

# New Poetry by D.R. James: “Stunned”



AND LINGERING SLUSH / image by  
Amalie Flynn

## **Stunned**

PANJWAI, Afghanistan – Stalking from home  
to home, a U. S. Army sergeant methodically  
killed at least 16 civilians, 9 of them children,  
...early on Sunday.

–*The New York Times*, March 11, 2012

Saffron daffodils three and four deep  
line the low-slung factory’s white-washed  
wall like spectators along a parade route

watching as we wander to an art exhibit.  
They have exploded three weeks early  
and seem surprised to see our passing,

their breeze-tossed faces long rows  
of ruffled 0’s aglow in the spotlight

of the daylight-saving sun. We all  
were stunned that mid-week morning  
several oddly mellow days ago to awaken  
to the Southwest desert's weather skewed  
toward winter Michigan, to children heading  
for school in T-shirts and plastic sandals,  
our spring relief reserved for late April  
arriving in force in early March. It's eerily  
just like summer, with highs near eighty,  
and as we walk I'm astounded by my body,  
how it knows to bully my sullen disposition  
*to get over it* as if I'd already survived  
the blizzards, shoveling, and lingering slush.  
But it's also spring break and warmer by  
fifteen degrees than Daytona or San Diego,  
and last Sunday, even across the ice-cold lake,  
short-sleeved Chicagoans shopped in droves,  
and tulips in the short-fenced beds beside  
the bus stops were already half-a-foot tall.  
In sympathy I've warned my Afghani students  
not to fall for this unseasonable withdrawal  
of the arctic's brutal jet-stream occupation,  
that they likely haven't seen the vicious last  
of what assaults us every winter, what  
most certainly will bewilder them once again.