONNIE WEBSTER: A bright 25-year-old housekeeper.

SHERIFF JEB ABERCROMBIE: A laid-back 50-year-old constable.

KIT STERNWOOD: A pompous brat in her 20s.

EUSTACE STERNWOOD: A pushy businessman in his 50s.

LILA DUNN: Opal's mother, sort of.

TIME: The present.

PLACE: The living room of the old Coventry house.

A NOTE ABOUT THE PLAY

It is suggested that the character of Lila Dunn be listed in the program with a phony actor's name attached.

Two Witches, No Waiting

ACT I

AT RISE: *The setting for our little tale is an old house, one that's been in the Coventry family for years. Once perhaps a showplace, it's now beginning to show its age. The old wallpaper's floral colors have dimmed, and the furniture is of an earlier time.*

There are four doors utilized in this floor plan. The front door is located on the R wall, just upstage of the fireplace. The second door, a closet, is located on the upstage wall, near the L wall. The third door, which leads to the kitchen, is located on the upstage wall near C. The fourth door, located on the DR wall, leads to ELZBETH's mystery room. There is also a staircase on the L wall, upstage of the mystery room, which leads upstairs to the bedrooms.

There is a rocking chair near the fireplace and a couch L. Near the couch is a high back chair with an end table and lamp between the two. A small desk, on which sits a telephone, and chair are located on the L wall, downstage of the door. There is a dining table near the UL corner with six matching chairs. A large china buffet full of all sorts of dishes, bottles and knickknacks rests against the upstage wall between the two doors.

Before the LIGHTS come up, a scream is heard. LIGHTS come up to reveal no one in the room. ARLENE MARCUS, dressed in her housecoat, enters from the kitchen carrying a mug.

ARLENE. Now what? (*Crosses to the stairs.*) What on earth can be the matter now? (*Calls out.*) Elzbeth?

(ELZBETH, also wearing her housecoat, comes down the stairs slowly.)

ARLENE *(cont'd)*. What was that?

ELZBETH *(surprised)*. Oh, you heard that, TOO?

ARLENE. Of course, I thought it was you.

ELZBETH *(vacantly)*. I don't think so.

(At that moment, OPAL DUNN rushes down the stairs, shoving ELZBETH over. OPAL is fully dressed and is carrying a bundle of clothes.)

OPAL. Get out of my way!

(OPAL continues down the stairs only to meet ARLENE.)

ARLENE. Opal, was that you who screamed just now?

OPAL. Probably, I've lost count of how many times I've screamed since I've been IN that place!

ARLENE *(puts her cup on the dining table)*. What scared you this time?

OPAL. You wouldn't believe me, you never believe me now get outta' my way.

(OPAL pushes ARLENE to one side and makes for the front door.)

ARLENE. You're leaving us? Now?

OPAL *(stops and turns)*. Only because I can't go sooner.

ARLENE. Look, if it was Elzbeth again, she's sorry.

ELZBETH *(moves to ARLENE)*. Not yet.

ARLENE. What do you mean, "Not yet"?

ELZBETH. I have to know what I'm sorry for.

OPAL. It doesn't make any difference.

ELZBETH (*logically*). Yes, it does. Otherwise it wouldn't be sincere.

ARLENE. How about a nice cup of sassafras tea, Opal. That has all sorts of soothing properties that calm the nerves, relax the muscles and help you focus.

OPAL. Oh no, Arlene, none of your explanations. EVERY time I tell you something, something that's odd or weird or crazy about this place, you ALWAYS have some sort of explanation. And it always sounds reasonable.

ARLENE. But don't you want to know what's behind all the odd or weird or crazy things around here?

OPAL. That's just IT! That's what lulls people like me into staying.

(*A thunderclap sounds.*)

OPAL (*cont'd*). See? Even the weather is weird out here.

ELZBETH. I think that was thunder.

OPAL. I'll bet you anything it's only out here, way out here in the woods.

ARLENE. But that's because there is a high pressure system moving in and what with all that moisture from the Gulf—

OPAL. See?! See?! ALWAYS the explanations! But not THIS time. I should've known better than to take this job. I heard about you two, you know.

ARLENE. Now, now, if we all can just relax a minute. Take a deep breath.

OPAL. And do what? Don't let it out?

(*ELZBETH moves to OPAL.*)

ELZBETH (*other-worldly*). I bet I can find the problem. Let me feel the bumps on your head. (*Reaches for OPAL's head.*)

OPAL. Get AWAY from me! (*Shies away from ELZBETH.*)

ELZBETH. Now Opal, you know I'm a licensed phrenologist.

OPAL. There's no such thing!

ELZBETH. How can you say that; I'm standing right here.

(*To ARLENE.*) How can you argue with somebody who won't believe their own eyes?

OPAL. I'll send somebody back for the rest of my things.

(*Moves to the front door.*) If I can find some OTHER fool who's crazy enough to come out here. (*Tries the door but it won't budge.*)

ARLENE. Won't you just listen to us for a minute?

OPAL (*panicking*). It won't open, it won't open! It's stuck!

ARLENE. That can't be, it's not locked. (*Moves to the door.*)

OPAL. It's never been stuck before, not while I've been here!

(*OPAL backs upstage of ARLENE.*) YOU did that! You did that so I couldn't leave.

ELZBETH. How do you know SHE did that?

OPAL. Because it's stuck!

ELZBETH. No, I mean how do you know I didn't do it?

ARLENE. Elzbeth!

OPAL. Five weeks I've worked for you two but no more! I mean I can put up with all the creaking coming from the attic like someone walking up there. I can put up with all the crazy laughter in the middle of the night. All those concoctions you two whip up in the kitchen, all the tapping at my window—

ARLENE. That's probably just a tree branch.

OPAL. There ain't no tree outside my window! But tonight was the final straw when I saw those eyes! Those two large eyes staring at me!

(*ARLENE and ELZBETH move to OPAL, backing her around the room.*)

ELZBETH. You saw two eyes outside your window?

ARLENE. Probably just some woodland creature.

OPAL. I'm on the second floor! This place is cursed! And you two are responsible.

ELZBETH (*wild-eyed*). You really shouldn't leave now, you know.

OPAL. You're witches! They tried to tell me! I didn't believe it, but it's true!

(ARLENE and ELZBETH back OPAL into a corner.)

ARLENE. How can you say that?

OPAL. Because it's true! That's what you ARE! Witches! Both of you! Witches!

(ARLENE and ELZBETH move closer to OPAL. Another thunderclap sounds and the LIGHTS black out.)

SCENE 2

(It is a few days later. LIGHTS up, the room is empty. There is a knock on the front door. Then the door opens, and JEREMY MARCUS looks in.)

JEREMY. Mother? Are you home? (*Enters, closes the door and looks around.*) Aunt Elzbeth? Hello? (*No answer.*) Oh, this can't be good. I told Mother I was coming, I KNOW I told Mother I was coming. (*Looks at his watch.*) And that girl said she'd be here—

(There is another knock at the front door.)

JEREMEY (*cont'd*). Right about now. (*Rushes over to the door and opens it cautiously.*) Yes?

BONNIE (*offstage*). Mr. Marcus?

JEREMY. Bonnie Webster?

BONNIE (*offstage*). That's right.

(*BONNIE WEBSTER enters, carrying her satchel.*)

BONNIE (*cont'd*). I hope I'm not too early. My mom always told me when I go in for a new job to arrive just a few minutes early so that way it's always— (*Eyes widen as she looks around the room.*) a good impression.

JEREMY (*nervously*). No, no, you're fine, really, fine.

(*JEREMY closes the door and looks at her. BONNIE looks at him, and the two are silent during this awkward moment. After a moment, he speaks.*)

JEREMY (*cont'd*). Really. Fine.

BONNIE. So. This is the house? The one you told me about on the phone?

JEREMY (*false bravado*). Yes, yes of course.

BONNIE (*looking around again*). You didn't use enough adjectives.

JEREMY. Oh, don't let it overwhelm you. It's really— (*Looks around.*) it's really not all that bad. (*Looks back at her.*) I mean for a housekeeper, not that much work.

BONNIE. I see. Where are the two ladies who live here, your mother and your aunt?

JEREMY (*meekly*). I don't know. (*Rushes over to the kitchen door.*) They're probably in the kitchen, sure. (*Opens the door and yells.*) Mother?!

(*This causes BONNIE to jump. JEREMY looks back at her, trying to remain calm.*)

JEREMEY (*cont'd*). Well, I wouldn't worry about it.

BONNIE. Why should I worry about it?

JEREMY. Worry, did I say worry? I didn't mean worry. Well, I meant I wouldn't worry in the sense that I have no idea what's going on. (*Moves to the staircase.*)

BONNIE. Ah. Obviously some obscure meaning to the word "worry" I wasn't previously aware of.

JEREMY (*indicates the couch*). Please, won't you sit down?

BONNIE. Certainly.

(*BONNIE sits as JEREMY moves over to her.*)

BONNIE (*cont'd*). I'm sure you'll want to see my references.

JEREMY. Huh? Oh, right, sure.

(*JEREMY holds out his hand. BONNIE opens her satchel and pulls out her resume. She hands it to JEREMY, who takes it, but keeps looking around.*)

JEREMY (*cont'd*). Yes, yes, these credentials look fine, just fine.

BONNIE. You didn't look at it.

JEREMY. Huh? (*Glances at the résumé.*) Yes, the credentials look fine, just fine.

BONNIE. Sir, you seem a bit nervous, if I may say so.

JEREMY. Well, there's a reason for that, I AM nervous. (*Sits in the chair next to the couch and places the résumé on the table.*) The thing is, Bonnie—May I call you Bonnie?

BONNIE. Certainly.

JEREMY. The thing is, Bonnie, well let's start with what you've heard? About this house?

BONNIE. Heard? Nothing, sir.

JEREMY (*smiles*). Nothing? (*Leans back in the chair, now more relaxed.*) Good.

BONNIE. As I told you I just moved here, well, I have a motel room anyway, and wanted to find a job as soon as possible.

JEREMY. Oh, you'll have your room and board here along with your salary.

BONNIE. That's another reason I applied for this job. I'm a very responsible person and not afraid of hard work. That's how I was raised.

ELZBETH (*offstage*). Is somebody here?!

JEREMY (*tenses up again and jumps to his feet*). Oh no, Aunt Elzbeth! (*Yells.*) It's just me, Aunt Elzbeth, Jeremy! (*Rushes over to the staircase.*) So there's no need for you to come down here. Just stay where you are! Really, just stay there for now.

BONNIE. Isn't she one of the ladies I'm supposed to work for?

JEREMY. Yes, but there was no way around that. Believe me, I've really thought about it, too.

BONNIE. But shouldn't I meet her?

JEREMY. Not yet.

BONNIE. Why not?

JEREMY. Good question. (*Smiles nervously and moves back to BONNIE.*) How can I put this? Ah! The thing is, I really believe you should meet Mother first.

BONNIE. Huh?

JEREMY. Yes, it's better that way. See, Mother is much more people-friendly.

(*BONNIE stares at him. JEREMY explains further.*)

JEREMY (*cont'd*). Mother is a little easier to get along with than Aunt Elzbeth. I don't mean Aunt Elzbeth is hard to get along with, per se, she's just ... Well, you need to meet Mother first. Mother is kind of a buffer to Aunt Elzbeth, a prologue to Aunt Elzbeth. The thing is you need to strain Aunt Elzbeth through Mother.

BONNIE. I don't really understand.

JEREMY. Uhm, put it this way. Meeting Aunt Elzbeth without Mother is like welding without goggles.

BONNIE. Now, now, I think you might be exaggerating. She can't be THAT bad.

JEREMY (*almost laughing*). Yeah, everybody says that at first. (*Sits again in the chair.*) Look, Bonnie, you seem like a nice kid.

BONNIE. I'm 25 years old.

JEREMY. Really? You don't look it. (*Looks around.*) But you'll certainly get caught up here. (*Looks at her again.*) Anyway, as I was about to say ... well, the thing is, there have been lots of stories about these two here. Well, about the whole family, in fact.

BONNIE. Oh, I think I get it. The family has a lot of eccentricities?

JEREMY (*mournfully*). As far as the eye can see.

(*At that moment, ELZBETH enters down the stairs.*)

ELZBETH. I THOUGHT I heard somebody down here.

JEREMY. Oh, no. (*Rushes over to ELZBETH.*) Aunt Elzbeth, I told you not to come down yet. Didn't you hear me?

ELZBETH. Yes, of course I did, I have perfect hearing, I'm not that old.

JEREMY. Well?

ELZBETH. Well, you said not to come down yet. But that was a couple of minutes ago, so I didn't. But now it's later. And I'm sure that "yet" is over. And here I am. (*Smiles and moves to BONNIE.*)

JEREMY. Wait, "yet" means until I call you, it's doesn't just expire on its own!

ELZBETH. And who're you, my dear?

BONNIE (*rises*). Hello. I'm Bonnie Webster. I'm applying for the job of housekeeper.

ELZBETH. Where?

JEREMY. Here! Remember? Last week, Opal what's-her-name left? In a hurry? In the middle of the night?

ELZBETH. Oh yes, we did lose our other housekeeper. (*Sits in the chair next to the couch.*) I seem to remember something about that.

JEREMY (*to himself*). She SEEMS to remember ... ?

ELZBETH. Well, I guess we do need a new housekeeper; I can't keep track of them.

BONNIE. What?

ELZBETH. We've had so many.

JEREMY. DON'T tell her THAT!

BONNIE. You've had a lot of housekeepers?

JEREMY (*trying to remain calm*). Now, now, a "lot" is a rather subjective term, isn't it? What's a lot to her may not be a lot to you.

ELZBETH. I do know it's in the double digits.

BONNIE. Would you like to ask me any questions?

ELZBETH (*rises and moves behind the couch*). No need, I have my own ways to find out things.

BONNIE (*not sure*). You do?

(*At that moment, ARLENE enters through the kitchen door.*)

ARLENE. Jeremy, you're here already?

(*JEREMY rushes over to ARLENE.*)

JEREMY. Mother! What do you mean, already? I told you I would be here at 9 o'clock.

(*ELZBETH leans over and feels BONNIE's head. BONNIE gets a curious look on her face but sits still nonetheless.*)

ARLENE. That's right, you certainly did. Is it already 9 o'clock?

JEREMY. Yes. Where WERE you?

ARLENE. Just working in the garden; had to do some digging.

JEREMY. Where is that wristwatch I gave you?

ARLENE. Oh, dear, that is such a nice piece, but for the life of me, I cannot find it.

BONNIE (*to ELZBETH*). What're you doing?

ELZBETH. Feeling the bumps on your head.

JEREMY (*sees ELZBETH*). Oh no! (*Rushes over to BONNIE.*)

ELZBETH. I'm a phrenologist.

BONNIE. A phrenologist? (*To JEREMY.*) She's a phrenologist?

JEREMY. Well, an unemployed phrenologist.

BONNIE. Is there another kind?

(*ARLENE moves to BONNIE.*)

ELZBETH. Listen, I can tell you quite a bit about yourself.

BONNIE. That's nice, but I probably already know all that stuff.

ARLENE. Good morning, my dear. (*Holds out a hand but realizes she is still wearing gloves.*) Oh, forgive me. (*Takes off the gloves and shoves them in her apron pocket.*)

(*BONNIE jumps up and shakes ARLENE's hand.*)

BONNIE. Good morning. I'm Bonnie Webster.

JEREMY. I told you about her, Mother.

ARLENE. I know, dear, I remember.

BONNIE. And I really would like this job. I'm a hard worker and—

ELZBETH (*holds up a hand*). Wait!

(*The others look at her.*)