

# What Remains

Susan McMillan

*"A part of us remains wherever we have been."  
—Chinese fortune cookie.*

Perhaps

a fingernail clipping in a hotel bathroom  
or a single hair that left the head  
to drift beneath the claw-foot tub

maybe

a love note written to a bygone boy  
whose image no longer comes in clear  
or his memory of you:

fifteen in blue Maverick jeans  
dangled earrings — one lost  
on the way home from school

it could be

the little gift for your weekend host  
who tidied, dusted,

cleaned the sink

vacuumed before your arrival — the box  
left on the nightstand for him to discover  
when it's too late to say

*You shouldn't have*

the laugh

shared with a stranger behind you  
in Friday's stagnant checkout line

the quarter dropped

in a parking meter or the quarter dropped  
through a dark crack in the seat  
of the car you sold years ago

it may be notes

of some jaunty tune you hummed  
that reached a mechanic's ear

later piped from his own lips  
all workday long