

# A Phalangelic Sonnet

By Anna Benedict

## **You only take as much as you can grab with two hands**

or, at least, with two hands & a bordering belly & a strong back. There's a point to this endless gingerbread city, she'd told me, then left me on my own to deal. There's a word for this – *döstädning* – Swedish death cleaning. Morbid but I'll take it. I open one box & peer inside – a dislodged ship in a bottle, seventeen crumpled love poems in her tongue, a picture frame with her head & your head – his head? – synapsed & hands pressed together in an airborne diamond. I don't want to look at my own. I squint at the photo & I wonder at what point I stopped being her & you stopped being him. Whatever. I've lingered long enough. Cardboard corners dig into fleshy palm meat & tummy. I see a broken doorknob on a dusty floorboard & I place it atop the box for safekeeping. As I heave I become aware of something at the bottom of the stairs – it is her, I think, or it is me, or it is us, I don't know. (It's okay, I know her, this wraith's wrath will hold as long as I'm here.) I stop & drop the box & look down the stairs & she stares. The box dissolves like sugar in water & she does too, the world does too, & the darkness turns bubblegum pink & all I can think is how I can place the box in the light to sort through if the morning has come.