

# THE FRATER

(Shatei)

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Younger Brother

Friend

Older Brother

YOUNGER BROTHER        I am a resident of this neighborhood. I have an older brother, and whenever I go to visit, instead of calling me by the name I have, he always says, "Welcome, Frater!" and Frater this and Frater that. I have no idea whether this word Frater has a good or a bad meaning. There is one near here who always looks after me. I have decided to visit him and question him about this matter. I must hurry on my way. Truly, I do hope he is at home, for if only he is at home, I am certain he will instruct me well on this matter. Well, here I am already. First I will announce myself. Hello in there. Is anybody home?

FRIEND    Someone is at the door. Who is there?

YOUNGER BROTHER    It is I.

FRIEND    Oh, Somebody (Using the name of the actor playing YOUNGER BROTHER.) What have you come to visit me about?

YOUNGER BROTHER    The matter about which I have

come at this time is of no great import. You know my older brother, do you not?

FRIEND Your older brother is Somebody (Using the name of the actor playing OLDER BROTHER)> What about him?

YOUNGER BROTHER Whenever I go visit this older brother of mine, instead of calling me by the name I have, he always says, "Welcome, Frater!" and Frater this and Frater that. I have no idea whether this word Frater has a good or a bad meaning. Please teach me what it means.

FRIEND Well, I must say, you speak of a most difficult thing. It is not the sort of thing that one has memorized by heart. I remember writing it down on the corner of something or other. I will go have a look. Wait right there for a while.

YOUNGER BROTHER With all my heart.

FRIEND (Aside.) What is this? The world is indeed full of fools. And this one has come to me to learn the meaning of the word Frater. I'll just give him a good ribbing and send him on his way. (To YOUNGER BROTHER.) I say, I say. Are you there?

YOUNGER BROTHER I am right here.

FRIEND I went and had a look, and I found that Frater has a meaning that I find a bit difficult to explain to your face.

YOUNGER BROTHER You've got me worried. Please come right out and say it.

FRIEND If you promise not to go to your brother's

place and have it out with him, I will tell you, but if you intend to go and have it out with him, I will not tell you.

YOUNGER BROTHER     Why, I most certainly will not go to my brother's place and have it out with him. Please do come right out and say it.

FRIEND     If that is the case, I will tell it to you. To begin with, concerning the meaning of this word Frater, one who sneaks in unannounced to take things from others without paying for them is known as a Frater.

YOUNGER BROTHER     Then, is not that something very like a thief?

FRIEND     Indeed it is the sort of word they use in China for a thief.

YOUNGER BROTHER     Well, I must say, that makes me most angry. While other people may well say a thing like that about someone, how can my older brother who is supposed to think well of me give me such an awful name as that?!

FRIEND     Just look at that. Even right here you are speaking in this manner. You must most certainly not go to your brother's place and have it out with him about this.

YOUNGER BROTHER     Oh, no, never. While I am indeed speaking in this manner here, I will certainly not go to my older brother's place and have it out with him.

FRIEND     That is good to know.

YOUNGER BROTHER     I must be on my way.

FRIEND     Are you going already?

YOUNGER BROTHER Most certainly.

FRIEND It was good of you to come.

YOUNGER BROTHER Ha.

(The FRIEND exits.)

YOUNGER BROTHER (Going on his way.) Oh, I must say, how angry I am, how angry I am. How can I leave this matter as it is without having it out? Up to this time, I have been called Frater, not knowing that it meant thief. Never has there ever been anything so vexing. Well, here I am already. I say, I say. Older Brother, are you there?

OLDER BROTHER I hear Frater's voice at the door. Hey, Frater, I am happy you have come.

YOUNGER BROTHER So you are calling me Frater, are you?

OLDER BROTHER Well, you are in a most ill humor. Have you been fighting in the streets?

YOUNGER BROTHER I am not the sort of person who fights in the streets.

OLDER BROTHER Well then, are you drunk on wine?

YOUNGER BROTHER How could one who never drinks wine be drunk on it?

OLDER BROTHER But you are in a most ill humor.

YOUNGER BROTHER Of course I am in ill humor. Up to this time, I have been called Frater by you, not knowing that it meant thief. But as I have found out its meaning, I will not put up with being called that anymore.

OLDER BROTHER Well, it appears that you still do

not know the meaning of Frater. As you do not know it, I will tell it to you. To begin with, we call our father Pater, and our mother Mater. In the same vein, older brothers are called Frater Senior and younger brothers are called Frater Junior. That is why I call you Frater. So what is wrong with that?

YOUNGER BROTHER        It matter not at all to me whether you call father Pater or Potater, nor mother Mater or Alma-Mater. But I have never ever Fratered in my life. It is you yourself who frequently Frater.

OLDER BROTHER        Then just what it is you think Frater means?

YOUNGER BROTHER        If I tell you, you will be ashamed.

OLDER BROTHER        I have nothing at all to be ashamed of. If I have, just tell me what it is.

YOUNGER BROTHER        In that case, I will tell you. Just this other day, you stole a spotted cow from the neighboring village, painted its white parts black, and took it to the market in another village and sold it. Where I come from, that is what we call a Spotted and a Painted Frater.

OLDER BROTHER        If that is the case, there was a time when you also Fratered.

YOUNGER BROTHER        When did I ever Frater?

OLDER BROTHER        It was just the other day to you Fratered some rice that had been put out in the riverbed to dry. Where I come from, that is what we call a Riverbed and a Rice Frater.

YOUNGER BROTHER There is still more that you did.

OLDER BROTHER If there is, just say it.

YOUNGER BROTHER How could I not say it. Just the other day when we were served some strong tea at a party, you praised the teacup, and then Fratered it right into your pocket. Where I come from, we call that a Teacup Frater.

OLDER BROTHER That was such a fine teacup that I asked for it and it was given to me.

YOUNGER BROTHER You say you asked for it and it was given to you? Then then for what reason did they call you back and take it away from you? (He laughs.)

OLDER BROTHER You worthless rascal! The more I let you talk the more you speak pure nonsense. (He grabs YOUNGER BROTHER and throws him to the ground.) This is what's good for a rascal like you.

YOUNGER BROTHER Though you are my older brother, I will not let you beat me. This is what's good for the likes of you! (He grabs OLDER BROTHER and throws him to the ground, and goes off.) I won, I won! I won, I won! I won, I won!

OLDER BROTHER (He gets to his feet.) Hey, hey! Treating your older brother in such a manner will bring you no good in the future. (He chases out after YOUNGER BROTHER.) I'll catch you yet, I'll catch you yet! I'll catch you yet, I'll catch you yet! I'll catch you yet, I'll catch you yet!