



## The Disciples of Apollo

### a short story by Eric Brown

#### Foreword

I wrote the following story in two sittings on the 1st of October 1987, something of an achievement as until then I'd always taken at least three or four days to complete a story, no matter how short. "The Disciples of Apollo" was one of those rare gifts that come to a writer all too infrequently, the story that writes itself. I'd had the central idea - the element that makes the story science fictional or fantastical - for a year or so, and as is always the case needed the solid bedrock of human interest on which to found the story. The character of Maitland (Levine in the original draft) came from somewhere within me, as do most of my characters. I wanted to write a story about someone who realises, too late, that his life to date has been a waste, an emotional blank, and I also wanted to write a story of redemption. Maitland's predicament seems hopeless - his past is a source of regret, his future non-existent: it is an irony of the situation that his salvation, his love for Caroline, allows him the bittersweet realisation that he might never have achieved fulfillment without being terminally ill.

The first draft did not contain the section beginning, 'Between the time of diagnosis...' through to the break. I finished the draft and filed it away, dissatisfied. I liked the story, was happy with its style and resolution, but felt that something was missing. Perhaps six months later I found myself writing a passage of text in a notebook from the point of view of someone suffering a terminal illness. Only days later did I realise that this passage was the section missing from "The Disciples of Apollo". I inserted the long paragraph and the story came to life. Maitland became more sympathetic and believable.

I sat on the story for a while. It was like nothing I had written before, and as it was not overtly science fiction, or really horror, or fantasy, I was unsure as to where I might submit it. Then *Other Edens III*, edited by Christopher Evans and Robert Holdstock, opened for submissions, and I realised that "Disciples..." was an *Other Edens* tale. Fortunately, so did the editors. "The Disciples of Apollo" was published in *Other Edens III*, Unwin Hyman, 1989, and reprinted in my collection, *Blue Shifting*, Pan Books, 1995.

It remains one of my favourite stories, along with "The Time-Lapsed Man" and "The Inheritors of Earth". It is about characters I care for, contains images and descriptions I still find arresting, and a core idea which I hope is original. As to what kind of story it is - SF, fantasy, or psychological horror... I'll leave that for the reader to decide.

## The Disciples of Apollo

"I'm sorry..."

"How long?"

"At least six months, perhaps even as many as nine."

"How will I know when...?"

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