

"THE BONES"

By Rob Biesenbach

Characters

Fran: 50s, hospitality volunteer, dowdy, Wisconsin accent

Margaret: 50s, second banana to Fran, also dowdy and Midwestern

Man 1: traveler

Woman: traveler

Man 2: white male, 25-35, loner, politely malevolent

(Fran and Margaret are seated on stools behind an information counter. Customers are milling about and occasionally approach the counter.)

FRAN

Oh sure, it's easy enough to kill someone ... it's disposing of the body that's the hard part.

MARGARET

Nonsense, you just dump it in a cornfield ...

FRAN

Oh, right, you just tote a corpse around in your Buick!

MARGARET

Well, you cut it into pieces first, silly.

FRAN

Oh, honestly, Margaret, have you tried cutting through bone -

(Man approaches counter, the women address him cheerfully.)

FRAN

Welcome to Sturgeon Bay, Gateway to Door County!

MARGARET

Map? Brochure? Hotel/Motel Guide?

MAN

Actually, I was looking for a place for dinner ...

FRAN

Oh, you'll find no shortage of fine dining on the peninsula!

MARGARET

What would you be looking for? Family style? Buffet? Romantic?

MAN

Family, I suppose. I've got the wife and kids with me.

FRAN

Oh, Margaret, would ya look at the little towheads?

MARGARET

(Gasp) Aren't they adorable?

FRAN

Little cherubs, they are! (Pause) So have ya checked out the fish boil?

MAN

Uh, fish boil?

MARGARET

Oh, ya gotta go to the fish boil!

FRAN

Door County tradition!

MARGARET

Not to be missed!

FRAN

See they cook up the fish -

MARGARET

In a great big kettle over a fire -

FRAN

And when it boils over it's done!

MARGARET

A real treat!

FRAN

A Door County tradition!

MARGARET

Not to be missed! You'll wanna take County Road Q up to the White Gull Inn.

MAN

Yeah, that sounds fun. Thank you, thank you very much!

FRAN

Such a nice man.

MARGARET

Such an adorable family. (Pause) Y'know, maybe boilin's the way to go. Then the flesh falls right off the bone.

FRAN

Yeah but then you're still stuck with all those bones.

MARGARET

Riiiiight, whaddaya do with the bones ... that's a pickle ...

(Pause.)

FRAN

I say ya burn 'em!

MARGARET

Burn 'em? Sounds like a chore to me ...

FRAN

Well, it's no picnic, that's for sure ...

(Woman approaches counter.)

WOMAN

Hi, I'm looking for a picnic spot.

FRAN

Oh my, ya snuck right up on us, dincha? Welcome to Sturgeon Bay, Gateway to Door County!

MARGARET

Map? Brochure? Roadside Diner Guide?

FRAN

Ya don't hafta give her the whole spiel, Margaret, the lady said she's lookin' for a picnic spot!

MARGARET

Oh, for goodness sakes, of course ya did, I'm sorry! Let's see, there's always Potawatomi State Park.

WOMAN

Actually, we're looking for something a little ... private. We're on our honeymoon.

MARGARET

Oh, gee, that's super!

FRAN

If it's privacy you're lookin for, ya wanna cruise up Highway 42 and you'll come to a wonderful place called the Sheep's Meadow.

MARGARET

There aren't actual sheep there, mind you.

FRAN

The newlyweds aren't lookin' for sheep, Margaret.

MARGARET

Well, I just didn't want anybody to be disappointed in case they were expectin' sheep.

WOMAN

And so it's away from the crowds huh?

FRAN

Oh, it's remote all right!

MARGARET

Heck yeah, you could bury a body out there and no one would know it!

(Pause a couple of beats as Fran and Margaret turn to look at each other.)

WOMAN

Well, this sounds fabulous, thank you!

FRAN

Such a delightful girl!

MARGARET

Oh yeah, just charming! (Pause) So ya burn 'em, huh ... wait, do bones burn?

FRAN

Oh, sure ... it takes a while, but they burn.

MARGARET

I don't think so, Fran. I mean, they turn black, they get charred ... but they don't burn. What do you think they're talkin' about when they pull "unidentified remains" from a house fire? Those are the bones, silly.

FRAN

Well, a house fire is a completely different thing. The heat's not concentrated like it is in a furnace.

MARGARET

Fire's fire - I say the bones stay behind.

(Man 2 approaches counter.)

FRAN

Welcome to Sturgeon Bay, Gateway to Door County!

MARGARET

Map? Brochure? Fishing Guide?

MAN 2

Just a map, thanks.

(He turns to exit but pauses and addresses them.)

MAN 2

You know, they don't really burn, per se ...

FRAN

Excuse me?

MAN 2

The bones. They don't burn like flesh does -

MARGARET

See?

MAN 2

But if you cook 'em in intense heat - say 700 degrees - for a good four hours or so, they become very brittle. Then it's just a matter of crumbling them up. The best way is to put them in a sturdy burlap sack, then work them over good with a wooden mallet. Or a plain old hammer will do. Then what you have left is a sort of ash-like, chalky residue that, when you spread it around in your garden, looks just like fertilizer. (Pause) Well, enough to fool the cops anyway.

FRAN

Is that right ...

MAN 2

Well, so I've heard! (Pause) Have a good day!

(He exits and there's a pause as they shuffle their brochures and look around a bit uneasily.)

FRAN

(Breaking the tension) You know, I gotta get out to the garden this weekend and fertilize those tomatoes.

MARGARET

(Relieved and cheerful) Oh, yeah, ya gotta fertilize ...

(Lights out.)