

# *The Kingdom at the Edge of the Forest*

*Eviatar Avni*



*Contento de Semrik*

*The Kingdom at the Edge of the Forest*  
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*For Rotem*



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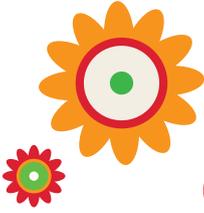
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# Chapter One

*On changing seasons, mysterious parcels  
and early spring rituals*



**O**n a dark and rainy night, without any warning, the spring appeared in the kingdom. He always appears unannounced, contrary to any standard etiquette. He is fond of showing up in the dead of the night, patiently awaiting the morning in order to welcome the awakening world with an unexpected morning greeting.

This time, he swept lightly into the kingdom from the forest, swiftly passing between the sleeping trees. He came upon the stream that flows through the heart of the forest and continued along, until he had left the woods and arrived at the giant's hut. Through the window, the spring noticed that the giant was sound asleep in his large bed. He noted that everything seemed to be in

order, and moved on to the big house, where the other residents of the kingdom lived. On his way, the spring hovered over the spacious garden that surrounded the house, examining its condition and assessing the work it would soon require. He reached the house, and while swirling around it and peeking through its windows, the spring caught sight of the winter – standing motionless at the edge of the garden, his back to the house. As quiet as the breeze, the spring snuck up behind the winter, silently approaching him, until he finally stood just behind him, his mouth a few inches away from the winter’s ear.

“Booo!” the spring called out suddenly.

The winter jumped up in fright and turned around. “In the name of all storms and blizzards! It’s about time you grew up,” he grumbled, but a few seconds later his anger subsided, and he smiled and welcomed the spring.

The winter briefed the spring on all the latest news in the kingdom, and the spring updated him on all that had been happening in the places he had visited on his way there. Finally, the winter excused himself and went to fetch his large backpack. In it he stashed away the rain he had brought with him, the cold winds, the gray clouds, the hail and the snow. When he was done, he zipped up his backpack and turned to bid farewell to the spring.

“I should be on my way now,” he said. “The autumn must be waiting for me to replace him.”

“Safe journey,” said the spring and embraced him. He watched as the winter quickly flew away and was soon out of sight. Then he opened his own backpack and pulled out a few white clouds and a pleasant breeze. When he was done, he sat down under a tree and waited for dawn.

The first to rise that morning was the princess. She climbed out of bed, approached the window and peeked outside to see what the new day had brought. She was greeted by blue skies and fresh air. In the garden, the plants lifted their heads and proudly presented their flowers. Insects scurried and flew from here to there, and the birds sat on the treetops and sang in a choir.

“The spring is here,” said the princess joyfully. She quickly dressed, took her basket and left for the forest, searching along the way for interesting flowers to make into perfume.

The prince rose from his sleep a little later. He immediately noticed the change that the spring had brought with him, and decided there was nothing better to do than to pay a visit to his friends the deer, who lived in a meadow at the edge of the forest, and to challenge them to a race.

Some time later, while the prince and princess were still away, the other residents of the kingdom were engaged in various activities. The giant was trimming the orange trees in the grove behind the house; the