Graduate Award Winner

Cody Miller

Building Homes Upon Remains

Benny stood in his doorframe as his house exploded around him. The air stretched like children pulling at Silly Putty. He met the paramedic. Her name was Mary, and he touched her watery, red hair. She cut melted threads from his flesh in his front yard. The polyester, peeled away from his skin, lay clumped in the scorched grass.

Benny tried to scream to show that he felt pain or something that wasn't happiness. Instead, he picked Mary up by her painted lips and walked away shedding ashes toward the chapel. Benny and Mary avoided marriage for thirteen days. Finally they wed upon a hill overlooking the wreckage of a plane that had no black box to recover. Benny took a job as a pilot because he felt like a flashlight without batteries. Mary told Benny she wanted a divorce two hours after they kissed, so Benny built a model replica of his former home and sat staring into the tiny rooms absent of light and his wife. He spotted her silhouette in one of the hallways, but couldn't tell if she was carrying a suitcase or her coat. Either way, he knew the only way to keep her was to set her red hair up in a pony-tail and turn her into plastic. He tried her in the kitchen. The cabinets were too tall. He tried her in the bedroom, but the bed was too short. He tried her in the living room, but he didn't like it. Finally, he turned her into a horse with a red mane and placed her in the front yard. Benny watched her from his rocking chair made of charred wood. He decided he hated his new home and threw a Molotov cocktail at his dream.

The house exploded, and the horse flew into his lap. Mary's eyes looked up at him from the horse's head. He missed how her body calmed him the first time he held her. He wanted that back, so he decided to build another house. Benny knew only Mary could make it a home, so he turned the horse into glue and started all over yet again.