NOTES FOR Author

By ……

LOGLINE

After consenting to scientific experimentations, a young man is turned into a werewolf and must deal with the ever-growing conflict between the pack of his past (humans) and the pack of his future (werewolves).

SYNOPSIS

Oliver wakes up naked and wanders into the camp of a scientist. He discovers he is a werewolf who has been experimented on by a certain “Human Group.” He runs off with another werewolf and learns their culture and ways of dealing with their transformations. Conflict and tension mounts as a new member is introduced into the group. Oliver endures aggression and hazing as with any typical newcomer. They soon come together against the Human Group and Oliver realizes he must choose a side. He is captured by the Human Group and tortured extensively. He escapes due to a traitor on the inside and rejoins his pack. He learns to live as a werewolf and never looks back.

PREMISE/THEME

Dusty states it fairly quickly: “Everybody needs a group they can just cut loose with.” The title says the rest. This screenplay is about finding a group of people…er…werewolves that you can trust and find camaraderie in. This is a resonating theme that will attract viewers and relates to the human condition in a big way. We all don’t want to end up alone. We all don’t want to live alone. We all are not meant to be alone and singular. This screenplay attempts to make the idea of the pack something that we all seek and desire. This theme is seen woven in the various characters, even though a lot of the characters are underdeveloped. It is a simple premise that works for the story. You have a good baseline for the plot with this theme. It provides a backbone, which is a good start.
I would recommend developing this theme more and give it some kind of twist because honestly, the theme is very simple to get.

The true promise of the premise comes with the protagonist’s inability to grasp who he has become and how he must live with his transformation. Give Oliver some kind of motivation to fulfill the theme and premise rather than throwing things at him to react to.

**STRUCTURE**

Opening Image: A man is hunting in a forest and is attacked by a creature.

   This is a great way to establish tone and mystery, even though that mystery evaporates when we come upon our main character naked in the woods.

Catalyst: Blair shows up to claim Oliver.

   This is a good way to kick things off but the exposition seems too revealing for the first minutes of screen time. She seems to blurt out all the facts about werewolves and Oliver’s predicament rather than allowing the viewer as well as the protagonist to discover these things as they go along in the story. Add some sort of time crunch so that Blair isn’t stuck explaining everything to Oliver in the first 10 minutes of the film. Have something happen where they need to get out of the house or some danger where Blair is forced to “explain later.”

Break Into Act 2: Oliver transforms into a werewolf.

   This is a good break and adds momentum to the story.

Central Question: The central question forming for the protagonist is “Where do I belong?”

   This relates to the premise because it gives the protagonist a motive to discover the theme presented by Dusty. It works on two levels: one for the protagonist as motivation; the other as a question as to where the werewolves and the humans belong in the hierarchy of society.
Desire Established: At first it seems Oliver wants to return to normal. Then he desires to stay a werewolf and defend them, totally rejecting the humans and those that were once his own kind.

I find this a little hard to believe. He has no desire to return to his parents or his friends. He will forsake every bond made as a human to be a werewolf? If this is true, you need to establish some kind of backstory that shows how shitty his life was and how this new life is better than the old. It has to be more than having heightened senses and abilities. There has to be some emotional relation.

Fun and Games: I really like the fun part where he learns his abilities. You do a good job of making this moment light and integrated into the story. I think some of the dialogue is a little cheesy and much, but this overall was a good moment.

Midpoint: Chris, Oliver’s girlfriend, calls and says she is coming to get Oliver.

This midpoint certainly heightens the tension, but it doesn’t really do anything for the story. It just adds another variable that in the end meets no thematic conclusion that relates to the story.

Increase of Tension: Oliver goes to rescue Chris. He inadvertently endangers the pack. Ricky hates him more for it. There is a tracker of Oliver which leads the Human Group to the pack. The Human Group attacks the werewolf pack and they scatter. Oliver is captured.

There is a nice build of tension and drama here. Things heat up in a good way. Even though the catalyst of all this (Chris entering the picture) isn’t as solid as the rest, you do a good job of integrating a sudden situation into the story.

Visit to Death: Oliver is tortured and almost killed.

I thought this part was a little much and broke the pace of the story. We go on a linear journey for all this time, then suddenly we break for – 1 Month Later. The torture was gruesome a bit over the top. I was not expecting the story to go in this direction. While
gritty, I didn’t expect there to be an emphasis on gory human torture (of course I didn’t expect Casino Royale to go this way but it worked for that movie...a little). This is definitely a strong visit to death scenario, but it seems exhausted by other films and the usual genre of these stories. I would suggest some motivation for the scientists other than testing Oliver’s limits.

Break into Act 3: Oliver escapes due to Dusty getting him through security.

I thought this was a bit contrived and forced. Either Dusty needs to do something really ingenious to get him out of there or the audience is not going to buy how stupid the Human Group’s security is.

Change in Protagonist: Oliver learns that he belongs with the wolves rather than the humans.

I did not buy this change. Like I said before, there needs to be some solid backstory to make me think his life would be better as a werewolf than as a human.

Climax: Oliver and werewolf pack attack Stonewell’s Human Group fortress.

This is the logical and predictable climax to this story. While it is this, it is still a good climax. Amp up the fight scenes and make more at stake here. Really make your audience fear the protagonists’ enemies and fear for the lives of the “good guys.”

Resolution: Oliver returns to the wolf pack and establishes himself as the alpha.

While I understand Oliver’s desire to return to the pack and be with Blair. I think him becoming the alpha is way too unrealistic. There are plenty of strong, well adapted werewolves that have much more experience than him that should take over the pack. If you really want Oliver to take over the pack as alpha, show through his actions how he is stronger than everyone else and is a capable leader. Right now I see Blair as more of a leader and mentor than him.
CHARACTER

Human Group: There is not much told about this group other than they want to eradicate the werewolves. Flesh these guys out more. Their group seems a bit cliché when it comes to villains. Either make them more evil or humanize them a bit more (I would recommend making them more evil to compensate for the crazy werewolves).

Werewolves: This group is a bit unbalanced and overpowered. I don’t really have any sympathy for them since they seem so hostile and mean. They are also trying to kill humans. They don’t seem like they want peace with the humans: whenever the humans are brought up, they speak of them with anger and hostility. There is never really a moment when I feel sympathy for them, especially after Ricky beat the shit out of Oliver just to assert his dominance. I think in your next draft, you should make these people “more human.” There is not much to relate or like about this pack.

Oliver: He is the protagonist of the story.

Blair: She is the mentor of Oliver’s in the ways of the werewolf. She is also a love interest? This sub-characterization never is fully realized. In the next draft, I would recommend putting an emphasis on Oliver and Blair’s relationship (the romantic side).

Ricky: I didn’t like this guy. I think he’s a dick and his arc is way too radical and too unbelievable. He mercilessly is beating Oliver one minute, almost to death, then saying its all in fun the next and trusts him from there on out. I didn’t buy this. Either tone down his hostility or make his character have a more realistic arc. You could make him have a truce with Oliver but still harbor hostilities for a possible sequel.

Dusty: This character is a good on the fence character. At first he seems to have an agenda, but near the end he shows his true colors and helps out the werewolves. The only problem I have with this character is his sudden desire to transform into a werewolf. There is no build up to that and it doesn’t really make sense to me.
Stonewell: I feel sympathy for this guy. His backstory was revealed in a very on the nose way, but it was very compelling. It gave me and probably would give the audience sympathy for this character, almost to such an extent as to switch sides.

Richard: He starts off as a cool character but dies in a unfulfilling way. He is very wise and very much an alpha. When he dies there is a great void in the pack. I think you would build his character more to have more of an impact on Oliver and the pack. He has a few scenes but he needs more. He also needs to die heroically.

Sequoia: This is another mentor character. She is very wise but doesn’t know how to communicate with common people any more. She is a very unique character and I think you’ve created a good character that really comes off the page. She is a little weird in her speech, but this is to be expected.

Chris: This is Oliver’s key to his backstory. She needs to be more of a person to reveal more about Oliver’s life before experimentation. Her role in the story is a bit convoluting. I would recommend cutting her out and having someone close to Oliver (family) try to find him. Perhaps that family member would be captured by the Human Group and killed in the scuffle, providing more of a catalyst for Oliver to help rally the werewolves. I also didn’t understand how she would be able to be his girlfriend if he is being experimented on for so long and has memory problems due to it.

**CONFLICT**

There needs to be more…

I find this true in my script too. You have a lot of potential to make this story an epic tale. There is so much you could amp up and make scarier, larger, grander, and emotionally impactful. You definitely take the torture scene to the extreme. Do this with the fights and action sequences as well. Also, add more. Have some fight scenes that release the tension. There are a lot of hazing fights dished out by Ricky which are well conceived but really do
little more than move the audience away from liking the werewolves. Make the climactic showdown between the Human Group and the Werewolves much more emotionally impactful. Connect the characters in their struggles as they fight. Have a showdown between Oliver and Stonewell, seeking revenge for Dusty’s death. Deliver those down and dirty fights and gritty scenarios you hint at with the opening image you created.

Raise the stakes. I feel that the werewolves are like overpowered superheroes. They don’t die easily (at least not as easily as humans). They beat the shit out of their own kind. They heal quickly and they are way stronger than humans even in their human form. Change this. Audiences like underdogs and you have a chance to create literal underdogs with your werewolf characters. I felt no sense of danger for these werewolves when they went out to do anything with the humans and I always wondered why they were so afraid of the humans and hid from them…

I think the conflict between Ricky and Oliver is too physical and one sided. I understand Ricky is asserting his dominance, but he just goes a little overboard. It is almost a little ridiculous. I as a reader and stranger to this world really lost any sympathy for the werewolf pack due to this conflict between Ricky and Oliver.

Develop emotional conflict between Blair and Oliver. There is a definite chemistry there. If you could implement a romantic subplot that creates a new dimension of conflict, you could take this story to a new level.

Also there are no fight scenes where they are all in their werewolf form. This would add a good dynamic if there were fight scenes or at least more scenes where they were werewolves.

**DIALOGUE**

The characters you have created need unique voices. There are some I can distinguish (younger guys swear a lot, older do not). Dusty has a good unique voice. I feel that everybody else kind of sound the same. Sequoia has a very distinct voice, because she is so
spaced out all the time. That is good. There are a few distinctions I can piece apart but overall they could be more distinct.

There is a lot of dialogue exposition in this screenplay. Dusty spills the whole backstory within the first act. Blair spills the whole werewolf element in the set up. I think you can back off on these exposition / backstories. Try to integrate them better into the story and separate the timing of delivery (talk about backstory in pieces as they become relevant to know rather than all at once).

Overall, the dialogue is believable…except for a few instances. Sequoia’s dialogue is very weird, but it works for her character. However, she is a little overdone and Oliver states the obvious about how weird she is. Back off on Oliver’s reaction with dialogue and hide these in facial expressions or pauses. Blair’s weird Avatar style attunement with nature is a little off from her character. She is very knowledgeable but try to make her dialogue a bit more hip and mainstream to relate to her youth and spunk. This is the only blatant inconsistency in dialogue characterization I noticed.

PACING

The pacing is consistent through the first part and the majority of the middle. I didn’t like the time passage of -1 Month Later. I felt it pulled me out of the action and required a certain amount of backstory that was never explained. What went on for that one month? How have the character changed? How have their motives changed? What have they learned in this month? It seems like nothing changed. Maybe you could consider taking this out and making a more linear torture and escape scene to bridge the time gap.

Also, everything seemed really forced and rushed near the end. Oliver comes back and gets the pack to go after the Human Group and the story ends when they come back victorious. I think there can be so much more here and I would encourage you to develop Act 3 further, which I’m sure you already had in mind.
I think some of the scenes you have as interaction and relationship developing scenes are too short. An example of this would be the scenes between Stonewall and Dusty. We just get glimpses of the potential of their characters and relationships and we never really get the full story. This is also true of Blair and Oliver. While Blair teaches Oliver a lot, their relationship never really develops into anything more with the scene time you give them together. I would recommend expanding their story since they are such important characters.

**ORIGINALITY**

This story has an interesting balance to originality and rehash. While the werewolf genre has been done over and over, time and time again, this story follows the main ingredients to such a genre while adding a little spice and flavor of its own. I think with some better characterization and a little more large scale action, this could be a very large concept story. I think right now it piggybacks too much off other werewolf genre stories, but with some work, it could be its own unique spin on a very old legend.

The advice I would give is to make your werewolf story different. Totally redefine the genre by breaking all the rules and making your own up. Try not to be so reverent to the myths and legends that have become so mainstream. You begin to do this with the scientific experimentation and such, but go deeper. There is some great potential here for a story that raises eyebrows and gets the audience to lean forward. Change the game. You will stand apart for it and get a lot of attention.

**LOGIC**

I had a lot of trouble stomaching the logic of a few key plot points and devices. I don’t buy that Oliver would volunteer to be subject to unknown experimentation by the company he worked at. I would suggest creating a backstory like the Bourne Trilogy where Oliver’s life sucks so much that he willingly volunteers for the program and the memory loss is due to his first transformation.
I really don’t understand why Dusty injected himself with the werewolf serum. There is no build up to that. It seems random. Why?

I don’t know why werewolves have the ability to heal like the Wolverine from X-Men. There has to be a point where their powers are not so God-like.

It is hard for me to believe that Oliver becomes the Alpha of the group. He seems a little weak and inexperienced to be such a leader all of a sudden. I would suggest making him a stronger character with a gritty edge who shows leadership qualities (not blatantly but subtly) throughout the screenplay (think Jake from Avatar – he entered a new culture and didn’t give a fuck about certain aspects of their culture).

I don’t see the logic in the Human Group and the Werewolf conflict. There needs to be more backstory to their struggle. Define who is superior and their motives for doing such things. Did the Human Group create the werewolves or were they already there and they just added more with their experimentations?

**FORMATTING**

Overall, this is a screenplay that is expertly formatted. Nothing really distracts me from the story, format-wise. You do a good job of adhering to the scriptwriting rules and formats. Watch your spelling and word choice in a few places. Also make it longer. This is a pretty big adventure for your protagonist. I think it can be explored in more depth then what you have fit into 94 pages.