MILK OUTSIDE A BAG OF MILK OUTSIDE A BAG OF MILK

Kryukov, N. (2021). *Milk Outside a Bag of Milk Outside a Bag of Milk* [Digital game]. N. Kryukov.

Samuel Draxler

The game entitled *Milk Outside a Bag of Milk Outside a Bag of Milk* was released on December 16, 2021, by a small team centralised around the head developer Nikita Kryukov. The game is a sequel title, and it is set in the aftermath of its predecessor, known as *Milk Inside a Bag of Milk Inside a Bag of Milk* (Kryukov, 2020). In the initial game, the player assumes the role of the inner voice of the main character, who is referred to in the community as 'the Girl' or 'Milk-chan' (without any official name), in this text called the Girl.

The primary objective of the first game is to proceed to a supermarket and purchase milk. This simple task is made complicated by her insecurities and mental illnesses. Within the narrative, the protagonist, known as the Girl, encounters individuals who are depicted as monsters, and there is a pervasive presence of abstract beings who are observing her. Consequently, it becomes necessary to instil in her the belief that she did not witness any of these events. Should an attempt be made to do so in a degrading manner, it is inevitable that the game will reach one of its conclusions (Shellding, 2022), with the result that the Girl will experience a mental breakdown and say, "Looks like 'Player' doesn't help me at all". It is evident that the only method of achieving the true ending is to be compassionate and by extension, compel her to perform specific actions.

A preliminary analysis of the visual components of the game and the interaction between the character, referred to as the Girl, and the player, suggests that the character may be suffering from brief psychotic disorder or schizophrenia, as defined by the American Psychiatric Association. The potential inclusion of bipolar disorder within the character's context is also a possibility (American Psychiatric Association, 2013). It should be noted that the theme of mental health is not unique within the horror gaming genre. Examples of such games include *Night in the Woods* (Infinite Fall, 2017), which focuses on depression among the younger generation, and *Hellblade: Senua's Sacrifice* (Ninja Theory, 2017), an attempt to depict schizophrenia in the most authentic way (Licardi, 2023). This 'trend' is also gaining traction within the AAA scene, as evidenced by, for instance, by the game *Silent Hill 2* (Bloober Team, 2024).

As the game is relatively brief, it is challenging to ascertain with certainty which mental disorders the character is afflicted with. The symptoms that can be observed in the first instance are as follows: hallucinations, delusions and disorganised speech, which are prevalent in both definitions.

Hallucinations manifest themselves as both visual and auditory phenomena, with visual hallucinations typically depicted as abstract images, such as hallways within a supermarket, or as grotesque monsters that defy rational comprehension. With regard to the auditory hallucinations, the player serves as the optimal instance of this phenomenon, given that communication is established with the character through multiple choice windows. In relation to the concept of delusion, the Girl engages in a cognitive exercise in which she imagines herself to be immersed in a visual novel, on a quest to purchase a bag

of milk. This is an intelligent explanation as to why the player is engaging with this particular genre of game, and this trope is also evident in the subsequent instalment. The final symptom to be observed in the initial game is that of the Girl's disorganised speech. This behaviour manifests itself most notably in instances where the player attempts to compel the character to engage in actions that cause her discomfort.

As previously mentioned, the game features two distinct endings, namely "Not this time" and "Milk bought". "Not this time" concludes with an unfavourable resolution, which is attained through the deterioration of the female protagonist, or by interrogating the possibility of her hallucinations, employing questions such as: "Has it ever occurred to you that it's all just in your head?" Alternatively, the player must select three disrespectful responses to direct towards the female character. The second ending, entitled "Milk bought", is considered a satisfactory conclusion and is recognised as a legitimate instalment in the official canon. In order to reach this particular conclusion, it is necessary for the player to demonstrate consideration towards the female character and ensure that she acquires the milk. The narrative concludes with the Girl successfully procuring the milk and returning home, where she is greeted by her mother. The mother asks the Girl whether she has purchased the milk and whether her new medicine is effective, to which the Girl answers in the affirmative. The mother then sends her to bed, thus bringing the game to a conclusion.

The first game is a relatively brief experience, lasting between thirty minutes and one hour, characterised by a substantial presence of abstract imagery and narrative incoherences. While this would typically be considered unfavourable, it is effective in terms of the game's setting, thereby enhancing its credibility. This could be one of the reasons why the game has received such a high number of positive reviews on Steam, with over 13,500 reviews and a 96% approval rating as at November 2025.

Milk Outside a Bag of Milk Outside a Bag of Milk was created by a larger team than the first instalment. Following the securing of budget from the prequel, significant enhancements were made to the audiovisual components of the game. These enhancements included the introduction of full animated cutscenes, numerous soundtracks, and more mainstream graphics. The second instalment commences a short time prior to the conclusion of the initial game, with the protagonist's mother yelling at the Girl and inquiring about her consumption of the milk, while concurrently pressing her finger against the Girl's arm. This immediately prompts the player to contemplate the distinction between reality and fiction, as this sequence did not occur in the preceding game's culmination. Evidence suggests that the subject is lactose intolerant, thereby providing a more profound interpretation of the scene and the first game in its entirety. The subsequent scene is set before a sink and a mirror, with a variety of medications dispersed throughout the scene. The drugs are not visible, but their colour and shape are partially described. It can be hypothesised that thiothixene is one of the substances. It is a pharmaceutical product used in the treatment of psychotic disorders and schizophrenia. Another potential medication could be a sleeping pill, although the specific identity of the drug in question remains unknown at this time. It is important to note that there are numerous other pills that we are currently unable to identify. This suggests that the Girl is currently undergoing clinical treatment. This finding may suggest that the patient's condition persists beyond the duration of a single month of brief psychotic disorder.

Following the scene with the sink, the Girl elects to engage in conversation with the player. It is evident that this game is not entirely akin to the first iteration. The first game was of the visual novel genre, and the second is of the point-and-click adventure genre. The objective of the game is to locate the thoughts of the girl, which are dispersed throughout her room. Upon inspection of each element within the game, there is an opportunity to

gain further insight into the subject known as the Girl. The following timeline details the sequence of events that transpired: the onset of auditory and visual hallucinations, the abusive behaviour of her father, and the administration of milk to the Girl. Within the context of this series, the term *milk* can be interpreted as a metaphor for physical and psychological abuse, signifying the transmission of trauma across generations. The symptoms exhibited by the subject in the second game appear to be indicative of schizophrenia, with a concurrent possibility of bipolar disorder, as evidenced by the marked fluctuations in mood experienced during gameplay between the two games.

Following the identification of her thoughts, the Girl can fall asleep, resulting in one of five possible endings. These are, in no specific order, termed "Shop ending", "Phone ending", "Room and field ending", "Mirror ending" and "Stairs ending". Each ending is characterised by its abstract nature and capacity for interpretation. For instance, the "Shop ending" depicts a scene in which the protagonist, and a boy named Treska proceed towards a shop with the intention of procuring milk. Treska may be a representation of herself, and the Girl may be a representation of the players in this ending. In all instances, the outcome is the same. Following the dream sequence, which constitutes of the various endings, the protagonist, the Girl, awakens in a state of tears, her gaze fixed upon a void in the sky. The title proved to be a one-of-a-kind experience, as evidenced by its reception in the marketplace, which saw it garner reviews that surpassed those of its immediate predecessor. The subject received a total of 7,000 reviews, of which 97% have been positive. The two games demonstrate the psychological challenges faced by some individuals. Digital games, such as this game series, have the potential to exert a positive influence on society, as they can be employed to disseminate awareness regarding psychological traumas and diseases.

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Author of the review

Mgr. Samuel Draxler
University of Ss. Cyril and Methodius in Trnava
Faculty of Mass Media Communication
Nám. J. Herdu 2
917 01 Trnava
SLOVAK REPUBLIC
draxler1@ucm.sk