I Am Legend By Richard Matheson: Plot Summary

American scientist, Robert Neville, is a lone human survivor living in the ruins of New York City three years after an initially promising cancer cure turns into a virus that wipes out humanity. Faithfully sending out radio messages every day and wandering the streets for food and supplies with family dog, Samantha, Robert is desperate to find survivors and answers. After an encounter, Neville soon realizes that there are many mutant victims of the contagion that remain. Driven by his hopes of reversing the effects that the virus has caused with his immune blood, Robert sets out to test his efforts on the Darkseekers- the incredibly strong and deformed victims of the plague who thrive only in the dark. With the infected constantly lurking in the shadows hoping to infect any immune survivors, Robert is aware that he is outnumbered and working against time.

Plot:

Set in the year 2009, a virus originally created as a cure for cancer, turns deadly. The virus kills around 90% of the world population, leaving a small amount to be nocturnal mutants preying on around 1% of remaining of those who were immune. Robert Neville, lives an isolated life with his family dog, Samantha (“Sam”), in Manhattan. In the film, viewers follow the journey of Sam and Robert in their day to day lives. Sam serving as a watchdog, and Robert using his radio to attempt to reach out to potential survivors.

Flashbacks later on in the film discloses to the audience that his wife and daughter, Zoe and Marley Neville, died in a helicopter crash during the chaotic mass evacuation out of Manhattan. Robert has them cleared while on the island with other military personnel and clearly faces regret for his decisions. After the death of his family and everyone else, the only intimacy he feels he has is with his German Shepherd, Sam, gifted from his daughter during her departure, mannequins he frequently chats to in the store, and TV characters.

After discovering an encouraging treatment made from his own blood, Neville sets up a trap and captures a female Darkseeker. In the process, the alpha male Darkseeker attempts to retrieve the female, but returns to the dark after being burned by the light. Neville takes the female to his laboratory in his Manhattan fortress to give her the “cure” he made from his blood. After days of checking on her, no success is shown.

A climactic scene of the movie takes place the next day out when he is knocked out after being caught in a trap similar to the one he used to capture the infected female. Hanging upside down, he uses a pocket knife to free himself before it gets dark out. He falls on his ankle, breaking it, but rushes to the car before the last glimpse of light diminishes. Waiting on the other side of the beam of light are erratic, infected dogs who are let loose by the alpha male who is seeking vengeance when turns completely night. Neville and Sam manage to terminate all of the dogs, but Sam is bitten in the fight. Neville gets back home and injects her with a strand of his serum, but is forced to strangle her when strong, undeniable signs of the infection are shown.

Perhaps his weakest moment of three years, heartbroken Robert ventures out on a suicidal

mission to kill Darkseekers. He kills a very large amount of them before being trapped by others. Before it is too late, survivor Anna and her son Ethan save him and take him back to his home. When he awakens hysterically, Anna explains that they traveled from Maryland after hearing his broadcast on the radio. They survived the outbreak aboard a Red Cross evacuation ship that came from São Paulo and are headed to a survivors camp in Bethel, Vermont. Robert angrily denies that any such camp exists. Neville goes and adjusts the potential cure and injects it again into the female Darkseeker.

After following Anna back to the home the night before, a group of Darkseekers attack Neville's house the following day. Robert, Anna, and Ethan hide inside the basement laboratory where the female test subject currently resides. After setting eyes on the youthful and recovering body of the female, Neville discovers that the last treatment he gave her was successful. Neville tries to evaluate the situation as the alpha male Darkseeker from earlier deliberately rams himself against a glass door to break in. Neville draws a plastic vessel of blood from the woman he cured and gives it to Anna, before shutting her and Ethan inside of a coal chute behind his lab. He then takes a grenade and kills the Darkseekers at the cost of his own life to save the cure. The next day, Anna and Ethan reach their destination at the survivors camp in Bethel, Vermont. After being greeted by several survivors and military officers, per Neville's request, Anna is seen handing them the cure.

Go or No: I would 1000% recommend this film to anyone. Whether you're into the post-apocalyptic genre or not, Will Smith's riveting performance will have anyone with a beating heart rooting for Robert Neville's survival. From his dry humor to uplift in times of need, to his daring bravery that will have you at the edge of your seat, the character execution of Will Smith and Francis Lawrence's perfect assembly earns this movie a 5/5 review.