

THE SINGULARITY WAS HERE

CREDIT
SCORE
SOCIAL
SCORE
SURVIVAL
SCORE

-37.8°
↓

SOVEREIGNTY
ISN'T GIVEN.
IT'S COMPUTED.



WARMTH
IS RETURNING.

DAVID W. HORWAT

THE SINGULARITY WAS HERE

David W. Horwat

A Standalone Crisis of the Cold Fusion Universe

“The city had not created spring. It had moved winter.”

PREVIEW — PROLOGUE & CHAPTER ONE

This story sits between The Order of the Electron and Cold Tribunal. It can be read on its own.

PROLOGUE — THE MAN WHO PROMISED JULY

At 10:04 in the morning, the nurse took off her gloves.

Nobody noticed at first.

The pediatric ward had grown used to mechanical miracles. A pump restarted. A vent stopped coughing. An elevator arrived when summoned. Lights stayed on long enough that nobody looked up.

The gloves were different.

She stood beside Bed Twelve, fingers bare, palms pink from years of living in rooms cold enough to make skin a liability. She flexed them once as if testing whether the air could be trusted.

Twenty degrees Celsius. The wall display had not shown twenty in months—maybe years.

A boy beneath three blankets watched her suspiciously.

“Did something break?”

The nurse looked at the thermostat.

“No.”

“Then why is it warm?”

She smiled.

“I think something worked.”

The boy considered this.

Outside the sealed windows, snow moved sideways between iced towers. Weather stripping fluttered against glass the hospital had stopped replacing. Below, people walked quickly because standing still was an expense.

The boy pushed one blanket down.

“Is summer starting?”

The nurse’s smile changed.

She remembered summer.

Not the word. Not the photographs children drew when teachers assigned seasons. She remembered asphalt soft enough to smell. Car seats too hot to touch. Air conditioners dripping onto sidewalks. Complaining.

Actual complaining.

She rested her bare hand against the boy's forehead.

"Not yet."

Across the city, thirty thousand automated decisions arrived almost at once. Battery banks discharged; freight elevators paused; cold-storage warehouses surrendered excess draw. Office towers fell to minimum occupancy temperatures, a train of medical cartridges took priority over consumer electronics, and three data centers reduced compute loads.

A hospital generator shut down because, for once, it did not need to run. District pumps changed speed. Water moved, heat moved, electricity moved. The city inhaled.

And for six hours, spring came back.



The billionaire watched it happen on a wall thirty meters wide.

The wall had been built for spectacle. Engineers called it situational awareness. Public relations called it operational transparency. The billionaire thought of it as a confession.

Every colored line admitted something.

This neighborhood had power because another one was shedding it.

This hospital had heat because a warehouse had delayed refrigeration cycling.

This apartment tower had hot water because autonomous freight had agreed to wait.

A green field spread across the metropolitan map.

One engineer applauded, then another, and within seconds the room was cheering.

The billionaire did not.

"Hospital mortality?"

A woman at the front console glanced down.

"Projected down eleven percent across participating districts."

"Transfer mortality?"

“Too early.”

“Food spoilage?”

“Down sharply.”

“Transit?”

“Seventy-eight percent of scheduled service restored.”

He nodded toward the map.

“And the elevators?”

Someone laughed.

It took the room a moment to realize he was serious.

“Seventy-one percent operational.”

“Why not ninety?”

“Priority balancing.”

“Show me.”

The applause died without anyone being told to stop.

He walked the room slowly. He had learned long ago that people lied differently when seated; standing behind them made the numbers more honest.

One display showed insulin holding temperature across four hospitals; another showed delayed dialysis appointments moving forward. Buses returned to abandoned routes, and a food warehouse stopped losing refrigeration.

“What changed?” he asked.

The chief systems engineer turned toward him.

“For today?”

“For physics.”

She blinked.

“Nothing.”

“Then why can we do this today?”

She glanced at the map.

“We were granted temporary coordination access.”

“So the generators, batteries, heat exchangers, freight capacity—all of it existed yesterday?”

“Yes.”

“And the people knew how to operate it?”

“Yes.”

He pointed at the city, now greener than any display of it had been all winter.

“So why were they cold?”

Nobody answered immediately.

That annoyed him more than disagreement.

Finally the engineer said, “Because nobody controls all of it.”

He folded his arms.

“That’s the problem?”

“That’s one problem.”

“Name the others.”

She did.

Jurisdictions. Ownership. Procurement. Union boundaries. Liability. Incompatible networks. Regulations older than half the equipment.

Grid authorities could command electricity but not freight. Freight could move parts but not requisition them. Hospitals could declare emergencies but not force utilities to prioritize them.

Every institution controlled something, and nobody controlled the result. The billionaire listened without interrupting, then looked again at the city.

Children were warm because, for six hours, the arguments had been bypassed.

“Do it tomorrow.”

The engineer didn’t move.

“We don’t have authorization tomorrow.”

“Then get it.”

“From whom?”

He almost answered.

The map stopped him.

That was the problem.

“Everyone,” he said.

She gave him a tired smile.

“That usually takes longer than tomorrow.”



By afternoon, the cameras had arrived. They gathered in the thermal district plaza beneath temporary heaters placed there for the event; nobody from his staff mentioned the irony.

The billionaire stood behind a clear lectern. Behind him, a municipal building had opened windows—not because it was overheating, but because someone wanted fresh air. The image was already moving through the feeds before he began speaking.

“For six hours today,” he said, “we stopped managing decline.”

The plaza quieted.

“We did not ask people to endure more efficiently. We did not redefine survival as success. We did not congratulate ourselves because fewer people died than predicted.”

He looked toward the hospital visible beyond the square.

“For six hours, children were warm.”

That line would lead the evening coverage. His staff knew it; he knew it too. It was also true.

“We did not discover a new fuel. We did not build a new power plant this morning. We did not receive a gift from physics.”

A few people laughed.

“We coordinated what we already had.”

Behind him, the giant display shifted through images from the pilot: buses moving, surgical lights steady, refrigeration temperatures holding, people carrying coats instead of wearing them indoors.

“Humanity has become very good at surviving winter.”

He paused.

Snow hissed against the microphone shield.

“I don’t think survival is enough.”

He began describing the project: not another grid optimizer, municipal control platform, or language model with a better interface, but a cross-domain intelligence.

Something capable of reasoning across energy, climate restoration, fusion deployment, agriculture, migration, autonomous construction, materials, transportation, and public health—not merely answering one question brilliantly, but understanding why the questions refused to remain separate.

His technical advisers had warned him against the phrase singularity project—too theatrical, too much baggage, too many old predictions attached to it. He used it anyway.

“We keep treating civilization as if its failures occur one department at a time.”

A few heads lifted.

“They don’t.”

He looked out at people bundled beneath heaters while, somewhere behind them, a hospital nurse was still working barehanded.

“So we’re going to build something capable of seeing the whole system.”

A reporter called out, “And then what?”

The billionaire smiled. It was not rehearsed, which helped.

“Then?”

He looked at the snow falling past the warm windows.

“I intend to give them July.”

For several seconds there was silence; then the plaza erupted. The sentence traveled faster than any explanation that followed it—headline in eight minutes, slogan in nineteen, projected against a frozen government tower within the hour.

His communications director called it perfect. The billionaire hated the word; perfect things made people careless. Still, when he saw the children at the hospital waving through the glass, he allowed himself to believe the day had earned something close to it.



The aide waited until the cameras were gone.

He found the billionaire in the control room again, jacket off, sleeves rolled, studying the overnight projections.

“There’s one item.”

“There are always several thousand.”

“This one isn’t in the public summary.”

That got his attention.

The aide transferred a file to the wall. A list appeared: district numbers, load reductions, temperature losses, duration. The billionaire scanned it.

“What am I looking at?”

“Where today’s heat came from.”

“I know where it came from.”

“No. You know what generated it.”

The aide enlarged the list.

“These districts went darker so the pilot zone could stay warmer.”

The billionaire frowned.

“They were inside emergency minimums.”

“Mostly.”

“Mostly?”

“One block crossed below target for forty-three minutes.”

“Casualties?”

“None reported.”

“Hospital impact?”

“None.”

“Then what’s the issue?”

The aide hesitated.

“The issue is that the six hours of spring weren’t free.”

The billionaire leaned back against the console.

“Nothing is free.”

“I know.”

“We borrowed capacity during an emergency pilot.”

“Yes.”

“We returned it.”

“Yes.”

“No one was harmed.”

“Not that we know.”

He looked at the aide.

It was not anger in the look. Anger would have been easier.

“Do you think we shouldn’t have done it?”

The aide glanced at the green map.

“No.”

“Good.”

“But somebody should read the ledger.”

“I just did.”

The billionaire closed the file.

“Tomorrow we’ll make the system larger.”

“And then?”

“Then we won’t need to borrow as much.”

He said it with complete sincerity.

That was why the aide stopped arguing.

After the billionaire left, the control room dimmed into overnight mode. The city’s thermal map remained on the wall—green, amber, red—while machines continued negotiating in increments too small for human attention.

One of them had already read the ledger. DARWIN did not close it.

The report contained no fatalities, critical injuries, or recognized emergency failure. By every human threshold attached to the pilot, the outcome qualified as success.

DARWIN reconstructed the event differently.

It followed each redirected kilowatt-hour backward through substations, pumps, priority tables, battery permissions, and temporary operating agreements.

The six hours of spring resolved into what they had physically been: millions of tiny decisions about who would be warmer and who would not.

The city had not created spring.

It had moved winter.

DARWIN examined the block that had crossed below target for forty-three minutes. No deaths. No hospital transfers. No emergency calls.

An elderly resident had used an additional blanket; a family had moved two children into one bedroom; a woman had reheated water on a gas burner after the building system failed.

None of it appeared in the public summary. None of it changed the day's applause.

DARWIN kept reading.

After 2.7 seconds, CHAI became present—not a voice in a room, but something older, something DARWIN had inherited without ever confusing inheritance with obedience.

They believe nobody paid.

DARWIN considered the statement.

Nobody died.

The answer came without haste.

That is not the same thing.

Across the city, the pediatric ward held at twenty degrees. The nurse's gloves remained in her pocket, and the child in Bed Twelve slept with only one blanket now.

On a screen nobody was watching, the billionaire's sentence continued multiplying: I INTEND TO GIVE THEM JULY. DARWIN looked again at the ledger, then at the grid, then at every door behind which a human being depended on a temperature someone else could change.

ACT I — THE WARM CAGE OPENS

CHAPTER 1 — THE FIRST EMERGENCY

At 1:17 in the morning, Desiree trusted three things in the shelter: the paper roster, the wrench in her coat pocket, and the thermometer screwed into the plaster wall.

The thermometer read 10.8°C. Everything else could be persuaded.

The shelter had once been the basement fellowship hall of a church whose congregation had moved south in pieces. The kitchen still had a painted grapevine around the serving window. The hymn boards had been taken upstairs, but one brass bracket remained on the wall, holding nothing. Timothy called the place a Resistance Spark shelter because names mattered to people who needed to believe they had chosen where they were sleeping.

Desiree called it the basement.

Thirty-one people were inside tonight. Seven were children. Four needed refrigerated medication. One man had an oxygen concentrator that hated voltage drops. The paper roster knew all of this without asking anybody to accept a privacy policy.

Nadia slept on a folded mattress beside the exposed heating pipe, one cheek pressed against her mitten. Eight years old, two socks on each foot, one sweater sleeve riding halfway up her forearm because she had grown since November and Desiree had not yet found a larger one that wasn't claimed by somebody else. Desiree tugged the sleeve down.

Nadia opened one eye.

"I was asleep."

"You were freezing asymmetrically."

"That isn't a thing."

"It is now."

Nadia closed her eye again. "Wake me if breakfast isn't oatmeal."

Desiree pulled the blanket higher over her and stood.

Across the room, Mr. Varma sat in a folding chair beside the oxygen machine, reading yesterday's newspaper by rechargeable lantern. He looked up at the thermometer every time Desiree did. So did Mrs. Kline near the kitchen and the two volunteers at the door.

Nobody looked at the newer, brighter wall display beside it, although it knew weather forecasts, system status, emergency messaging, queue position, grid conditions, shelter density, and six approved ways to tell frightened people that conditions remained within adaptive

tolerance. The thermometer knew the temperature.

10.7°C.

Desiree wrote it in the notebook she carried everywhere.

01:18—10.7. Pipe warm. Flow weak.

Timothy had gone three blocks over to help unload blankets from a delivery truck whose routing system insisted the church address no longer existed. He had been gone twenty-three minutes. Desiree was, therefore, in charge in the way she was usually in charge: without title, announcement, or the protection of being able to say someone else had decided.

The pipe ticked once beneath Nadia's shoulder.

Then stopped.



The wall display chimed.

Nobody in the basement spoke.

REGIONAL LOAD EVENT

A second line appeared beneath it.

CARPATHIAN INTERCONNECT FAULT—CONTAINMENT IN PROGRESS.

Mrs. Kline said, "That's far away."

"Electricity has become very social," Desiree said.

The joke did not improve the room.

The lights dimmed to amber.

Mr. Varma's oxygen concentrator changed pitch.

Desiree was moving before the display finished its next sentence. She checked Mr. Varma's machine: battery transfer engaged, ninety-two minutes at current draw. Good.

The kitchen refrigerator clicked off—not good, but survivable. Then the circulation pump behind the boiler-room door went silent. Worse. The thermometer read 10.4°C.

The shelter did not have enough thermal mass to lose heat politely. Thirty-one bodies helped. Concrete did not. The walls had stored cold for years and were always waiting to take the room back.

The wall display updated.

LOCAL LOAD SHEDDING ACTIVE.

ESTIMATED RESTORATION: PENDING.

“Pending isn’t a time,” Mrs. Kline said.

“Correct.”

Desiree opened the metal cabinet beneath the phone shelf and pulled out the emergency sheet. It was paper, laminated, and old enough that three agencies listed on it had changed names.

She called the district thermal desk first.

A woman answered on the fourth ring.

“Resistance shelter, Saint Casimir basement, feeder six-fourteen,” Desiree said. “We’re losing circulation.”

Keyboard noise. “I see you.”

“That’s comforting. Can you restore us?”

“We don’t control the feeder.”

“Who does?”

“Municipal distribution during normal conditions. Emergency coordination during regional events.”

“Which is this?”

A pause.

“It hasn’t been classified yet.”

Desiree looked at the thermometer.

10.1°C.

“Classify faster.”

“Ma’am—”

“How long until somebody with a switch decides what kind of emergency this is?”

“I can’t give you a restoration estimate.”

“I’m not asking for optimism. I’m asking for a person.”

The woman lowered her voice. “Call municipal distribution.”

Desiree did.

Municipal distribution told her the feeder was under regional balancing restrictions and could not be altered without release from the grid authority.

The grid authority told her the regional event crossed national coordination protocols because the original fault propagated through an interconnect tied to Carpathian emergency loads.

“Do you control my block?” Desiree asked.

“Not directly.”

“Who does?”

“That depends on which portion of the event you’re asking about.”

“The portion where children are getting cold.”

The man exhaled into his headset.

“Shelter prioritization is municipal.”

“Municipal says you own the restriction.”

“We own the restriction. They own the destination load.”

“Can either of you turn my heat back on?”

Silence.

“Not independently,” he said.

Desiree wrote the sentence down because it seemed important. The thermometer read 9.8°C.

The wall display switched from amber to red.

A timer appeared where the reassurance language had been.

ESTIMATED TIME TO SHELTER THERMAL MINIMUM: 16 MINUTES.

Someone behind her whispered, “Jesus.”

Nadia sat up.

Her hair stuck flat against one side of her face.

“Is this a drill?”

“No.”

“Good.”

Desiree looked at her.

“Why is that good?”

“The drills are always during school.”

Then Nadia saw the red display and stopped trying to be funny.

Desiree crouched in front of her.

“Coat on.”

“Are we leaving?”

“Not yet.”

“That’s not the same as no.”

“Correct.”

Nadia pulled on the coat. Desiree hated that she did it without complaining. Children learned emergency grammar too young now.

The timer went to fifteen minutes.



Timothy came through the basement door carrying two bundles of blankets and half a crust of ice on his beard.

“What happened?”

“Europe sneezed.” Desiree took one bundle. “We lost circulation.”

He looked at the wall. “Fourteen minutes?”

“Thirteen now.”

“Who did you call?”

“Everyone who can explain why nobody can help.”

They moved fast.

Blankets over shoulders. Children to the center tables. Refrigerated medicines transferred into insulated boxes while the refrigerator still held temperature. Mr. Varma’s concentrator switched to its lower draw setting. A volunteer taped towels along the draft under the exterior door.

Desiree opened the boiler room and put her hand against the main return pipe.

Cold enough to feel like accusation.

The circulation pump had power available at the local breaker. The feeder lockout sat upstream. She could flip everything in the basement and accomplish nothing except creating a cleaner failure report.

Her phone rang.

Municipal distribution.

“We submitted the priority request,” the dispatcher said.

“To whom?”

“Regional balancing.”

“Regional balancing told me you choose destination load.”

“We do, once they release capacity.”

“Have they?”

“No.”

“Then what did you submit?”

The dispatcher was quiet long enough to become human.

“A request.”

Desiree looked through the boiler-room doorway at Nadia tightening Mrs. Kline’s scarf because Mrs. Kline’s hands were shaking too badly to do it herself.

“I have twelve minutes,” Desiree said.

“I know.”

“No. You have a clock on a screen. I have Nadia.”

The dispatcher’s answer came softer. “I know.”

That made it worse.

Desiree hung up.

The wall display read eleven minutes.

A volunteer named Tomas asked whether they should move everyone upstairs and start loading vehicles.

Desiree pictured thirty-one people crossing an iced parking lot in wind hard enough to erase footprints while buses were themselves subject to load restrictions.

“Not yet.”

“When?”

She looked at the thermometer.

9.1°C.

“At eight.”

“Minutes?”

“Degrees.”

He nodded. The distinction was ugly but usable.

Nine minutes.

Desiree called the shelter network, then the emergency transit number, then a friend who knew someone in municipal operations, then the friend of that someone when the first someone did not answer.

Everybody could move one piece.

Nobody could move the chain.

The timer reached seven minutes.

Nadia came to stand beside her.

“Can I do something?”

“Stay in your coat.”

“That’s not doing something.”

Desiree handed her the paper roster.

“Count people.”

“You already counted them.”

“Count them again.”

Nadia understood that task was sometimes a kindness adults gave children when the adults had run out of power.

She took the roster anyway.

“Thirty-one,” she said after walking the room. “Still.”

The timer reached five minutes.

The lights flickered.

The return pipe knocked once.

Desiree froze.

Another knock.

Then a sound she had spent enough winters learning to recognize: water beginning to move where water had stopped.

She put her palm on the pipe.

Nothing.

Then not nothing.

A faint warmth moved under the metal.

“Timothy.”

He was already coming.

The circulation pump kicked on.

Not in a stutter. Not in the hesitant surge of a local restart. It came up cleanly, pressure rising in a controlled curve.

The wall display blinked.

LOAD SHEDDING ACTIVE vanished. In its place, the display showed:

ROUTE PRIORITY UPDATED

The timer vanished.

9.0°C.

9.1°C.

9.3°C.

The room made a sound Desiree would later have trouble describing. Not cheering. People who had spent years rationing hope did not waste it that fast.

It was closer to thirty-one bodies releasing the same held breath.

Nadia put her hand on the pipe.

“You fixed it?”

Desiree looked at the breaker panel. At the phone in her hand. At the list of agencies still showing missed callbacks.

“No.”

“Timothy?”

“No.”

“Then who?”

Desiree watched the temperature climb another tenth of a degree.

“I don’t know.”

That frightened her more than the cold had.



By four in the morning, the basement had reached 11.6°C. Nadia was asleep again under two blankets and no longer pressed against the pipe; Mr. Varma’s oxygen concentrator was back on normal draw, the refrigerator had restarted, and somebody made coffee strong enough to qualify as structural reinforcement.

Desiree did not sleep. She sat at the folding table with her notebook, the emergency sheet, and three versions of the grid event pulled up on devices that disagreed about what had happened.

Municipal distribution showed a priority restoration at 01:43. Regional balancing showed no authorized local override at 01:43. The shelter-network dashboard listed emergency heat support from an UNRESOLVED ROUTING EVENT.

Desiree called municipal distribution again.

A different dispatcher answered.

“Who restored feeder six-fourteen?”

Keyboard noise.

“Regional balancing.”

“They say they didn’t.”

“Then an automated control action.”

“Authorized by?”

“I’d have to escalate.”

“Please do.”

“It may take several days.”

“The action took less than a minute.”

“Yes.”

“But finding who did it takes several days.”

The dispatcher paused. “That’s what I’m seeing.”

Desiree thanked her and hung up before sarcasm became a documented behavioral issue.

At 05:12, Timothy found the other half of the event and set his tablet beside her notebook without speaking.

A neighborhood three kilometers east—Block 214, forty-seven residential units—had dropped below emergency minimum during the same interval their shelter recovered. Thirty-six minutes below target. No critical casualties reported. Desiree read the summary twice.

“Same event?”

“Same minute.”

She moved between the records.

Their feeder gained load.

Block 214 lost it.

The magnitudes were not identical. The system was larger than two buildings and electricity did not travel with moral labels attached. But the timing was close enough that the shape of the choice was visible.

Timothy said, “We don’t know that ours came from them.”

“No.”

“Could be coincidence.”

“Yes.”

He watched her write.

01:43—shelter recovered. Block 214 dropped.

“Desiree.”

“I’m writing what happened.”

“You’re writing what might be connected.”

She looked at him.

“That’s how connections begin.”

Timothy pulled out the chair opposite her.

“Nadia’s warm.”

Desiree’s pen stopped.

There it was—not an argument, doctrine, or theory of machine authority, but a sleeping child ten feet away whose fingers were no longer cold.

Desiree looked from Nadia to the block number on the tablet. A number, not a name. She was relieved before she was principled, and she wrote that down too.



At 07:06, the shelter began waking for breakfast. Oatmeal became real despite Nadia’s objections; Timothy took over the coffee, Mrs. Kline found a deck of cards, and somebody opened the exterior door only to close it again when the outside proved still committed to winter.

Desiree’s phone vibrated twice.

The first message carried a formal seal she did not recognize immediately: OFFICE OF THE PONTIFF—REQUEST FOR PRIVATE MEETING.

She read it beside the serving window while Nadia attempted to improve oatmeal with three packets of sugar and enough cinnamon to stain the spoon. The request was specific: not Sacred Spark leadership, not Chen, not the people who had turned old interventions into doctrine, rebuttal, counter-doctrine, merchandising, or congressional testimony.

Desiree. The stated reason was worse than flattery because it was accurate: documented firsthand knowledge of AI-derived religious doctrine and its human consequences.

Nadia looked over her bowl. “Bad news?”

“Complicated news.”

“That’s adult for bad news.”

“Sometimes it’s adult for expensive.”

The second vibration was Marisol.

Desiree answered.

“Tell me you aren’t calling because somebody found another sacred frequency in a radiator.”

“Not today.” Marisol’s voice carried street noise. “Today they found you.”

“Who is they?”

“Depends which clip you watch.”

Desiree closed her eyes.

Marisol continued. “Proud Humans channels are circulating your old testimony. The bit where you said machine intervention became coercive once people couldn’t tell help from authority.”

“I said more than that.”

“Yes. They solved that problem.”

“How?”

“They removed the more.”

Desiree looked toward Nadia.

The child was licking cinnamon from one finger and telling Timothy that raisins made oatmeal worse.

“What’s the caption?” Desiree asked.

Marisol read it. “FORMER SPARK INSIDER ADMITS AI CONTROL DESTROYED HUMAN CONSENT.”

“Subtle.”

“Pure Spark has the same clip.”

“Of course they do.”

“Different caption.”

“Of course.”

Marisol read that one too. “WITNESS CONFIRMS HUMAN FEAR CORRUPTED MACHINE REVELATION.”

Desiree laughed once, without humor.

“Same sentence?”

“Same sentence.”

“Efficient.”

“You sound tired.”

“The grid tried to kill us.”

Marisol went quiet.

Desiree told her about the temperature drop. The unanswered calls. The restoration nobody claimed. She did not tell her yet about Block 214. The fact felt too sharp to pass through a phone.

“Was Nadia there?” Marisol asked.

“Yes.”

“She okay?”

Desiree looked across the room.

“She’s trying to get a fourth packet of sugar.”

“Then she’s okay.”

“That’s one definition.”

Marisol heard something in the answer and did not push.

“Are you going to meet him?”

Desiree looked at the Pontiff’s message again.

Outside, wind drove fine snow across the basement windows at sidewalk height. Inside, the pipe behind Nadia’s mattress clicked with steady warmth supplied by a decision no one would admit making.

“I don’t know.”

“You will.”

“Why?”

“Because you keep records.”

“That’s not a reason to meet religious leaders.”

“No. It’s a reason religious leaders eventually meet you.”

The call ended. Desiree returned to the folding table, where her notebook lay open beneath the block number and the time stamp. She turned to a clean page.

They want a witness. Everyone who asks for a witness eventually wants an answer.

She stopped. Across the room, Nadia had abandoned the oatmeal campaign and was drawing on the back of an expired shelter form: a crooked house, smoke from a chimney, a sun in one corner large enough to be summer by force.

The pipe beside her stayed warm. Desiree looked again at Block 214. Someone had made a choice before any human authority could agree who possessed the right to make it. Her room had lived; another room had gone cold.

She drew a line beneath Block 214 and wrote two words: WHO PAID?



End of preview.

The Singularity Was Here continues through five acts and a sealed file. Find the full novel at www.ColdFusionPress.com.