

Lonewolf

JL Merrow

Camwolf

By JL Merrow

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Sex with a stranger can be riskier than you know...

Two years ago a casual encounter in Stuttgart left Carl changed forever. He thought he could handle being a werewolf—until he passed the curse on to his English lover, Nick Sewell. Now Carl's come back to Germany to look for answers from the man who made him a monster. But Dieter's disappeared, and in his place Carl finds Christian, who may have as much to hide as Carl does—or even more.

A companion to—or appetiser for—my novel *Camwolf*, now available from Samhain Publishing.

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His enquiries at Ingolfs, the dingy bar on the edge of the Altstadt, had got him nowhere. No one had seen Dieter for over a year—or at least, no one was willing to admit to it. The barman had known something. He'd looked at Carl with narrowed eyes and flared nostrils, and suggested Carl might be safer in another bar. As if he could see inside him, see the abomination that was Carl's true self.

Carl downed the dregs of his Weissbier and slammed the glass back down on the scarred oak table. Time to go home. Or what passed for it while Carl stayed in this piss-poor corner of Stuttgart. His neighbours were all shell-shocked Asylanten; a melange of Iraqis and Afghans and God knew who else, whole families to one room and the stairs reeking of rotting trash and urine. Home. Carl's jaw tightened. 'Home' was a meaningless concept anyway. He turned his steps south, towards the river, and stopped to look out upon the lights of the city reflected in its inky waters.

He'd been crazy to think Dieter might still be here, after all this time. He should never have left Germany—not without getting the answers he'd come here, two years later, to seek. But at the time...

At the time, all he'd wanted was to get away. Away from this land with its nightmares-made-flesh. Away from the lover who'd proved to be a monster.

Away from the terror that he'd become one himself.

Sometimes, though, there's just nowhere far enough to run.

BEFORE

Dieter was leaning on the bar at Ingolfs, a cigarette in one fine-boned hand, the night Carl first met him. His square jaw, blond hair and piercing blue eyes would have made Heinrich Himmler wet himself with joy. He was the brightest thing in that smoke-blackened place—the only reason Carl didn't turn on his heel and walk straight out again.

Instead, he walked up to the bar and ordered a Weissbier; the pale, smoky lager he had developed a taste for during his year's study in Heidelberg. Then he turned round and leant on the bar to take a long swallow, only a foot away from the tall, confident German.

"British?"

Carl raised an eyebrow. "That a problem?"

Broad shoulders shrugged, the casual leather jacket rising and falling. "Why should it be?" The man's cheeks were lightly stubbled, the blond bristles invisible from a few feet away. A hint, perhaps, of other qualities one had to get close to discover. He took a long drag on the cigarette, then blew the smoke out in a steady stream, courteously directed away from Carl's face. "Dieter Bachmeier, he said in a neutral tone.

"Carl Fisher." They shook hands; it was the norm, here, this formality.

"You have been in my country long?"

"Nearly a year, now. Heidelberg. In Stuttgart for the weekend." Perhaps brevity was catching. Carl found himself wanting a cigarette, but resisted the urge to ask for one. He didn't

smoke. Not really. "How did you know I was British?" He was damn sure his accent hadn't given him away.

Dieter gestured with his cigarette. "Your clothes, your hair. The way you walked in here."

Carl felt a flash of irritation. "The way I walk?"

"There was..." Dieter took another drag on his cigarette while he considered his next words carefully. Or maybe that was just the impression he wanted to give. "A hesitancy."

"Bollocks." Carl's beer spilled a little over his fingers as he slammed his glass down on the bar.

Dieter just looked amused. "No, I assure you. You walked through the door, and then you stopped. Looked around the place. You wondered if you should leave. And then you saw me." Another drag on the cigarette. Carl wanted to rip it from the smug bastard's fingers.

"No need to ask why you're drinking alone," Carl snapped, and took a long swallow of his beer. He was damned if he'd move, though. Let Bachmeier be the one to back off.

He didn't. The bastard just laughed, a low throaty chuckle that made Carl want to hit something. Preferably Bachmeier, right in that damned superior Aryan face.

"Ach, but it is early, yet. If you will wait an hour or two, you will find that I have many friends. I'm sure they would be pleased to meet you. New blood is always welcome."

"Yeah? If they're friends of yours, I doubt we'd get on." Carl took another long swallow, the Weissbier's medicinal flavour washing away the foul taste talking to Bachmeier threatened to leave in his mouth. He'd finish his beer and get out of here. Why the hell hadn't he stayed in Heidelberg, stuck to one of the places he knew?

"And now you are wondering why you came here, no?"

Carl looked up sharply. Unsettled.

"You know what I think?" Dieter smiled, and slowly, deliberately, stubbed out his cigarette in the palm of his hand. As Carl tried to stifle his instinctive gasp, Dieter leaned forward to whisper conspiratorially, "I think you were bored. I am right, no?"

"No," Carl lied. Caught.

"Why don't we go for a walk? The Schlossgarten is very beautiful at this time of night." Standing at the bar in full view of everyone, he dropped his burnt hand to cup Carl's groin through his jeans.

Carl was paralysed. Frozen. Uncertain it was actually happening, even as his prick hardened in Dieter's grasp. The few drinkers in the Kneipe ignored them utterly. As if this sort of thing happened here all the time. Dieter leaned down to nuzzle into Carl's neck. His breath was searing hot, and he smelled of dry smoke and the moist, black earth of the pine forests. "Komm mit," he whispered, and released Carl's erection to walk toward the door.

Mesmerised, Carl could do nothing but follow.

They slipped through side streets and alleyways, the humid summer's night settling like a thick, heavy blanket around their shoulders. Only the moon, almost full and directly overhead, lit their passage through the seamier streets, though pungent odours gave strong hints as to what to avoid.

The fountain in the centre of the Schlossgarten was brightly spotlighted, making Carl blink when they reached it, but the gardens themselves were shrouded in shadow. It was eerily silent, despite the fact that they were not alone—on one bench, a tramp, wrapped in several tattered coats against the non-existent chill. On another, a young couple having sex. As Carl's eyes adjusted, he could make out several shadowy figures that lurked, watching them.

The spell broke. "Is this what you're into?" he hissed at Dieter's back. "You brought me here so perverts can watch us fuck?"

Dieter laughed. "You British. You are so prudish about such things. But no. That is not what we are here for. Come with me." He held out his hand.

After a long moment, Carl took it.

Dieter wove a twisted trail around trees and bushes. They emerged in a tiny clearing, shielded from view on all sides. Moonlight washed down on them, sapping the colour from Dieter's blond hair and turning it a ghostly white. Carl wondered what it did to his own, darker colouring—then ceased to care as Dieter dropped his jacket to the ground and pulled off his shirt.

As Carl stood, transfixed, at the sight of that gleaming, hairless chest with its well-defined muscles, Dieter turned with a smile. "Don't tell me you don't want this."

"I want it," Carl said, his voice hoarse, and started to strip.

And then Dieter was upon him. They fought, rather than caressed, one another. The rough, dry ground scraped against Carl's skin as they rolled in the dirt; the uneven bark of a tree bruised his back as Dieter slammed him up against the trunk. Infected by the silence of the place, Carl didn't make a sound—not even when Dieter dropped to his knees and buried that arrogant head in the dark hair at Carl's groin. Surrendering to sensation, Carl didn't resist as he was flipped around and his chest pressed into the unyielding bark. *I don't do this*, he thought, as strong fingers breached him.

You do now. He thought he heard Dieter breathe the words, but maybe his mind was playing tricks on him. God knew, he could scarcely think—could scarcely breathe—as Dieter pushed into him. The pain was good. Better than good, a complement to the bruising roughness of the tree trunk against his chest, his face, his cock. Damn, he'd needed this. Needed it without knowing what he'd needed, his instincts dulled almost out of existence by the boredom of the men he'd known in Heidelberg, all kindness and condoms and safe, safe, safe. Dieter thrust savagely, and Carl wondered if he'd bleed. Found he didn't much care. It was all too much to process—too much force, too much heat, too much friction.

"Du gehörst mir," Dieter whispered. "Dein süßes Arsch—ach—your sweet neck." He bit viciously, and Carl let out a strangled moan as the added stimulus pushed him over the edge.

For a breathless moment, the darkness was absolute. Then Carl gulped in humid air, drowning in the night's oppressiveness. Sweat cooled on his back, and he realised Dieter had stepped away from him. Leaning on the tree for support, Carl turned, and saw Dieter wipe a dark smear from around his mouth. *I did bleed*, he thought dully. As if in a dream, he wondered what would happen now.

Dieter smiled, all teeth and no eyes. "Now, you run." Then suddenly his eyes were twice normal size, gleaming amber in the moonlight. As Carl stared at the impossibility, Dieter seemed to melt, to flow, his skin and hair darkening as if covered by a spreading malignancy. His face, his limbs...it was as if some monstrous parasite were trying to escape from Dieter's skin. Flesh rippled, bones deformed... The tree trunk was cold against Carl's back, but it didn't stop him vomiting up his Weissbier.

The creature that had just fucked him stepped forward, its tongue lolling. It looked like a wolf, moved like a wolf.

Could not be a wolf.

It bared its teeth in a snarl.

Carl ran.

It was a nightmare flight. Stones ripped his feet, roots tripped him, branches tore at his hair, his face. He could feel the hot breath of the creature on his back, but still it didn't pounce.

It was taunting him. Enraged, hopeless, Carl stopped running. Turned. "Just fucking do it!" he screamed.

From three feet away, the wolf leapt.

Carl woke up in hospital with a set of neatly-stitched wounds and a hostile policeman by his bed. Even the nurses had little sympathy for an *Arschficker* who'd played one kinky game too many.

Two weeks later, he went home to England.

Two weeks after that, the full moon rose and turned him into a monster.

DURING

Carl learns quickly. He has to.

Nobody teaches him.

He learns it's only safe to live alone. Not one-bed-flat alone; out-in-the-wilds alone. When the full moon comes and the change takes him, tears him apart and remakes him in his violator's image, he can't be anywhere there might be people.

He's not sure what he's most afraid of: that he'll pass on this vile infection; or simply that he'll be known, and marked, for the leper he is.

He moves to a University town where nobody knows him; finishes his studies; moves again. Remains in academia because the outside world of work and responsibility is too mundane, too alien.

Then he meets a man called Nick who stirs his blood like no one has since Dieter.

He's careful; of course he is. But Nick Sewell is a suspicious bastard, who picks the wrong phase of the moon to come sneaking around Carl's cottage.

Carl wonders, afterwards, whose fault it really was. All the things he told Nick—that confused tale about defending his territory, claiming his mate—does he believe even half of them himself?

All he remembers clearly is that first howl of triumph, when he realised he would no longer be alone.

The irony is like a red-hot knife twisting in his guts when they fight almost to the death, the first time they change together.

Alone. He will always be alone.

NOW

"Got a light?"

Leaning upon the railing of the bridge, Carl looked around into cool grey eyes, a slender face that looked vaguely familiar. "I don't smoke."

"Good for you. It's a filthy habit." The stranger leant against the railing beside him, gazing over the Neckar. He wasn't a local; his accent was too clipped for a Schwäbischer. "The river is beautiful at this time of night, no?"

"What do you want?" Carl almost snarled it, a challenge.

"That's an interesting question." There were streetlamps, even here. Carl could see the stranger bite his lip as he thought. "Probably the same thing that everyone wants. Good health, a decent salary, a comfortable place to live, and someone to love, I would think. And you?"

Carl found himself answering. "Not to be a freak."

"You don't seem a freak to me. Quite good-looking, in fact."

"What do you want?"

"Didn't we just cover that?" The stranger took out a cigarette and a Zippo lighter. "Well, at this moment, I'd be glad if you didn't throw yourself into the river." Sharply-defined cheeks hollowed as he lit the cigarette, then smoothed as he puffed the smoke out into the darkness.

"You're some kind of Samaritan?" Not knowing any equivalent German term, Carl said it in English.

"What?"

Carl shrugged. "Maybe it's just a British thing. They hang around on bridges, trying to stop people killing themselves."

"Oh. Then, yes."

"Why? Why do you give a fuck if some stranger tops himself?"

Puff. "Perhaps because I was once in that situation myself."

"You? What would you have to kill yourself over?"

Puff. "My lover died. For a while, I wanted to join him."

"My lover didn't die," Carl said roughly.

Puff.

"I tried to kill him." Carl shivered. So much blood. Even now, he could taste Nick's blood in his mouth, feel the pain as Nick tore at him with teeth as vicious as his own.

Puff.

"I nearly did kill him." Carl laughed without humour. "But then again, he nearly killed me."

Puff.

"Aren't you scared, standing out here with someone who's just confessed to attempted murder?" Carl found his eyes narrowing. "Maybe you're the one who needs the bloody Samaritans."

A crooked smile was on those wind-chapped lips. "I do not think it would have been murder. You fought, no? Tooth and claw?" He took another drag on the cigarette, then flicked it into the river.

Carl stood frozen. "Is it on my face? In my eyes?" His hands crept up to feel his features, looking for some coarsening, some stigma, some *reason*... "How come *everyone* in this fucking place seems to just look at me and know I'm a monster?" By the end, it had become a shout, and his fists were clenched in the stranger's jacket.

The stranger smiled.

Panting, Carl released his hands from the stranger's lapels and backed off. He was trembling, his throat too sore to shout any more.

"You are not a monster," the stranger told him softly. Unafraid. "You are like me. A wolf. Nothing more." He stepped forward, and with steady hands, cupped Carl's face. "I saw you at Ingolfs. Dieter was my lover." His hands were soft on Carl's skin, and the grey eyes that looked into Carl's had only sadness in their gaze. "He did not think fidelity much of a virtue."

"How do you know I'm a... wolf?"

A shrug. "Any wolf would know you for what you are. Or rather, any wolf who has not lived his life alone. And do you think I would not recognize your scent, after my lover came home drenched in it?" Again, the crooked smile. "Ingolfs—that was the place you met Dieter? It is popular with our kind."

Thought returned, and Carl thrust the man roughly from him. "If you're a wolf too, then you know you're a fool for being anywhere near me! I told you, I nearly killed my lover!" Carl turned his head, took a few paces away, unable to meet that cool grey gaze any longer. "After I turned him into a monster."

"But I am not him." Soft steps, and then the stranger was in front of him once more, his scent filling Carl's nostrils. "And I would not fight you."

The promise of submission was like a drug, clouding Carl's senses, making him hard. He fought it. "Why do you want me? Because of what I am?"

"Because of what we are. Because I am lonely, and you are too. A wolf is not meant to run alone." He smiled. "My name is Christian."

"Carl."

Christian smiled again, and this time his eyes were flecked with amber. "Would you like to come back to my place, Carl?"

Carl hesitated.

"It isn't far. A pleasant little flat, in a half-decent district."

"What if we fight?"

"We won't fight." Christian's hand was in Carl's hair once more, his breath hot in Carl's ear. "I promise you that."

The apartment block was brightly lit, almost offensively clean. As he climbed the well-swept stairs, Carl felt obliged to soften his footsteps to avoid waking the neighbours. The only scents here were the lingering traces of the inhabitants' supper. On the ground floor, spaghetti. On the next, Wurst. Underlying them, a tang from the cleaning fluid last used to wash down the stairs, and the soft aroma of people at peace. Carl wondered if that would change tonight.

Christian's flat was on the third and final floor. Here, the scent changed subtly. Still human, yes—but with a wilder undertone. And more than that, something familiar..."Dieter lived here?" Carl asked abruptly.

Christian's eyes were oddly dark in the bright illumination of the hallway. "Yes," he answered, motioning Carl into the flat. Carl felt crass, uncouth. Christian mourned Dieter as a lover. He should put aside his own hatred of the man who had made him a monster.

"It was my apartment before he moved in," Christian added. He sounded almost defensive.

"It's a nice place," Carl said hurriedly.

"Thank you," Christian said, shutting the door. And then he was upon Carl, pressing their bodies together, bruising Carl's lips with his kiss. Carl felt the hard wood of the door at his back, and instinct took over. He grabbed Christian by the shoulders and forced their bodies around, until it was Christian who was trapped against the unyielding wood. He deepened the kiss, thrusting his tongue into Christian's mouth, and his right hand dropped to scrabble at the fastenings of Christian's trousers.

Christian bucked up into his touch, moaning into his mouth. Just as Carl was ready to rip the material in his frustration, the zipper gave way, and he seized hold of Christian's erection through the thin cotton of his underwear. Carl broke the kiss and dived into Christian's neck, sucking and nipping. He felt more bestial than human, wanting to mark Christian as his own.

"Do it," Christian breathed. "Bite me."

It was too much. Carl bit down savagely, and Christian's cock throbbed in his hand. The taste of him was intoxicating, and belonged to Carl alone. Incensed by the barriers between them, Carl began to tear at his own clothing. Slender hands moved to help him divest himself. Yanking furiously at the waistband of Christian's trousers, Carl pulled them down and out of the way. He moaned aloud at the first touch of their heated flesh together.

"Fuck me," Christian breathed. "Fuck me now."

They needed condoms; some part of Carl's brain was still capable of thinking. Condoms and lube.

"Now," Christian insisted, and Carl forgot all else but the desperate need to get inside Christian as quickly as possible. With a snarl he lifted the younger man's slender body by the hips, pressing it against the door to help him hold the weight. Christian hooked his ankles around Carl's waist.

"It'll hurt," Carl muttered, his conscience apparently unable to be completely silenced.

"Don't care," Christian told him. "Do it now."

With a roar, Carl pushed in roughly. Christian whimpered, and Carl stilled. "Keep going," Christian urged.

It was more than Carl could withstand. He shoved in savagely, before withdrawing almost to his full extent and then slamming back in, and repeating the process with single-minded determination. So good... For the first time since he had understood what Dieter had done to him, Carl felt free. Finally, he was unfettered by the fear of brutalising his lover, of making him a monster. They were the same, and Christian was his.

Eyes clenched shut against the sweat that dripped into them, Carl thrust once more and then shuddered. All that he was seemed to pour out into Christian, who moaned, shooting out his own climax between them in hot, pulsing spurts. Overcome, Carl collapsed against his lover's slender body, only the wall holding them upright. His breath came in ragged bursts.

"Bed," Christian murmured, and they staggered to a room with clean sheets on the bed and thick, soft rugs upon the floor.

"How did Dieter die?" Carl asked, as dawn's grey light filtered through the blinds to cast mottled shadows on their naked bodies. He drowsily traced his fingers along his lover's pale shoulder, watching as the shadows deformed and bent around his hand.

Christian's back tensed and then slowly, deliberately relaxed. "Does it matter?"

"I'd like to know."

"I think I told you he did not believe in fidelity? He was killed by a jealous lover."

"Human, or wolf?"

"With a knife."

"Do you know who did it?"

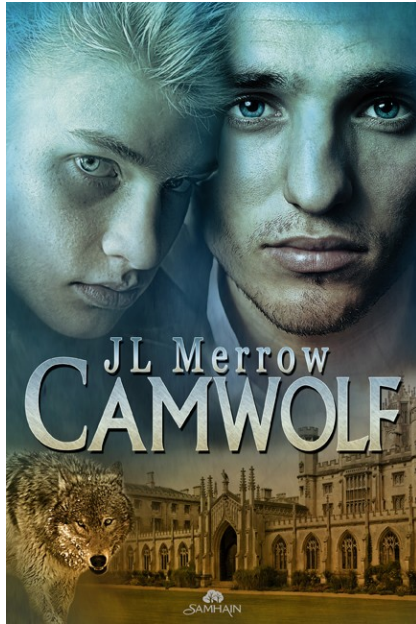
Christian rolled over. Cool grey eyes met Carl's for a moment, then looked away. "You really want to know?"

"No," Carl told him, kissing his forehead. "It's not important."

Christian smiled crookedly, and relaxed down upon Carl's shoulder once again.

End

If you've enjoyed this story and would like to read about Nick, the lover Carl turned into a werewolf, check out *Camwolf*:



Now available in e-book from Samhain Publishing, or on Kindle.

To save his lover, he must become his own worst nightmare.

Dr. Nick Sewell. Non-conformist. Werewolf. The first puts him at odds with his colleagues' idea of how an All Saints College lecturer should behave. The second, bestowed upon him by an ex-boyfriend, puts him at odds with himself.

There's his tendency to change into a wolf on the full moon. And his visceral attraction to Julian Lauder, a troubled young German student. Despite his determination not to act on his desire, Nick's brutal response to seeing Julian with another man frightens them both. At first.

Then Nick learns that Julian is not only a naturally submissive werewolf, but one who has learned better how to deal with just being a werewolf. That explains the attraction, but it doesn't make it any easier when the tables are turned, and Julian—once the student—is now teaching Nick...who still isn't happy about conforming to the "werewolf way".

Meanwhile, reports of a strange wolf stalking the town barely register on Nick's radar—until Julian disappears. Accusing eyes—both wolf and human—are turned toward Nick. Even with the help of friends, hope is growing as cold as the kidnapper's trail. Unless Nick gives free rein to the wolf's inhuman power...

JL MERROW is that rare beast, an English person who refuses to drink tea. She read Natural Sciences at Cambridge, where she learned many things, chief amongst which was that she never wanted to see the inside of a lab ever again. Her one regret is that she never mastered the ability of punting one-handed whilst holding a glass of champagne.

She has had over thirty short stories and novellas published. *CAMWOLF*, a paranormal gay romance, was her first novel, and her second, *WIGHT MISCHIEF*, a romantic thriller, will be published by Samhain Publishing in November 2011.

For more information on books by JL Merrow, see www.jlmerrow.com

