Milk
By Emily Aldrich
Cast of Characters:

Man: A man struggles to adjust to his new reality in the aftermath of a somewhat-recent accident and failures to recognize the sacrifices of his partner.

Woman: A woman attempting to handle the remains of her relationship while refusing to let go of the past.

Synopsis:

Months after an accident changes their lives, one couple struggles to face their new reality until a milk carton brings one of them to the breaking point.
A Man plods on stage, holding a carton of milk.
He grabs a bowl and spoon from the back counter and proceeds to leisurely make a bowl of cereal.
He leaves the carton of milk on the back counter and sits at the kitchen table.
He begins eating cereal and following his daily routine (reading the newspaper, checking his phone, etc.).
After a few moments, a Woman quickly walks on stage, frazzled.
Woman: Where the hell are the keys? God, we are so late for…
She trails off upon seeing the Man who is continuing to eat while not acknowledging her.
She takes a step toward him, starting to address him but hesitates, sighs, and continues looking around.
Woman: … And I just know your mother is going to claim I purposefully misplaced the keys because heaven forbid her son would ever…
The Woman freezes when she sees the milk carton sitting on the back counter.
Woman: Are. You. Kidding. Me? Seriously! How hard is it for a grown man to remember to put the fucking milk away?
The Woman picks up the carton and begins grabbing some other haphazardly placed items before stopping herself.
Woman: You know what… I can’t do this anymore. I’m done! I’m so fucking done!
The Woman starts storming out of the kitchen then stops herself and looks back at the Man, taking a deep breath.

Woman: I’m sorry, okay? I know things haven’t been easy for you. But surely you realize how much I’ve been doing around here recently and it’s not like I’m asking that much of you. And all this… is just not what I signed up for. And yet here we are. With you being… well… and me having cleaning up your messes, just trying to do anything and everything I could over the last year to make your life even the slightest bit better.

But what about me? I honestly can’t even remember the last time you asked me how I was doing or what I wanted.
Maybe you just don’t want to give me a chance to tell you how fucking miserable this year has been for me.
And maybe you want to stay in this “perfect” little world you’ve had me create for “us” and forget about everything else. I guess that’d explain why you never even ask about our friends …

Did you know Ally is pregnant? I mean of course you don’t, how would you? When all we seem to ever do is just sit in this… apartment. Yesterday, I was in the grocery store picking up this fucking milk when all of a sudden, I ran into her. And there she was… just…
And I don’t mean to blame this all on you, I know I haven’t been asking you to go out. But that’s because I saw how painful it was for you. And it hurt me, to see you sink further into isolation when our friends came over.
And I know… you probably think I should’ve just gone without you. But if you know me at all, you know I couldn’t possibly do that.

So, I started making excuses whenever they asked us to hang out. But I had figured that things would eventually get better or you’d at least try to make some other friends. But it’s been a year and you’ve just... given up. You didn’t seem to even notice that we stopped going out or even indicate that you cared that we are just sitting around while there is an entire world out there that you… that we could still be a part of.

And you know what! … I miss it. I miss you, I miss us, I miss our life and our friends. I miss not having to constantly be at your side or, when I’m not by your side, worrying about not being by your side and not doing enough for you.
I miss catching you smiling at me while we watch a movie, I miss having you surprise me with breakfast in bed. Or, even just back when you cared enough to put the milk away after you made yourself breakfast.
And maybe there’s more I should be doing for you. Or maybe I’ve been doing too much and I shouldn’t have let things get so out of hand.
And I guess maybe I was just clinging on to the hope that one day I’d wake up and things would be back to normal because we won’t last if this truly is our new normal.

And maybe there is a part of me that still believes that things could change, that’s holding out hope that if I could just tell you the truth, and if you would just listen to me, that things could get better.

But maybe there’s another part of me that is terrified that just saying all this to you would be enough ruin what little we still had left.

_The Woman finally approaches the table and sits._

_The Man looks up and acknowledges the woman, for the first time, with a small smile and squeeze on her hand._

_The Woman sighs and forces a smile in return._

Man notices her behavior and signs in ASL: **Are you okay?**

Woman: Am I okay? Am I okay? I…

_The Woman pauses._

Woman signs and says: **I’m fine.**

_The Man continues eating breakfast as the Woman looks longingly towards the door and then back to the table as lights fade._