

HERBIE'S POND  
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Herbie the Happy Goldfish swam around his garden pond with excitement. Just under the surface of the water, he could see the sun rays playing along the edge. He'd had a happy summer. Mrs. Friend had kept the water clear and fresh—just the way he liked it. The small Sumac tree had grown just enough to give him some shade in one corner of the pond.

And every morning as soon as Mr. Friend let the cats out, they would always visit Herbie. He knew they enjoyed looking into the water to watch him swim. Maybe they wished they could swim too.

He would miss the cats. Why? Herbie knew the summer was coming to an end, because the days were shorter, the sun was cooler and the water was beginning to get a little chilly. Mrs. Friend had changed his food which was always a sign, and he knew what that meant. Soon he'd be settling in for a long winter's sleep.

One morning Mrs. Friend's face appeared in the opening above the pond. Herbie swam around and around. He kept glancing up, noticing she had a little net in her hand. Was she going to catch him? No, he didn't think so. Was she going to clean the water? No, he didn't think so.

Ah, all at once it came to him. She was going to clear out some of the leaves and dust that had settled on the bottom of the pond, so Herbie would get full benefit of the water's oxygen through the winter months. And then she did the nicest thing—she put a broken clay flower pot upside down on his pond's floor and hung a little tube into the water for Herbie to get oxygen.

So, that was it, summer was over and she had prepared his house for winter. Even though Herbie had done this three times in his life, he really didn't want to go for his winter's sleep. He'd much rather flip, swim and dart through the water and show off for his friend cats rather than slowing down his pace to almost a stop. And he preferred his diet of insects and flake food to a stodgy menu of oxygen.

Several days after Mrs. Friend finished cleaning the pond, the sky seemed dark, casting shadows over the water. Herbie could hardly make out the faces of his cat friends as they stared into his pond. And then one morning, Herbie looked up and saw a white shimmering cover. Ice! Now he was very sure that winter had come and he wouldn't see his friends for a long time.

As the days went on, the cover seemed to come closer to the bottom of the pond where he lay. He was frightened that it might get so close that it would touch him. Now Mrs. Friend had finished preparing him for his long winter's nap. So Herbie

whirled around and swam into his broken flower pot where he'd be safe even though the heavy cover of ice continued to push down on him.

Soon, Herbie fell asleep. He breathed in the oxygen and nutrients from the water—just enough so he didn't wake up and get hungry. All through the long winter, he slept and slept. He dreamt happy thoughts of swimming in his pond. He often thought he saw Friend-Frog sitting on the rim waiting to make a big splash in the water. He'd look up and see the friendly face of the Sumac tree as she spread her branches over a shady corner of his pond. He'd think about the children playing and throwing his favourite treats into the water. And he'd think about Mrs. Friend putting on the water fountain so he could jump and splash. Thinking good thoughts gave him happy dreams to help him get through the long winter.

And then one morning, his space seemed warmer than usual and he wiggled out of his safe place and slowly swam to the surface. The ice was gone and there were the happy faces of his cat friends. Surely they hadn't stayed there all winter and waited for him to come back. No, they didn't do that, but Herbie knew they were his friends, because they'd remembered him and had come to say hello.



Food for Thought: I'm so glad you've read about Herbie the Happy Goldfish. I don't know if fish can think and remember things to make them happy, but I do know that it always helps me to think about nice things when time seems long or if I get really bored. Do you like to think happy thoughts? Sometimes they help to make us feel good even in a situation that we might not like. Maybe you have a cold and have to stay in bed. Did you know you still have a choice in what you think about? Happy thoughts bring good feelings. Maybe next time when you have to do something that you don't really want to do, you can think about some favourite times to make it easier.