

# Forerunner

by Ulrike

The apple never falls far from the tree or .....





*Dear Catherine, little brother,*

*I hope you all are well. I'm fine. Time has passed quickly, so this is my apology for this tardy letter. I hope I can compensate for the delay with an interesting story I read recently. I attach some photos.*

*The French newspaper "Le Monde" reported an extraordinary weather phenomenon, which occurred in the French Alps, which created bloody snow. So I thought it must be a trick, miracle, murder case, horror story, vampire, tourist come-on, or pollution - or whatever. Anyway, I was curious about the cause and started some research.*

*There is an ominous superstition surrounding such phenomena. Of course it's complete nonsense!*

*There are two varieties of it, one appears as a pink to crimson colour, the other is yellowish-brown. Both were traced to natural causes.*

*Could the red colour be caused by fleas? No. The color change is caused by green algae, which are also called snow or blood algae. The green color of algae, when exposed to strong light and UV radiation, become red pigments and thereby serves as a sunscreen.*

*I don't know about the sun protection factor, but not only glaciers and high altitude snowfields can discolor red. Even lakes show this phenomenon.*

*The second variety is thrilling too. It originated in Sahara sand. A strong warm wind, which is called a "Sirocco", transported the fine sand from the North African desert along the Mediterranean Sea northwards. Did you know, that the Sahara is as big as the States? Sahara dust in the air is often seen, even in Central Europe.*

*The phenomenon needs a strong southerly current. Storms in North Africa then swirl huge clouds of dust up into higher layers. From there, it drives a strong southerly drift to the*

*north. However, most of it falls into the Mediterranean Sea. Only the finest dust passes through the Alps, staining the snow surface orange brown and also making the sky milky. But not only the alpine mountain areas are affected. Even in the lowlands, the phenomenon is well known and annoying to car owners. There it appears as bloody rain.*

*I hope that's enough entertainment, for now.*

*Be all well.*

*Lots of love to all of you and especially to Father as well.*

*Devin*

“Are you sure, that the author of this letter is really Devin?” Catherine asking in surprise, after she read the letter.

Vincent, who had been watching her as she read, grinned like a Cheshire cat.

“Yes, it seems so, look at the envelope,” he answered, amused.

“So... uh.... Astonishingly, I have no words. Devin is always good for a surprise,” Catherine remarked with a shake of her head. “What do think? Should we share this letter with the rest of the community?”

“Yes, I think that would be a wonderful idea,” Vincent replied, enfolding her in his arms. “We can announce it at supper and then afterwards all who are interested can gather in Father's chamber.

“Let's do it this way. I want to see their facial expressions,” Catherine suggested with a sly smile, as she explained.

Some days later a small group of adults, accompanied by most of the children, gathered in Father's chamber, being anxious to know more about this mysterious announcement from Vincent.

“Father, would you do us the pleasure of reciting Devin's letter, which he addressed to Catherine?” Vincent asked with an innocent look.

“A letter from Devin,” Father echoed and for a very short moment his face mirrored his conflicting emotions. He was thrown into turmoil, caught between a sense of foreboding and paternal pride. So he gave Vincent a look of inquiry, which was answered with a subtle shrug. Of course, the relationship between father and son had improved, but there was always a nagging inner voice.

“Uh,... yes of course, if you think.....” Father focused on the letter and started to read aloud. The longer he read, the greater his paternal pride. When he had finished his declamation, he folded the letter and thought happily, “My son.”

“So they adopted the name of a car model and named a wind after it? Interesting.” Kipper commented aloud into the silence.

The adults looked questioningly at the boy.

“There is a car called “Scirocco”. It's part of my car card game,” he explained proudly, enjoying that all the attention was focused on him.” VW is building it, and it's very stylish, I tell you.”



The whole group bursted out laughing.

Father regained his composure and went to Kipper and put his arm around the boy.

“Can you imagine that it could have happened the other way around? Will you show me the card because ...” he bent over to Kipper and whispered in his ear,” I don't know anything about the car, but this must be our secret. Okay?”

Kipper nodded and started to rummage around for the game box in his trouser pockets. As he found the box, he browsed through the cards, and searched for the correct card.

“Uh,... here, I got it. Look Father, isn't it stylish? Don't worry, this is a European version of the card game, so there are some odd units,” Kipper explained, handing the card over to Father.



While this was going on, the group melted away, until only Father, Kipper, Catherine and Vincent remained.

“Uh,.... Kipper, I'm deeply impressed and it's so interesting. You are right. Thank you very much for your help,” Father praised the boy, ruffling with his hand through the boy's hair.

As Kipper now left the group, he seemed to burst with pride. The others stayed and enjoyed some cups of tea.

“I can't tell you how much Devin surprised me. This precise scientific report... and of course it couldn't be an indication of things to come,” Father said, dwelling on this thought.

“You have more in common than you considered possible,” Vincent added, touching his hand and squeezing it gently. He gave him a warm smile.

Father looked up in surprise und nodded.

Catherine and Vincent exchanged glances. They wanted to give Father time to come to terms with his emotions.

So Catherine gave a big yawn. “My apologies, but it's been a long day. I think, it's time for me to call it a day. I'll leave the letter with you. Sleep well, Father,” she said, rising and giving Father a gentle kiss on his forehead.

“I'll accompany you,” Vincent added. He squeezed Father's hand again, “Good night and sleep well.”

Father answered by reciprocating the squeeze of Vincent's hand accompanied by a grateful look.

“Good night, sleep well and ... thank you,” he replied, musing.

Catherine and Vincent walked out silently, hand in hand, their bond floating with all these emotions, the evening had created.

But in one big point, they sang from the same hymnal: Like father, like son.

<http://www.weatheronline.de/reports/wind/The-Sirocco.htm>

<http://www.algaeobserver.com/blutschnee-schneعالgen-mikroalgen>

<http://www.wetteronline.de/fotostrecken/2014-02-24-sa?part=single>

<http://www.noz.de/deutschland-welt/gut-zu-wissen/artikel/694771/blutregen-kommt-am-freitag-nach-deutschland>

<http://www.volkswagen-classic.de/modelle/scirocco-2>

[http://i.ebayimg.com/00/s/MTlwMFgxNjAw/z/MzcAAOSwZd1VYbyL/\\$\\_1.JPG](http://i.ebayimg.com/00/s/MTlwMFgxNjAw/z/MzcAAOSwZd1VYbyL/$_1.JPG)