

# Discussion with Pierre Bonnard's "Breakfast"

Jenny Chin

You are eating breakfast in a bright purple shirt. A vibrant, orange pitcher rests on the left corner of the tray, the color mirroring the contents inside. A shamrock-shaped leaf decorates the exterior of the pitcher in a lazy, nonchalant way. Below it, a glass cup lays on a dirty porcelain saucer. It needs to be cleaned, but your attention isn't there. Instead it's on your right hand, which is carefully spooning out some sugar for tea while your left hand is steadying the dark, burgundy cup. You hesitate after a few stirs. The tea is still too hot. But that's okay. You won't be drinking it anyway.

You are actually hanging on a wall. You are in a painting, attracting any willing and curious spectator in view. There is a balance of light and dark on you, as well as bold colors, with an emphasis on warm oranges on the left and cool blues on the right. There is no humor in you, despite the encouraging, rich chroma. You are very serious. Dusty brown hair covers your eyes. I can't fully see your expression, so I can only infer.

The table cloth beneath the tray is decorated with light lavender crosses on an orange tinted background. The tray has the same pattern, except it is made with languid white strokes. I almost thought the tray was part of the cloth but, alas, it was the work of careful repetition from the artist.

Your hair is almost swallowed up by the surrounding landscape. There are sneaky specks of orange and blue in the brown mass. I almost missed that on the first few cursory glances. To the left of your head, there are trees with intense flames of orange foliage that lick the horizon. Their only healing salve is the blue-green wave of tree trunks underneath, and the soothing pattern of white and blue spots on your right. Funny, there are complementary colors on the left and right sides of your head. Did you know that?

Did you know that even now I can barely see your right arm, a mysterious snaky-looking blob of reddish-purple with dark stripes? It has no outline like other shapes on you. It is merely there, masked as an illusion but somehow I know it's there. I can follow your purple shirt to make out your purple arm; such is the aptitude of our eyes.

There is an aura of mystery around you somehow. I'm always expecting you to do something else after that spoonful of sugar. You want to finish your narrative, don't you? So what will you do? Will you have to mop up the spill because you knocked your cup over? Or will you take care of that disturbing

bruise on the back of your left hand? Will you burn your tongue on the tea? Or will you find the juice in the pitcher a better choice instead?

Work Cited

<https://www.metmuseum.org/exhibitions/listings/2009/pierre-bonnard>

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