

# Chez Jane

By Frank O'Hara

The white chocolate jar full of petals  
swills odds and ends around in a dizzying eye  
of four o'clocks now and to come. The tiger,  
marvellously striped and irritable, leaps  
on the table and without disturbing a hair  
of the flowers' breathless attention, pisses  
into the pot, right down its delicate spout.  
A whisper of steam goes up from that porcelain  
urethra. "Saint-Saëns!" it seems to be whispering,  
curling unerringly around the furry nuts  
of the terrible puss, who is mentally flexing.  
Ah be with me always, spirit of noisy  
contemplation in the studio, the Garden  
of Zoos, the eternally fixed afternoons!  
There, while music scratches its scrofulous  
stomach, the brute beast emerges and stands,  
clear and careful, knowing always the exact peril  
at this moment caressing his fangs with  
a tongue given wholly to luxurious usages;  
which only a moment before dropped aspirin  
in this sunset of roses, and now throws a chair  
in the air to aggravate the truly menacing.

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Source: The Collected Poems of Frank O'Hara (1995)



Frank O'Hara brought a refreshing new casualness and spontaneity to poetry, making deliriously funny and surprisingly moving verse out of everyday activities recounted in conversational tones. (What he called his "I do this I do that" poems often featured glimpses of his adored New York City or anecdotes about friends—most of whom were themselves poets or painters.) His brilliant career as a writer and art curator was cut tragically short by a freak dune buggy accident on Fire Island in New York.

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