Name\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ #10

*Read and annotate thoroughly – the dotted lines indicate where the text has been cut and spliced.*

THEY CAME BY NIGHT. Came in their dark cars with their spotlights and their guns and

their axes and pikes. Came from the blackness with a great sound of motors, the long white arms

of their spotlights snapping around the boulevard corner and clutching out at Cimarron Street.

Robert Neville was sitting at the peephole when they came. He had put down a book and was

sitting there watching idly when the beams splashed white across the bloodless vampire faces

and they whirled with a gasp, their dark animal eyes staring at the blinding lights.

Neville jumped back from the peephole, his heart thudding with the abrupt shock. For a

moment he stood there trembling in the dark room, unable to decide what to do. His throat

contracted and he heard the roar of the car motors even through the soundproofing on his house.

He thought of the pistols in his bureau, the sub-machine gun on his workbench, thought of

defending his house against them.

Then he pressed his fingers in until the nails dug at his palms. No, he’d made his decision,

he’d worked it out carefully through the past months. He would not fight.

With a heavy, sinking sensation in the pit of his stomach he stepped back to the peephole and

looked out.

The street was a scene of rushing, violent action illuminated by the bald glare of the

spotlights. Men rushed at men, the sound of running boots covered the pavement. Then a shot

rang out, echoing hollowly; more shots.

Two male vampires went thrashing down onto their sides. Four men grabbed them by the

arms and jerked them up while two other men drove the glittering lance points of their pikes into

the vampires’ chests. Neville’s face twitched as screams filled the night. He felt his chest

shuddering with labored breath as he watched from his house.

The dark-suited men knew exactly what they were doing. There were about seven vampires

visible, six men and a woman. The men surrounded the seven, held their flailing arms, and

drove razor-tipped pikes deep into their bodies. Blood spouted out on the dark pavement and the

vampires perished one by one. Neville felt himself shivering more and more. Is this the new

society? The words flashed across his mind. He tried to believe that the men were forced into

what they were doing, but shock brought terrible doubt. Did they have to do it like this, with

such a black and brutal slaughtering? Why did they slay with alarum by night, when by day the

vampires could be dispatched in peace?

Robert Neville felt tight fists shaking at his sides. He didn’t like the looks of them, he didn’t

like the methodical butchery. They were more like gangsters than men forced into a situa tion.

There were looks of vicious triumph on their faces, white and stark in the spotlights. Their faces

were cruel and emotionless.

Suddenly Neville felt himself shudder violently, remembering. Where was Ben Cortman?

His eyes fled over the street but he couldn’t see Cortman. He pressed against the peephole

and looked up and down the street. He didn’t want them to get Cortman, he realized, didn’t want them to destroy Cortman like that. With a sense of inward shock he could not analyze in the rush

of the moment, he realized that he felt more deeply toward the vampires than he did toward their

executioners.

Now the seven vampires lay crumpled and still in their pools of stolen blood. The spotlights

were moving around the street, flaying open the night. Neville turned his head away as the

brilliant glare blazed across the front of his house. Then the spotlight had turned about and he

looked again.

A shout. Neville’s eyes jumped toward the focus of the spotlights.

He stiffened.

Cortman was on the roof of the house across the street. He was pulling himself up toward the chimney, body flattened on the shingles.

Abruptly it came to Neville that it was in that chimney that Ben Cortman had hidden most of

the time, and he felt a wrench of despair at the knowledge. His lips pressed together tightly.

Why hadn’t he looked more carefully? He couldn’t fight the sick apprehension he felt at the thought of Cortman’s being killed by these brutal strangers. Objectively, it was pointless, but he

could not repress the feeling. Cortman was not theirs to put to rest.

But there was nothing he could do.

With bleak, tortured eyes he watched the spotlights cluster on Cortman’s wriggling body. He watched the white hands reaching out slowly for handholds on the roof. Slowly, slowly, as if

Cortman had all the time in the world. Hurry up! Neville felt himself twitch with the unspoken words as he watched. He felt himself straining with Cortman’s agonizingly slow movements.

The men did not shout, they did not command. They raised their rifles now and the night was torn open again with their exploding fire.

Neville almost felt the bullets in his own flesh. His body jerked with convulsive shudders as he watched Cortman’s body jerk under the impact of the bullets.

A clumping of boots. Neville jerked back into the darkness. He stood in the middle of the

room, waiting for them to call to him and tell him to come out. He held himself rigidly. I’m not

going to fight, he told himself strongly. Even though he wanted to fight, even though he already

hated the dark men with their guns and their bloodstained pikes.

But he wasn’t going to fight. He had worked out his decision very carefully. They were

doing what they had to do, albeit with unnecessary violence and seeming relish. He had killed

their people and they had to capture him and save themselves. He would not fight. He’d throw

himself upon the justice of their new society. When they called to him he would go out and

surrender, it was his decision.

Rough hands slid under his armpits and pulled him up. He kept wondering when they would

shoot him again. Virge, he thought, Virge, I’m coming with you now. The pain in his chest was

like molten lead poured over him from a great height. He felt and heard his boot tips scraping

over the floor and waited for death. I want to die in my own house, he thought. He struggled

feebly but they didn’t stop. Hot pain raked saw-toothed nails through his chest as they dragged

him through the front room.

“No,” he groaned. “No!”

Then pain surged up from his chest and drove a barbed club into his brain. Everything began

spinning away into blackness.

“Virge,” he muttered in a hoarse whisper.

And the dark men dragged his lifeless body from the house. Into the night. Into the world

that was theirs and no longer his.

Abruptly that realization joined with what he saw on their faces—awe, fear, shrinking

horror—and he knew that they were afraid of him. To them he was some terrible scourge they

had never seen, a scourge even worse than the disease they had come to live with. He was an

invisible specter who had left for evidence of his existence the bloodless bodies of their loved

ones. And he understood what they felt and did not hate them. His right hand tightened on the

tiny envelope of pills. So long as the end did not come with violence, so long as it did not have

to be a butchery before their eyes

Robert Neville looked out over the new people of the earth. He knew he did not belong to

them; he knew that, like the vampires, he was anathema and black terror to be destroyed. And,

abruptly, the concept came, amusing to him even in his pain.

A coughing chuckle filled his throat. He turned and leaned against the wall while he

swallowed the pills. Full circle, he thought while the final lethargy crept into his limbs. Full

circle. A new terror born in death, a new superstition entering the unassailable fortress of

forever.

I am legend.