

Fate/ Brunch Date
By Angelus

Angelus overslept. It's not that he had any plans or obligations, but the Arctic Fox preferred to keep a strict schedule. It helped everything at Chadea run smoothly, or at least as smoothly as possible for a foundation tasked with maintaining the survival and longevity of humanity. This daunting task was precisely why Angelus slept in; the latest Singularity repair mission left him exhausted, and his body needed the extra sleep. He grumbled about it as he got out of bed, but the damage was done. Breakfast would have to be brunch instead.

He pulled on a baby blue button-up shirt which he tucked into a pair of grey dress pants. A belt cinched up his waist and a long, navy-blue tie graced his neckline. He sighed as he looked himself over in the mirror. The Singularity repair had taken several days, and in that time the teal blue bands and streaks dyed into his fur and hair had faded. It was a problem to sort out after food, much as he loathed going out looking any less than his best.

He took a deep breath and straightened his posture before departing his bedroom. The metal automatic door slid open to a bright and spacious hallway. The walls, floor, and ceiling were made of the same silvery-white metal as the rest of the common areas, and the cool overhead lighting gave everything the slightest of blue glows. A little natural light filtered in through wide windows down the hall, but the snowfall outside clouded much of the Arctic sunlight.

"You overslept." A stern voice greeted Angelus as soon as the door to his room closed behind him. It was the corrupted King of Knights, Artoria Alter. She spoke without opening her eyes or even moving to face him. She stood beside him in a dress that was such a deep purple it was almost black. White embroidery trimmed the hems of the sleeves and dress, and the delicate nature of the work belied the raw power that Alter possessed.

"I know. My apologies, Alter. I hope you haven't been waiting for me all this time." He turned to face her, having to tip his gaze down just a bit due to their height difference. He was about a head taller than her.

"No, I only recently returned to see if you had awoken. Upon realizing that you were not going to wake up in time, I sought breakfast on my own." She opened one eye and fixed her cold, golden gaze on Angelus' face. "The Dragon Witch joined me, which soured my appetite. You'll have to make this up to me at dinner."

Angelus nodded. "Of course. And sorry again."

"Hmph." Alter turned and departed. "Apologies are meaningless. Show me that you mean it, and I may yet forgive you."

Angelus couldn't help but smile. Artoria Alter was impossibly stern and serious, but she was also one of the first Servants to answer his call for aid so many years ago. She had become something of his personal bodyguard in that time, opting to accompany him almost anywhere to ensure his safety.

Of course, her protection wouldn't be needed in the cafeteria, so she went her own way while Angelus walked down the hall to the cafeteria. It was quieter than he was used to. Typically the hallways would be filled with Servants and staff making their way to breakfast, but now that it was past ten in the morning, there were only stragglers like himself.

The cafeteria was also unusually empty. There was usually a flurry of activity, the seats would be filled to overflowing, and it would be loud enough that it could be hard to think. At this hour though, most of the tables were empty. In one corner table, the famous writers appeared to have emerged from the library for coffee and bagels. At another table, a pair of Round Table knights were having a discussion of siege tactics with heroes of Troy. The table that caught Angelus' attention hosted but a single Servant and a stack of plates already four high and climbing. Angelus took a deep breath and approached, taking a seat across from the grey-furred wolf who was working through his fifth plate of breakfast food.

"Good morning Patxi. Do you mind if I join you?"

The wolf looked up from his food and hastily swallowed the mouthful he was working on. "Ulp-! Good morning, Master. You're welcome to join me, but uh, I don't usually see you here this late do I?" Patxi spoke between bites as he poked at his chicken fried steak with a fork and knife. He was wearing relaxed slacks and a zipped-up Chaldea Standard Issue jacket, though it was stretched a bit around his stomach.

"Not usually, no. I must have been exhausted from that Singularity." He rubbed the side of his head with one hand.

"I'll bet. We were there for, what, a week? I got back from that absolutely starving. Er, more than usual." Patxi set his fifth plate on top of the stack of dirty plates. His long and fluffy white hair fell forward over his shoulder, prompting him to push it back.

"A week and a day, and it shows. Just look at me. My color is fading." Angelus made an exasperated face and held up his arms, showing Patxi that the teal-blue bands that usually separated his white fur from his black-furred extremities were all but gone.

"Whoa." Patxi leaned forward to get a closer look. "I haven't seen you like this since..."

"The Chinese Lostbelt?"

"On, no, that was much worse. I don't think that counts, you were almost poisoned to death. I was going to say Scandinavia."

Angelus chuckled. "Fair, fair. We both had our fur burned half off that time."

Patxi snorted. "And you summoned ME to the front lines to fight that fire giant. How do you think I felt about that?" His tone was accusing, but he was grinning.

"What can I say, Archer beats Saber after all." Angelus smirked.

There was a pause as they reminisced. Patxi was the first to break the silence again. "So, I was going to get another serving. If you haven't eaten yet, you should get something too. Tamamo is cooking right now." Patxi got up from the table and gestured for Angelus to follow.

"Cat, you mean?" Angelus had the image of a fox girl in a roller skate diner outfit in his head, along with the out-of-place "Woof!" that was her catchphrase.

"Nope, the uh... normal? One?" Patxi wasn't quite sure how to differentiate the two. "Uh, Caster. Tamamo Caster."

"Oh, that's rare. She doesn't usually cook." Angelus and Patxi stepped up to the counter. Patxi was right. The woman working the stove had the ears and tails of a kitsune, and was dressed in plain white clothes and a bright blue apron. Angelus was used to seeing her in a gorgeous blue and billowing shrine maiden outfit, though such attire would not be kitchen safe. Her long, pinkish-orange hair was also tied back into a neat ponytail to keep it out of the way, and the hairstyle made her ears more prominent. "Good morning Tamamo, it's nice to see you here."

Tamamo's ears flicked and she turned to greet Angelus with a smile. "Well good morning my sleepy husband!" The kitsune woman had insisted on referring to Angelus as her husband from the moment she was summoned. Angelus pushed back initially, but Tamamo eventually won the battle of attrition. "Did that mean old Singularity take all the pep out of your step?"

Angelus shook his head, but he was smiling. "You were there, I think you're well aware of the answer."

"That's right, I am!" she boasted. "And that's why I've been busy preparing your favorite since the moment you stepped through the cafeteria door. Ta-dah!" She presented the brunch she had prepared with a flourish: slices of thick French toast covered in butter and syrup, paired with sausage links and bacon strips.

Angelus' stomach growled as soon as it saw it. "Ah- Thank you Tamamo. Your performance is as flawless as I would expect." He took the plate from her and tried to stifle his swaying tail.

"You're welcome. And for you, little Yaga~" Tamamo presented a second plate of french toast and meat to Patxi, though his plate was heavier on the meat.

"Oh, thanks. That looks great!" Patxi gave her a toothy smile and let his tail wag freely.

Tamamo winked at him and gave a bright but sly smile. "My pleasure. Now you two go take a seat and I'll bring you your drinks in a moment." Her twin tails flicked as she turned back to her work.

"Appreciated! Do you wanna join me, Master?" Patxi was trying to play it cool, but his ears were perked up and his bright eyes almost seemed to glow.

Angelus nodded. "We were already at the same table, so I think it goes without saying. But yes, I'll join you."

The fox and the wolf returned to their table, sitting across from one another again. Their conversation went quiet as they both dug into their brunch. Angelus handled a knife and fork, cutting bites out of his french toast before neatly popping them into his mouth one at a time. On the other hand, Patxi was jabbing his fork into his food and stuffing his cheeks full before roughly chewing and quickly swallowing... At least until he eyed how Angelus was eating. He reached for his butter knife and handled it awkwardly in his clawed hands as he tried to copy Angelus.

Angelus almost giggled as he looked up to see Patxi cutting through his sausage like he was planning to saw through the plate and table alike. "You can eat however you like you know."

Patxi froze, now aware that Angelus was watching him. And evaluating him. And probably judging him. "Urk. B-but, you always do everything so fancy! I don't want to embarrass you." His ears and shoulders slouched.

"Pffttt." Angelus couldn't hold back a sputtering laugh. "I guess you've never happened by the cafeteria when I'm having lunch with Artoria Alter?"

Patxi cast his gaze up and away as he tried to recall if he'd ever witnessed that. "I don't think so."

"Ah. Let's suffice to say that the way she devours cheeseburgers makes your eating habits look tame. Something about junk food just brings out the dragon in her. Don't tell her that though."

Patxi blinked in disbelief. "No way, really? But she's so stern and... scary. I feel like I'm gonna die every time she looks at me."

"She *is* stern and scary, but there's more to her than that. It just takes some time to get to know her."

"Kinda like you?"

Angelus raised a brow. "What, do you think *I'm* stern and scary?"

Patxi shook his head. "I did when we met back in Russia, but I know you better now. You are still pretty serious about everything though. You always dress nice, you're well-mannered, you always try to stay calm, and you're really handsome. Er-" He blew through that last statement and only hesitated after he had said it.

It caught Angelus off-guard, and he sputtered, but neither of them had a chance to get a word in before Tamamo appeared at the table.

"Sorry for the wait you two!" She set two large coffees down for the pair of them. Angelus was given a cappuccino that had a Mirror of Amaterasu design in the milk foam. Patxi meanwhile had a tall Americano that was on the strong side.

"Thanks!" Patxi took a big gulp, unbothered by the heat of the drink.

Angelus took a small sip of his and set the cup back down. "Thank you Tamamo. I have to ask though, you usually avoid the kitchen so you don't have to deal with Cat. Why cook today?"

"Oh, let's just say I had a feeling that you two," she tilted her head toward Patxi as her ears flicked, "would be having brunch together today, and I wanted to help things along."

"Help... things?" Angelus furrowed his brow and tilted his head. "What do you mean by that?"

"Goodness~" Tamamo stood up straight and put one hand on her hip as her tails bobbed behind her. "So many questions over a little meal, Master," she gave a fake pout. Angelus suddenly felt his fur stand on end, but he realized her scheming too late. "Is there something wrong with me making breakfast for my husband and his boyfriend~?"

Angelus shot up from his seat. A pink blush glowed beneath his white fur, and he turned his back to the breakfast table to hide it. "I have to go. Please excuse me."

Before he could move to leave, Tamamo grasped his shoulder, turned him back to face the table, and pushed him back down onto the cafeteria bench.

"Oh don't you worry, I can take care of anything that needs doing. You best sit here and finish your food. If you waste any, you may be subject to a kitsune's curse!" She said that in a cheery tone, but Angelus felt that she may just be telling the truth. He sat, rooted to his chair and blushing furiously, trying to relax.

"What was that all about?" Patxi muttered around a mouthful of food as he continued to try and cut it with his knife. He was staring intently at his meal as he tried to emulate the cutting technique he observed Angelus using, and it was clear that this act was taking most of his concentration. "She said something about you having a boyfriend? And you haven't introduced me to him?" The Yaga said in a state of utter obliviousness.

Patxi's thick skull was Angelus' saving grace this morning. "Don't listen to her. I don't have a boyfriend," he huffed, looking away from Patxi.

"Ooohh, is that kinda like how she calls you her husband but you're not *actually* her husband?" He set his utensils down and stopped eating to look at Angelus, which only made the fox tense again.

"S-something like that, probably, yeah."

"That makes sense. I mean, you have a girlfriend anyway, right?" Patxi's ears perked up to listen with more intent.

"What?" Angelus snapped back to attention, looking directly at Patxi with an intense expression.

"Well yeah, you and Alter are together, right? You're basically inseparable." Patxi pointed his fork at Angelus to emphasize his claim.

Angelus stared dead ahead as he came to a horrifying revelation.

Patxi thought he was straight.

He cleared his throat to buy a moment to collect his thoughts. "Eh-hem. Alter and I are close, but we're not dating. I have great respect for her and lean on her strength perhaps a bit more often than I would like, but our feelings are platonic. She's more of a friend slash bodyguard."

Patxi sat up straighter, making himself ever so slightly taller. "That so? Huh. So who are you dating then?"

"N-no one." Angelus grumbled.

Patxi's bright blue eyes widened and he leaned forward. "Really? How could someone like you still be single? You're amazing and handsome and-" Patxi stopped mid-sentence and his face lit up red. "A-and uh, you've literally saved the entire world. Several times. As if you needed to add to your list of accolades." Now he was the one avoiding eye contact as if that hid the way he was now fidgeting and wiggling.

"It's... ah-" Angelus took a deep breath. He could still hear Tamamo's teasing tone in his head. My husband's boyfriend~ "Sheesh... You're handsome too." He spoke quickly, getting the words out as fast as he could.

Patxi's fluffy tail started wagging so fast Angelus could hear it whapping against the cafeteria bench. "O-oh, thanks! Er, so I gotta ask, does that mean you're not-"

"No Patxi, I am NOT straight." Angelus sounded indignant over the very possibility he could be mistaken for it.

"In that case, uh..." Patxi swallowed. "Would you, uhm..."

Angelus felt his eyes widen in spite of himself. His heart beat faster, and he resisted the urge to pant as his skin grew hot. He wasn't ready for this. He absolutely, one hundred percent, wasn't ready for things to escalate here, all over the course of a single, fateful brunch.

"Would you want to hang out more? We could start doing lunch together, or something." It was an innocent, harmless question. A simple request. But the fox and the wolf both knew exactly what the real meaning behind that question was.

"I..." Angelus felt a wave of relief wash over him. This he could do. "I would like that. Very much."

The two shared a smile, and they proceeded to finish their now lukewarm brunch together.

“Lady Tamamo.” Artoria Alter awaited the kitsune at the kitchen exit door and caught her on the way out. “I trust things went well?”

Tamamo removed her apron and tossed it into a laundry bin, leaving her in a drab white chef's outfit. “But of course. Setting up two lovebirds for success is trivial when they've been circling and courting one another the way those two have been. Really, Miss Alter, you should try and give me a more challenging pairing next time~” Tamamo cooed as she pulled her hair tie out and let her hair fall free.

“Hmph. I do not do this for entertainment, kitsune woman. I do it for Master's benefit, and I would hope your motivations are the same.” Her voice was unwavering and serious.

Tamamo frowned. “I forget that you're not half as fun as your other self. But yes, though I may make a game of it, I assure you I took the work seriously and truly believe that this is for the best. I wouldn't have helped you otherwise.” She collected herself and gave Alter a smile.

“Thanks for setting this up, everything went exactly as you predicted.”

“It was trivial. Master is a man of consistency and reliability. Anyone observing his habits over time could have engineered that situation.”

“Then it's a good thing you've been with him so long, hmm? You serve him better than any of us, and I don't say that lightly. After all, I'm right here~” Tamamo chuckled at her own joke.

Alter didn't even smirk. “It is our duty as Servants. On that accord, I thank you for doing your duty in assisting me with this matter. I require nothing further.” Without so much as a nod of assent, she walked away.

Tamamo watched her go and waited until she disappeared around a corner to peek back in through the kitchen door. Angelus and Patxi were just finishing their food, and the pair of them looked brighter together than ever before.