***From a Military Briefing***

1. *To the End of the Road*

Scene: *A shell-shocked bunker. A Captain is briefing his soldiers. Fitful mortal-fire lights up the night. A bone-storm gathering in the distance.*

Captain: Comrades, time is short. It is already 24:00 hours. I will have to confine my instructions to the essentials.

Mission: To go down the road.

Objective: To get to the end of the road.

Directive: To get beyond it.

Equipment: 1. Skull-helmet

2. Skeleton-chassis

3. Intelligent-monkey hands

4. Sensory devices, wired for sight and sound:

1. Binocular eyes
2. Radar ears

Hazards: Exhaustion. Decadence. Nihilism.

As for personnel: fortunately, we have several courageous volunteers who, in their own words, “do not wish to preserve themselves.”

Worst-Case

Scenario: Conquest by the Last Man. Mediocrity. Total destruction.

Here a few words. You will be following a dangerous but well-traveled road. If you look to the side, you may see things that will make you feel queasy: crushed helmets, twisted chassis. *Do not be alarmed*. It is only the bones. Remember, your bones are your friends. Carry them around with you at all times. Where? To the place where you lay them down. They are at least as essential as your rifles. Severe penalties await anyone who loses either. *You get only one helmet.*

Remember: do not be concerned with preserving yourself. Laugh in the face of SAD (Suffering and Death) and you will strengthen your resolve to surpass yourselves, even when SAD-shrapnel lodges in your corneas or roots around in your skulls. Your heroic laughter will be a general YES (Yay-Saying Ethos Support). He who says YES *is*. He who says NO is *not.* A strong YES, comrades, will provide the necessary cover-fire for the avant garde to makes it past enemy fire all the way to the end of the road. [Loud cheers from soldiers.]

Comrades, once more into the bone-storm!

1. *Crossing the Bridge*

Scene: *End of the road. A watchtower. Weird half-lights glimmering in a dawn/dusk sky. A bridge stretched precariously across a floating-nihilist-infested river. Soldiers are making preparations to advance further into unknown territory. Silence everywhere, occasionally punctuated by the sound of a dog barking in the distance.*

Captain: I congratulate those few of you who have made it this far. But as you all know, the end of the road is only the beginning. Those of you who want to turn back here are free to do so. But remember this: in the long run there is no escape. You will pass this way again. [Suddenly he falls silent. A look of anxiety comes over his face, as if he had just disclosed prematurely a terrible and dangerous secret.]

Several

soldiers: Just what do you mean, sir?

Captain

[nervously]: At this time I am not at liberty to tell you any more than this… Are you all with me, then?

Soldiers: Yes, SIR!

Captain: Very well. But first, a brief review: what is the name of that structure up ahead?

Soldiers: The Bridge of Bones, SIR!

Captain: And what is the span of this bridge?

Soldiers: It stretches from one end of history to the other, SIR!

Captain: And what is this bridge made of?

Soldiers: Bones, SIR!

Captain: And what are these bones made of?

Soldiers: Close inspection reveals them to consist of billions of concatenated ant-sized human fractals screaming in inaudible agony, SIR!

Captain: What is man, Soldier?

1st Soldier: Something to be overcome, Sir!

Captain: What does joy want, Soldier?

2nd Soldier: Deep eternity, Sir!

Captain: Do you want to preserve yourself, Soldier?

3rd Soldier: Yes Sir, No Sir!

Captain: All right, then: now comes the tough part. I am to give you your secret orders; you are to disobey these orders and cross the bridge on your own initiative, in groups of one. *Warning*: dangerous idiot-questioners are stationed all along the expanse. They are armed with secret implosive devices. Do *not* I repeat do *not* take them seriously. Your lives may depend on a little cheerful sarcasm. I emphasize that you are on your own. My orders are to order you not to cross the bridge. I command you to disobey me. How do you respond?

Soldiers: Yes, SIR!

Captain: You sheep! You cows! Don’t just say “yes” to everything I say!

Soldiers

(severally): Yes, sir! I mean no, sir! I mean, whatever you (don’t) say, sir?!

[Soldiers mill about aimlessly in a blind panic. Captain, in disgust, slips down the back staircase and heads for the bridge.]

1st soldier: Where’s the Captain? What’ll we do?

2nd soldier: Who’ll tell us where to go from here?

Distant

voice: *Only when you have denied me will I return to you*.

3rd soldier: It’s times like these you wish you were in the army!

Sergeant: You *are* in the army, jackass! It doesn’t get any more structured than this. *The army doesn’t have an army*. Face it: the Captain’s gone AWOL.

3rd soldier: You mean absent-without-leave?

Sergeant: No: ardent-with-Overman-longing.

Now listen up, Soldiers: *Burn the Bridge behind you!*