

## CORA'S THINGS

Cora had over 250 Hummels  
from when her first husband,  
a GI cracker who beat her  
apparently every time she  
bought one or came home  
with marzipan candies or  
licorice bits or gummy bears  
for the kids, or sometimes  
a dazzling minuet clock  
or a humpback or coo-coo,  
when they were stationed  
in Germany. Then they moved  
to Texas 'cause the war was over  
and he didn't know what  
to do with her and all her  
Hummels and two daughters  
but in a stroke of dumb luck  
a truck lost its brakes and  
smashed through Cora's  
pretty picture window

and all the Hummels had  
shocked cracked "O" surprised  
wide-mouth frog cherub faces  
all over the plush carpet and  
former GI cracker Lloyd laughed  
at the porcelain carnage  
and this broke Cora's fine china  
heart so she left him there  
with a big old "O" for a mouth  
drunk and broken on the floor.

She replaced every figurine,  
set all her dozen clocks to chime  
at the appointed time, some  
on the quarter-hour, all at half,  
and on Christmas she hung  
a high-heeled boot for a stocking  
and set a motion-timed bird  
chirping in the tree that sometimes  
mouthed off when the clocks did.

Cora raised 297 houseplants  
(counted at her last move) after  
she married a man who lasted  
35 years who never raised a hand

but bought her little smiling  
cherub "O"-mouthed carolers,  
squeezebox players, kite-flyers—  
with velvet runners for them, too,  
proud in their backlit curio case.  
Cora knew if one was moved  
for a step-child's curious fingering  
or a rude guest's unmasked handling.

Cora knew every ridge in her  
shag carpet and could detect  
a careless wanderer in the hall  
treading stealthily to the kitchen  
to snatch a cookie from her  
Hopalong Cassidy biscuit jar.

Cora knew how to count.  
Cora knew how to keep time  
with the man who never lifted  
a hand to her and backlit all  
her fragile, particular pretties.