

RST Analyses from the RST web site (www.sfu.ca/rst)

The Sparky Text

This little text is the main body of an advertisement for V8 vegetable juice. It is notable for the extreme feat of **imagination** that it requires in order to see it as **coherent**. It is also notable for the lack of cohesive signals, especially that there is no clear signal of cause.

The text is addressed to "you." So you must imagine, possibly against personal reality, that:

1. As a child, you had a pet;
2. the pet was named "Sparky;"
3. you threw vegetables under the table (presumably to avoid eating them);
4. Sparky ate them;
5. Eating the vegetables affected Sparky's health.

The reader's search for coherence leads to a kind of assertion, in RST terms a Relational Proposition.

Cause

The notion that the vegetables caused Sparky to live a long time relies on a generalization that *eating vegetables tends to cause longevity*. It is implicit and defeasible (deniable). It would probably be illegal to make it explicit, because that would be a medical claim, and medical claims are regulated by law. Legal aspects are probably enough of a threat that they are the likely reason for including the fine print disavowal of the claim (see second image.)

Preparation

The text also illustrates how a background photo can function in a preparatory way, just as the title of a paper does. Without the photo as a leading preparation, the search for coherence might tend to fail.

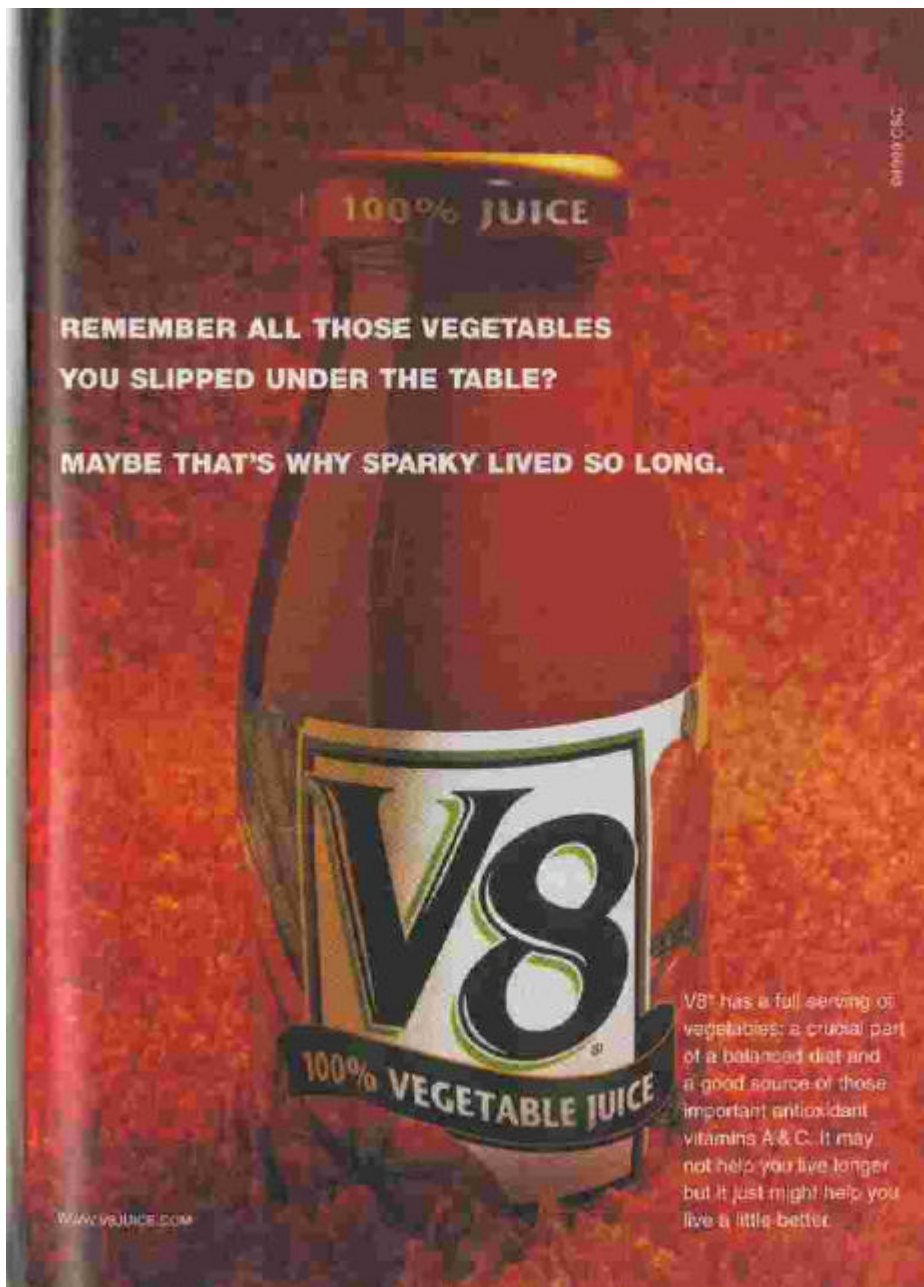
Fiction

It is interesting to consider how this sort of text is related to fiction. Certainly, for the advertiser's purposes, the assertion of cause does not belong entirely to the imagined world created by the reader. It must also affect the world in which the reader buys groceries. So, this is more like a parable than it is like a fictional drama.

The text:

- 1) BACKGROUND: PHOTO OF A V8 VEGETABLE JUICE BOTTLE.
- 2) REMEMBER ALL THOSE VEGETABLES YOU SLIPPED UNDER THE TABLE?
- 3) MAYBE THAT'S WHY SPARKY LIVED SO LONG.
- 4) advertisement in Reader's Digest, September 1999, p. 143.

The text as it appeared:



100% JUICE

REMEMBER ALL THOSE VEGETABLES
YOU SLIPPED UNDER THE TABLE?
MAYBE THAT'S WHY SPARKY LIVED SO LONG.

V8[®]

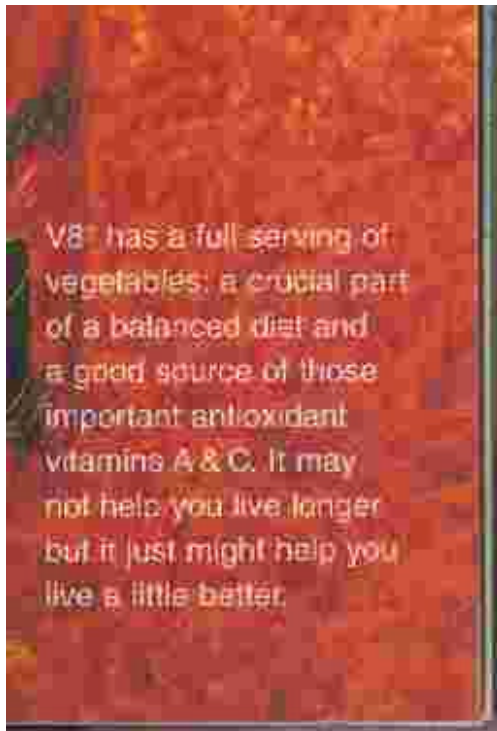
100% VEGETABLE JUICE

V8[®] has a full serving of vegetables, a crucial part of a balanced diet and a good source of those important antioxidant vitamins A & C. It may not help you live longer but it just might help you live a little better.

www.v8juice.com

©2009 CFC

Here is the fine print:



The analysis:

