

George Singleton

an excerpt of

No Shade Ever

BECAUSE I'd seen part of a documentary on gurus who slept on beds of nails, and because I tried to quit smoking before my wife came back home after leaving for nine months in order to birth our first child—though she would come back childless and say it was all a lie she made up in order to check into some kind of speech clinic up in Minnesota where she hoped to lose her bilateral lisp—I had a dream of chairs and beds adorned entirely with ancient car cigarette lighters. This wasn't the kind of dream a person could forget or disobey. In the dream, I stood in the middle of a giant room filled with my handcrafted furniture. I didn't remember making the things, but I understood that it was an art show, that I was the center of attention, and that I was going to make 14.5 million dollars. I kept thinking, Who would pay that much money to sit on chairs and beds that could offer only a tiny strange cushion effect? There were famous rich people at the opening, namely Ted Turner and the vice president of the United States. I thought in my dream, I don't care that they're probably not on speaking terms, as long as they buy my work. Some professional basketball players and golfers stood around wearing their uniforms and outfits. Hollywood starlets stood on the perimeter, but I could tell that they wanted nothing more than to grab me by the arm and tell me how they wanted their mansions out in California completely covered in car cigarette lighters, or at least the shiny silver ones found in 1960s models. A group of Japanese businessmen fought over a banquet table I'd drilled a thousand holes into in order to glue in Cadillac lighters. Of course, everyone wore tuxedos and evening gowns, and I stood around in my underwear pretending that I knew what I was doing, that it was some kind of statement, that I thought it important to show up at my first art opening clad in my work clothes.

When I woke up alone, I certainly didn't feel good about myself, and before I had my first cigarette of the morning—who could quit smoking with dreams like this?—it came to me that maybe I'd taken yet another wrong-headed turn over the last year.