

THE SHELL



Part 4

A wise person (I can't remember who – some pedant will have to remind me) once said, “United we stand, divided we fall”. I cannot *tell* you how true that is. As I said before, no one Freedom Fighter would ever have been able to make the difference in this battle. It required the work of all to be in it. In spite of the Enemies' activities and actions, directly or through surrogates, there were still enough, just enough, Freedom Fighters to carry on the work of the great struggle. They drew their Bows again and again, even when their arms and shoulders were shaking with fatigue and they felt that they could not possibly bend their Bows one further time – still they did so. Again and again they charged at the Shell with their Swords, despairing and frightened that they were achieving nothing and feeling more and more that they were being foolish and ought to give up while they were still behind – but still they laboured on. The Shield Bearers continued to do their work and encouraged others until their voices were croaky little whispers that could barely be heard above the din and the clamour of the struggle that was raging. With phenomenal persistence, the faithful Officers called them to battle, taught them, led them, worked with them and sought to gather them into a cohesive and effective fighting troop. They were enough, just enough.

All their efforts, however, were still inadequate and insufficient to attain a victory. On their own, the Freedom Fighters would have achieved very little. But they were not on their own. There was the Warrior. Still the Warrior stood on the roof of the Shell and nothing would move him. Again and again, with absolute determination and persistence, the Warrior bent and arched and bowed and struck. The Mace was unharmed, undamaged and unaffected by all the savagery of this contest. It seemed that all of the Heavens and all of the Earth would first have to depart and become nothing, before even the smallest detail of the Mace would be affected. Such was the expert craftsmanship of the Mace.

The chips of Shell, the dust plumes and fragments, both above and below the Shell, like good mathematics, began to add up, then to multiply. Arrows began to stick into the Shell more and more frequently, particularly as the aim of the Archers improved through constant practise and repetition. The Swords were causing much more significant damage. So much so, that many of the Dorks, scoffers and mockers were suddenly a great deal more pensive and thoughtful about their world. This was just as well, because their yammering was distracting and it was pleasant to have relief from it. It was disappointing, though, that these people had not thought to be a little more pensive a great deal sooner. Some of the Freedom Fighters that had begun to slip into the Greyness, now started to fight against both the Greyness that was enveloping them AND the Shell. Many soon discovered that the best cure for encroaching Greyness was commitment in the warfare against the Shell. It vivified them – made them come alive again and overflow with Colour such that the Greyness had to retreat before it. So the numbers of the Freedom Fighters began to swell, the unity between them was deepened and their Chants were more often than not, delights to hear and be part of.

Then there was that happy day; I'm sure many of you remember it. If you don't because you weren't there, you missed something unforgettable. I am sure you can imagine it. I am certain that, if you close your eyes, pierce the Greyness with your imagination and bring all your senses to bear on what that day was like, I believe that it will be something tangible and real to you as much as it was to us who were there.

We had all become accustomed to that regular Boom! Boom! of the Warrior's Mace. It filled our beings and gave energy to our limbs. But on that day, as the Mace struck for what must have been the millionth time, the note was completely different. The Warrior himself perceived it, and for the first time in as long as I could remember, the Warrior paused. There had been a shifting, a change that inspired us and made us grip our Shields tightly. Typically enough (we're human after all), our first reaction was one of *worry*. We feared that the Warrior had stopped, that defeat was around the corner. After that pause, however, as we held our breaths, the Warrior heaved up the weapon again, and drove it a further time upon the summit. We were certain then, the sound *had* changed – not because of any weakness or deficiency in either the Warrior or the Mace, but in the *Shell*. How we set to that day. Nothing mattered and we renewed our efforts as if it were the first day of our resolve, not the thousandth.



It was about mid-day, when the Son Light was at its zenith, when all the world should be filled with brightness and dazzling Colour, that the Thud of the Mace was echoed with the sound of a Crack, like the report of a rifle. We, all of us, saw it then: the Warrior, the Enemy (who howled in anger!), the Freedom Fighters, the Radical Types and all the Grey People, as well as the Son Light. We, all of us, saw it. A crack, a fissure, a jagged lightning-shaped line appeared in the Shell. Hope that is seen is no hope at all – indeed, for now we were passed the place of Hope, we entered into the beginning of the reality that we had hoped for, the realisation of our dreams, the revelation of the truth that we had believed in. The Crack was long, so wondrously, fantastically long. It stretched from the summit to the base of the Shell on the East side. Its magnificent length convinced us that it was a fatal blow that had been struck. This mopping up operation was now into its death throes.

The Warrior knew what was coming and what now must be done. He struck the point of that Crack with three, swift blows, one right after the other, as if he were now in a hurry and had to get this done so as to be elsewhere in good time. It was after the echo of the third blow began to fade that the Warrior paused again. We all did. Just stood there, looking up, not daring to breath, the whole Village silent in anticipation. Then it happened. A piece of the Shell, at the very peak of the construction, battered and mutilated beyond recovery or salvation, fell. Look, let's be honest. It wasn't a terrible big or impressive piece – probably no more than the size of a Man. But, the point is, it fell!

As we watched it fall, we saw it twist and twirl through the air like a falling leaf. Such is the nature of things made with Indifference, though, that it did not gather speed as it fell and nor did anyone underneath feel in the slightest concerned that it would plummet on top of them and cause untold harm and misery. No, it just floated down and then ... disappeared. It was like a mirage, a chimera. It was there, then it was gone. I was outraged that something that had thwarted and blighted and denied and corrupted and mutilated life for so long, could, in reality, amount to so little.

And then, from the hole in the Shell, the space that had been created, shone through the most glorious sight we had ever seen. The Hope of it had inspired us, the Dream of it had given us strength, the envisioning of it had been our goal; but to see it like that, in those circumstances, was the fulfilment, no, the surpassing of all our Hopes and Dreams and Visions. Son Light – beautiful and glorious streamed through the hole in the Shell. It transformed the Village and the Shell shrank and paled in its radiance. How we cheered! How we clenched our fists, arms raised heavenwards, our heads thrown back and roared and bellowed our approval.

There was no doubt that it was the beginning of the end. Sure, there was still a lot of work to be done and it would take forever to clear away the rest of the Shell and deal with those who sought its return or repair. We were on the right road, and it felt wonderfully correct to be there. We knew, with certainty and clarity that everything would be alright.

And when that Village was done, well, didn't I warn you that there would be other Villages, other Shells and other battles to be fought:

“Finally, build up your strength in union with the Lord and by means of His mighty power. Put on all the armour that God gives you, so that you will be able to stand up against the Devil's evil tricks. For we are not fighting against human beings but against the wicked spiritual forces in the heavenly world, the rulers, authorities and cosmic powers of this dark age. So put on God's armour now! Then, when the evil day comes, you will be able to resist the enemy's attacks; and after fighting to the end, you will still hold your ground.

So stand ready, with truth as a belt tight around your waist, with righteousness as your breastplate, and as your shoes, the readiness to announce the good news of peace. At all times carry faith as a shield; for with it you will be able to put out all the burning arrows shot by the Evil One. And accept salvation as a helmet, and the word of God as the sword which the Spirit gives you.

Do all this in prayer, asking for God's help. Pray on every occasion, as the Spirit leads. For this reason, keep alert and never give up; pray always for all God's people.”

Ephesians 6: 10 – 18

The End