

Alcoholic beverage and scott russell sanders

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Analysis of "Under the Influence" by Scott Russell Sanders

Scott Russell Sanders' narrative essay "Under the Influence" is a piece about his experiences with his alcoholic father. To describe these experiences, Sanders uses animalistic diction, asyndeton, and explains how his father's disease creates insecurities in himself. Sanders' purpose is to describe life with an alcoholic in order to demonstrate the effects and devastation in correlation with the "disease". Using negative connotation, Sanders creates animal-like characteristics when writing about this father's illness. Sanders reminisces about this childhood when he would "tiptoe past [his father], as past a snoring dragon"(59); he is portraying his father as a creature known for being a giant, angry, fire breathing monster. While intoxicated, people are often referred to as having "dragon's breath", which is why Sanders chooses a dragon over any other monster or creature. When Sanders' father argues with his mother, "he snarls back, she yells, he growls" (59); this gives the father traits of an animal showing that his disease is dehumanizing and turning him into a monster when he drinks. In addition, Sanders' gives his father animalistic qualities in contrast to his mother. His mother would regularly address the father's alcohol problem which would lead to an argument in which the father would "grunt" and "snarl" while the mother "yells". This implies the father is an animal while the mother still has human qualities. The disease of alcoholism not only destroys the father, but also places several insecurities inside Sanders himself. Sanders feels that maybe if he "[earned] A's in school, [won] baseball games, [or fixed] the broken washer" (59), it would take away the "ache that gnaws" at this father. Seeing his father drink as a child, Sanders feels that it is his fault that his

father drinks as much as he does, because he is not the great son every father dreams of having. Sanders also recognizes that he is more likely to become an alcoholic and shies away from “nightclubs, from bars, from parties where the solvent is alcohol” (68). He is reluctant to drink alcohol because he is insecure about his ability to resist acquiring the “illness” (“...a glass of wine, a can of beer, nothing stronger, nothing more. I listen for the turning of a key in my brain.”); since statistics show that since his father is an alcoholic, the disease is contagious. Using asyndeton, Sanders shows how certain memories are stronger than others. When using the asyndeton, (“our father prowls the house, thumping into furniture, rummaging in the kitchen, slamming doors...”)(59), it gives the effect that these memories are often repeated over a long period of time and he remembers vividly, this technique gives a tone that Sanders is annoyed and somewhat depressed with the effects of his father’s drinking. If these memories were frequently happening, Sanders probably became annoyed of seeing his father under the influence and going through the same routine everyday, and becoming depressed knowing that there is something wrong with his father and that he is hurting from his illness. These strategies give us a deeper understanding of the life of an alcoholic and how it not only destroys the one with the disease, but the people around them. If you were Sanders, how well should your shining armor stand against the dragon of alcoholism?