

Franks turned, his face pale and vacant. The A-class leady shifted. "As you can see, the Tube has been shut. We were prepared for this. As soon as all of you were on the surface, the order was given. If you had gone back when we asked you, you would now be safely down below. We had to work quickly because it was such an immense operation." "But why?" Moss demanded angrily. "Because it is unthinkable that you should be allowed to resume the war. With all the Tubes sealed, it will be many months before forces from below can reach the surface, let alone organize a military program. By that time the cycle will have entered its last stages. You will not be so perturbed to find your world intact. "We had hoped that you would be undersurface when the sealing occurred. Your presence here is a nuisance. When the Soviets broke through, we were able to accomplish their sealing

without—" "The Soviets? They broke through?" "Several months ago, they came up unexpectedly to see why the war had not been won. We were forced to act with speed. At this moment they are desperately attempting to cut new Tubes to the surface, to resume the war. We have, however, been able to seal each new one as it appears." The leady regarded the three men calmly. "We're cut off," Moss said, trembling. "We can't get back. What'll we do?" "How did you manage to seal the Tube so quickly?" Franks asked the leady. "We've been up here only two hours." "Bombs are placed just above the first stage of each Tube for such emergencies. They are heat bombs. They fuse lead and rock." Gripping the handle of his gun, Franks turned to Moss and Taylor.

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