

The Cloud Walker

I remember very clearly the time Edmund told me that he was dying. We were driving back home, I sitting in the back of the car. We came to the dark corner by The Kennels, where there are lots of yew trees, and he told me that the doctor had told him he had but five years left to live.

In *Almost Tomorrow*, and my piece about commandos, I've used such terms as 'prophesy', 'clairvoyant', 'second sight' in connection with him, and elsewhere here have indicated Edmund's interest in numerology. Alas, what I had to say on the subject in *Almost Tomorrow* was edited a bit.

I write my dreams down and have been doing so for years, so I know that there have been instances where I have dreamed about something that subsequently happened. Maybe it was the same with Dad. I know of a dream he had about someone in his family that from that point onwards greatly affected his relationship with that child - and not in a good way at all. Did he feel threatened, because in the dream that person had seemed threatening? Anyway, back to *The Cloud Walker*.

On the second page of Chapter 3, Hobart, the creative type who drinks a lot, knows that the 'summers left to him would not reach double figures'. But he was 'determined to live at least the eight years' that his apprentice, Kieron, needed to become established. That is: he was determined to live at least eight more years, but he knew he would not see ten summers.

Edmund wrote *The Cloud Walker* in 1972, knowing that it would be published in 1973. Jason was nine in 1973, and eight years later, seventeen in 1981, by which time he'd have passed the age (sixteen) when he could leave school. I am not saying that the hero, Kieron, is based on my brother, and indeed, Edmund makes this clear too by having Kieron at the end of the novel have a son called Jason.

So, when *The Cloud Walker* was published in 1973, did Edmund already know that he would die in nine years time, before summer, but was determined to live at least as long as it took to see the last of his children finish school? He died nine years later, in early March.

This review of *The Cloud Walker* was in *The Sunday Times*, midsummer's day, 1973. 'After self-destruction of two world technological civilizations, a medieval society ruled by the anti-machine Luddite Church grows up in Britain. Kieron, the Cloud Walker, dreams heretically of flying. His ingenious struggles against 'religious' orthodoxy and brutal pirates makes engrossing reading.'

And, from cloud walkers to sky walkers. Having read *Five To Twelve* a few times,

I often wonder where young Luke Skywalker of *Star Wars* fame got his surname from, when, at the end of Chapter 7, Juno watches Dion's antics as he flies up in the sky: she does not care much about what she sees, having previously had experiences with 'off-lane sky walkers bent upon their own destruction'. Another phrase mentioned in the novel is 'total recall'.

Shaun