

The Talking Cloth

Aunt Phoebe has things. Things and things and things.	9
"A collector of life," Mom calls her.	16
Daddy says she lives in a junk pile. "Reminds me of your room, Amber," he says.	28
I like visiting Aunt Phoebe. There's no place in her house to be bored, and she always gives me mocha to drink. Daddy says it will stunt my growth.	32
Aunt Phoebe tells him, "Mocha is named after a city in Yemen, and this child just grew an inch or two, inside, for knowing that.	43
Aunt Phoebe knows things... She tells me stories about her "collection of life," each time we visit. I sip hot mocha and listen, imagining all the people and places she has seen.	55
Today we sit in her kitchen and she tells about the basket of folded cloths in the corner. "I bought these in Africa," she says.	61
Daddy laughs. "I figured that was laundry you hadn't put away."	72
Aunt Phoebe smiles and takes a cloth from the top of the basket. She unfolds it with a flourish - a long magic carpet. It runs like a white river across the floor.	84
"What do you do with such a long cloth?" I ask.	86
"You wear it," says Aunt Phoebe. "It tells how you are feeling. This cloth talks."	95
"How can it do that?"	108
"By the color and what the symbols mean," Aunt Phoebe tells me.	118
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