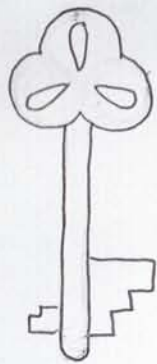




# Wolf King

by Kate Fox Hayward



Once upon a time there was a brave and wise king, who was tricked into falling in love with a beautiful but wicked witch. They were soon married. As a wedding gift the king gave the evil witch the key to his heart. As soon as the key was in her hand the witch transformed the king into a massive grey wolf, banished him to a forest at the edge of the kingdom, and took control of

the throne. The king's beautiful daughter, fearing for her life, fled after him.

One day, several years later, a young and strong hunter was stalking deer in the forest when he came across the largest wolf he had ever seen. Fearing for the safety of the villages around the forest the hunter drew an arrow from his quiver and took aim at the creature. Just as he was about to let the arrow fly, a beautiful maiden threw herself in its path.

"Please don't shoot my father," she cried.

Confused the hunter laid down his weapon. To his surprise the wolf began speaking to him.

"I am actually the king of this land," said the wolf. "I was banished by my wife, the evil witch. If you will steal back the key to my heart from



around her neck I will give you my daughter's hand in marriage." The maiden was so beautiful that the hunter had no choice but to agree.

"To get into the witch's chamber you must pass through three trials," warned the king. "Once you have conquered them, my key should be yours for the taking." The king



and the maiden traveled with the hunter to the edge of the forest, "One last piece of advice; don't eat anything inside the castle, nor take anything that is offered to you," said the king. "Thank you for your advice," replied the hunter "I shall return shortly."

The hunter journeyed to the castle, and snuck inside through an underground passageway. He traveled through the darkness



of the tunnel until he reached a door. He tried the knob and found that it turned easily. Inside the room was the most delicious and extravagant feast he had ever seen. Delicacies from every country in the world were spread across a gigantic table, and although the hunter was very hungry he remembered the king's warning and passed quickly through the room without eating

a thing. The second door opened as easily as the first. When he passed through the door the hunter was almost blinded by the wealth of riches that lay behind the door. The room was full of piles of gold and silver from floor to ceiling. Standing in front of each pile was a beautiful maiden offering him sacks of coins from the piles. However, the hunter again remembered the king's warning and passed through the room

without taking anything, even though he was very poor. He entered the third and final room, not knowing what to expect and was immediately confronted by a massive three headed wolf twice as large as the king. The brave young hunter quickly drew his sword and



began slashing. After a long and difficult battle all three heads of the wolf lay in a pile on the ground. The hunter gathered the last of his strength and entered the witch's chamber.

She was waiting for him and raised her arm to cast a spell as he entered. However the hunter was expecting this and



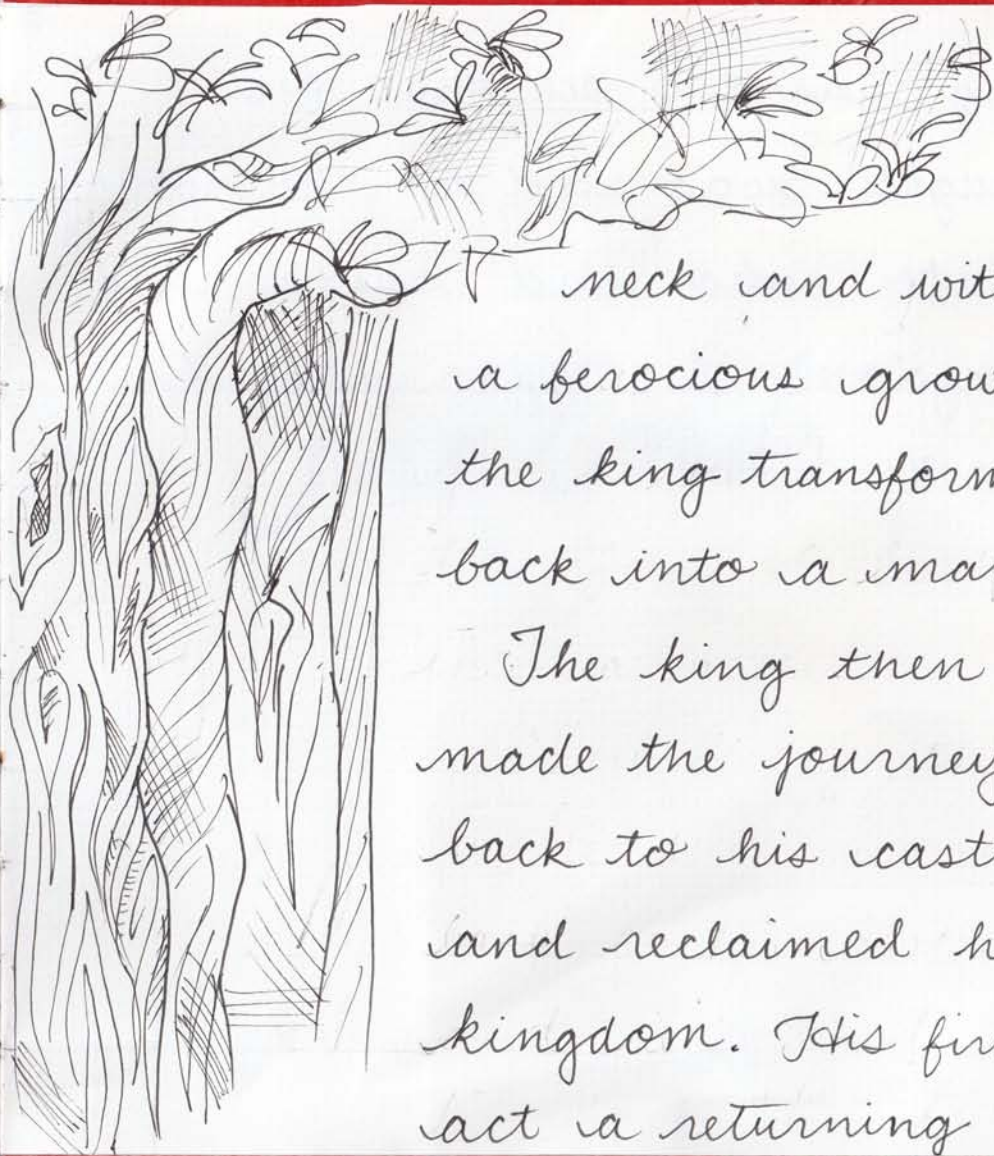
before the spell could be completed he chopped off the witch's arm. She screamed in rage and pain, and raised her other arm to cast a



spell, but the hunter was again too quick for her, and again he chopped off her arm. He then saw the key to the king's

heart on a chain around her neck. He swung one final blow and sliced the witch's head from her body. The key to the king's heart was at last free.

The hunter picked up the key and began the long journey back to the forest. At last he reached the edge of the woods where the king and his daughter were waiting for him. He fastened the key around the king's



neck and with a ferocious growl the king transformed back into a man.

The king then made the journey back to his castle and reclaimed his kingdom. His first act a returning

king was too see that his  
daughter was wed to the young  
hunter who had saved his  
kingdom, his life, and his  
heart.

The End