

Rock-Think

by Maven Treecat

<https://www.furaffinity.net/user/maventreecat/>

Content warning: Unsupervised children (at heart, at least)

Jobe kicked a rock along the dirt path, muttering to himself. Chewed out by his mother for the third time in a week for going out on his own, the young mouse was in no mood to just sit around on the docks and do nothing. So, of course, he'd left the town's border once more, following the tracks of old trade wagons and carts on their way to the desert empire and dragging a particularly large stick along behind him. Eventually, though, the subtle roll of the hill would show the plain grassy fields that stretched as far as his eyes could see.

"Stupid grass," the mouse muttered, trotting off the road and towards the nearby trees that grew into their own little patch of forest, the last vestiges of the coastal woods that had been taken to build the town's docks and homes long ago. To Jobe, though, it was one of the few places of mystery in the world and as vast as it was shady.

Jobe pushed through the odd branch, small, shoeless paws pushing him over branches of far greater size than the prize he drug around and stumbling over a hidden tree root here and there. The further he pushed through, the more a smile crossed his face. Maybe he'd find a really interesting leaf this time. "...or maybe one of those rocks with the tiny sparkles," he pondered aloud. "I wonder if Tia likes tho-"

"Hi!"

The chirpy voice made the mouse stumble backwards in surprise, his butt thumping down on the dirt below. He quickly grabbed his stick and aimed it up, as if in hopes his assailer might impale themselves. Only once he tilted his head did he see the source: a small reptilian creature, one only slightly bigger than him, peeking over a nearby fallen tree trunk and wearing the biggest open-mouthed grin.

"M-m-mister goblin, p-p-please d-d-don't come any c-c-c-closer!" he squeaked.

The grin on the creature's face subsided for a moment, its head tilted to one side. "I is kobold, no goblin. ...also no mister. I is miss."

The genuine confusion and innocence in the creature's voice made the mouse lower his stick slightly, tilting his head to match hers. "...kobold? What's a kobold?" Jobe asked cautiously.

"I is!" the surprise visitor commented, her hands reaching over to try and hoist herself over the trunk. The small hands slipped off the bark, sounds of scratching and scrambling like a cat hanging on the edge of a bed. Slowly she began to crest the obstacle, eventually tumbling over the other side with an awkward crash and tiny *oof!*

Jobe couldn't help but giggle at the awkward display, slowly standing up, brushing the dirt off his small tunic, and extending a paw to the head-over-heels creature. "Do...you need a hand, miss kobold?" he asked.

The kobold untwisted herself and extended one hand to grip the mouse's and help pull her upright. "No no, I two hands,," the kobold said, looking at her hands as if to double-check. "But thank for help!"

Jobe stared at the kobold for a moment. Mostly red in color with a long, angular muzzle and six ridges on her forehead, the slightly taller girl was nothing like he'd ever seen. His furless tail waved curiously behind him, and the kobold's moved to match. "...my name is Jobe. What's yours?"

The kobold's open-mouth grin returned once more. "I Sixen. Good meet, Jobe!"

The two silently regarded each other for a moment before Jobe finally had to ask. "Um...so, what did you want? If not to eat me like the goblins mommy tells me about."

The kobold blinked dumbly before leaning down and sniffing at the the big, round ears that almost dwarfed Jobe's head in size. Leaning back, she petted the top of his head. "No ripe. No worry of eatings. No no, I heard Jobe rock-think! I *good* at rock!"

Rock think? Did she mean..."...you mean you know where some sparkly rocks are?"

Sixen nodded enthusiastically. "Yes! Tiny sparkle rocks! Place many. Big ice rock leave sparkle, water look!"

Jobe grinned. He didn't understand the eager kobold's later words, but he was interested. "Well, lead on, Sixen!"

Sixen nodded and began to scramble her way along the rough terrain, Jobe happily following his new friend through the forest he'd come to explore.

"I want to look at the trees."

"I want look at trees."

Jobe shook his head. "No no, I want to look at the trees. You need to use those words."

"Why, friend Jobe?"

"...I dunno, just something mommy's really strict about. But people like it better when you use them, I think."

"...I want look at the trees?"

The two had met a few days ago, but already Jobe had found excuses to slip out every afternoon and meet his weird kobold friend. Sixen had shown him how to find the rocks with little sparkles in them, where the rocks with the red and orange layers were, and even a few strange rocks full of holes and really light in his hands. In return, Jobe tried to help Sixen with her

language. He didn't know all the rules himself, but he felt confident he knew what sounded right from his mother's teaching. Sixen occasionally would get it right, but, without him correcting her, she slipped into her chirpy version of common more often than not.

"Hmm. Maybe I should wait until the teacher comes back to teach you," Jobe sighed.

"No no, friend Jobe best teacher!" Sixen cheered, kicking her feet on the large river-side rock she sat upon. "Speak good common, yes yes. I good learner!"

"I am a good learner," he corrected.

"You too, yes yes," the kobold agreed with a nod.

Shaking his head, the mouse poked his stick into the river, smiling as he watched the water divert around the sturdy wood. As he did so, he poked around at some of the riverbed's rocks, visible through the crystal-clear water, catching glimpses of those sparkles he'd found so elusive before meeting Sixen.

"So...a big thing of ice used to be here," he recalled, "and as it moved away, it left these shiny bits of rock?"

"Yes, big ice rock!" Sixen cheered, hopping down off her seat to walk across the shallow channel. "Others still here, but all far away. Powerful ice rock, make many changes."

"Wow...I can't imagine a big ice rock here. We only get snow in the winter."

"Big, big like mountain! Sixen tunnel near one, size of hundred Sixens! More!"

Jobe sighed in awe, imagining whatever he could of the scene as the kobold plopped down beside him, both marveling at those tiny square minerals that caught the light only just so. "All these interesting things about rocks. You're so cool, Sixen," he wistfully murmured. "I wish I could go places like you and learn about shiny stuff and rocks and whatever. All I do is clean, stir the soup pot, and get lessons from mommy."

Sixen tilted her head, as she frequently did. "You...are child, yes?"

Jobe looked up from the river. "Y...yes? Aren't you?"

"No. I is adult. Is...not problem?"

Jobe sheepishly smiled, his ears red with embarrassment. "Well, you were playing with me, so I thought..."

"Can...adult Jobe not play?" the kobold interrupted.

It was a question Jobe was stunned by. All the adults seemed to do was work. Did...did they play? "I don't know. Maybe? Never really thought about it before."

Reaching out, her small hand rested on the mouse's wrist. "You not ripe yet, yes? Take time to learn and play, find adult who play like you, then you may get wish. I learn rock, I play like merchant, I find merchant...now big dad send me to be merchant and talk rock!"

Jobe looked down at the river, the light having angled just far enough to no longer catch the embedded minerals in the rocks below. "...maybe. Who would come to a fishing village like this, though?"

"I did, yes yes?"

The mouse looked up, the kobold's big smile yet again causing him to smile in return.

"Yeah, I guess you did."

It was the dead of night when Jobe's rounded ears twitched, catching the subtle sound of earth shuffling beneath someone's feet. When he rolled over to the cabin's opening, he could hear a familiar scritch and scuffling before small kobold hands gripped the opening's bottom and hoisted the red creature up and into his bed, the two sharing a mutual *oof* as they collided.

"Sixen, what are you-" Jobe squeaked.

The kobold held up a finger to her lips, the mouse gulping. A creature like her inside his room in the dead of night? They'd make the same mistake he did. So he lowered his voice to a whisper as best he could. "What are you doing here?"

"Sixen go in morning. *Isthasy* here with friends to bring me to desert city."

"What?! Bu-"

"*Shhhh.*"

The two paused, hearing the shifting of a bed one room over. A minute passed, though, and no more sound came. Just rolling over in their sleep...

"Sixen adult, have work. But good work, work like play for Sixen."

Jobe's expression soured, and soon the mouse turned over and stuffed his head into his single pillow. *If I don't listen to this, maybe it'll be a dream.*

Sixen seemed to understand what was going on, a rare frown on her face. "...wanted to say bye and give thing."

"Mh dnn whn ht."

Sixen rolled over the mouse, but Jobe kept the pillow clutched to his face. Eventually she tugged it away, the pouting face turning towards the open window. "I don't want it."

"...do you want to forget me?"

The question and its carefully spoken grammar made the mouse turn back quickly, an angry expression betrayed by water in the corners of his eyes. "What? No! No I don't. I just..."

"Then please take it. I not want to be forgotten either."

Jobe grimaced, tears running down his face. Almost. She'd almost gotten it right. Reaching out, he felt the weight in his hands as she placed something there. He wiped his eyes to focus on the object in the bright moonlight. It appeared to be a stone, held within two tiny, seamless rings of wood, one of the rings pierced through and strung with a "string" made of stems.

"Is small rock from Sixen-home. If you find play-work too, maybe you visit? Maybe I there. Have fun, Jobe. Find many good rock."

With that, Sixen lifted herself up and over the cabin's opening, landing with a solid face-plant onto the ground outside. It was loud enough that it made the mouse forget to cry, wincing in sympathy instead. But Sixen bounced up, waved goodbye, and ran as fast as she could away into the night. Jobe could faintly make out a muscular, more angular silhouette waiting for her in the distance as he waved back, not stopping waving until even the dark shapes had melted into the patch of forest.

As he sat back down in his bed, hands rolling the strange necklace in his hands, Jobe wondered if it were magic. He wondered if Sixen was magic. He wasn't sure anymore about either, but the mouse was at least sure that there were a lot more things in the world now that he wanted to discover, magic or not.

He smiled. Maybe he'd go exploring tomorrow. Maybe he'd bring Tia, too.