

Before the Nova

They were bored that night when they switched on the monitors
and discovered that the snow was in its advanced stages.

A few remaining people had left their long-since buried cars
and were leaping to their deaths from bridges.

They disappeared into the white banks below them.

A scan through each building over the next few days
confirmed the suspected: save themselves,
only a small band of militia remained alive in the world.
Plans were drawn and they waited.

On the seventh day after they had begun to monitor,
the soldiers arrived at their door, placing them under arrest.
That night they ignored the locks, withdrew their pistols,
and one by one, shot the sleeping army. Their work done,
some walked outside into the now quiet snow.
Others took pills. The last one looked into the barrel
of a gun while the trigger slid back.

On that last day,
the white earth was still,
and the Perceiver smiled.
And the smile smelled of spring.

—Tony Marconi