

SUMMERTREE
BY RON COWEN

YOUNG MAN.

It's hot out here, just sitting and waiting. Shirt's sticking to my back. I hate it like this, wiping sweat out of my eyes. Damn. I'll just lie here and let the breeze cool my face. Ah. Just close my eyes and put my head back. I have to remember all these things. Hey, you're tickling me...ow! That hurts! Mom...Dad...? I wish you could feel the palm of my hand. Can you see how smooth it is? Can you tell that it is warm? There are all these lines. All these little lines going all over, criss-crossing, entwining, stopping, then starting up again. You know, hands are like leaves. But you know that. Ever peel a leaf? You know. You peel off the skin or the flesh...the green part...and try and just leave the veins without breaking any of them. Like this. Very slowly. Very carefully. You must do it very slowly and be very cautious not to break a vein in two. See? It looks like a winter tree. Then you hold it up to the sun and see how it makes a shadow. It looks like a big skeleton's hand. Did you ever wonder if a hand could be stripped like a leaf? It could, you know. Sure. You very slowly, very carefully peel the skin away, being careful not to break anything. Then you hold the skeleton hand up to the light and see how it makes a shadow like a big, winter tree. If you care to try it yourself, I guarantee you, you won't feel a thing. Except yourself...screaming. You know, this tree has been here for years and years. It's funny. The first thing I wanted to do when I was a kid was to dig it up and see it fall over. I guess all kids do.