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The Psychology of the Person Who Leaves the Last Swallow of Milk in the Carton

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Psychological Investigation (tic) into Human Behavior, Domestic Deception, and the Refusal to Finish What We Start

INTRODUCTION

The Unfinished Glass

There are certain crimes that never make the evening news. No police department issues a press release about them, no detective arrives with a notebook, and no prosecutor stands before a jury demanding justice. They occur quietly, usually in kitchens, refrigerators, break rooms, and homes where people have learned to live with one another's peculiar habits. They leave no blood, no broken windows, and no fingerprints that a laboratory technician would consider worth examining.

Yet they happen every day.

Among these offenses, few are more psychologically revealing than the person who removes a carton of milk from the refrigerator, pours the last usable portion into a glass, and then returns the carton to its original position with one swallow remaining.

Not half a glass. Not enough for cereal. Not enough to make a meaningful contribution to coffee. One swallow.

The carton is returned to the refrigerator as though the individual has completed a reasonable domestic responsibility. The refrigerator door closes. The person walks away. Another person arrives later, opens the refrigerator, discovers the nearly empty carton, and experiences a moment of confusion followed by disappointment, followed by an emotional response that may be disproportionate to the actual amount of milk involved.

The question is not simply why someone leaves one swallow in a milk carton. The question is what kind of person does this, what internal reasoning permits it, and why the individual believes that the next person should be responsible for completing a task that the first person deliberately abandoned.

This book is an investigation into that behavior.

It is not intended to establish a universal diagnosis. It would be irresponsible to claim that every person who leaves one swallow of milk in a carton possesses the same personality structure, emotional history, or moral framework. Human behavior is rarely that simple. The individual may be distracted, exhausted, rushed, forgetful, or genuinely unaware that the carton contains almost nothing.

However, there are other individuals who know precisely what they are doing.

They lift the carton. They feel its lack of weight. They see the small quantity remaining. They understand that the carton is effectively empty. They make a decision. Instead of throwing it away, rinsing it, or placing it in the recycling container, they return it to the refrigerator.

This is where the investigation begins.

The remaining milk is not the central issue. The remaining milk is evidence.

CHAPTER ONE

The Crime Scene

The modern kitchen is a place of extraordinary technological advancement. Refrigerators can produce ice, dispense filtered water, monitor internal temperatures, and, in some cases, connect to the internet. Ovens can be programmed remotely. Coffee machines can be scheduled to prepare a beverage before the occupant has fully awakened. Dishwashers can determine the appropriate washing cycle based on the contents placed inside them.

Despite these advances, the kitchen remains vulnerable to one of the oldest problems in human society: people who do not finish what they start.

The milk carton is often discovered during a routine investigation. An individual opens the refrigerator with a clear objective. Perhaps the person intends to prepare breakfast, pour a glass of milk, or add milk to a cup of coffee. The refrigerator light comes on, illuminating the interior and revealing the objects within.

The carton is located.

The individual removes it, tilts it over a glass, and pours. At some point, the flow of milk decreases. The carton is tilted farther. The individual may shake it slightly. A final portion emerges. The glass is filled, or nearly filled. The individual examines the carton and determines that enough milk remains for one additional swallow.

At this moment, the individual faces a decision.

The carton could be discarded. The carton could be placed on the counter for someone else to inspect. The individual could pour the remaining milk into the glass and finish the task. Instead, the person places the cap on the carton and returns it to the refrigerator.

The act is completed with remarkable efficiency.

There is no hesitation visible to the casual observer. No confession is offered. No explanation is recorded. The refrigerator door closes, and the individual leaves the scene.

Later, another person discovers the carton.

The second individual may remove it from the refrigerator expecting to pour a full glass. The carton is heavier than an empty container but lighter than a useful container. It has the physical appearance of a functioning supply, while possessing almost none of the substance it promises.

The second individual shakes it.

This action is important. The shaking of the milk carton is not merely a practical attempt to determine its contents. It is often the first emotional response to the discovery. The individual already suspects the carton is empty, but hope remains. Perhaps there is enough milk for cereal. Perhaps there is enough for coffee. Perhaps the first person simply failed to pour correctly.

The carton is tilted.

A thin stream emerges, or a single drop falls. The investigation reaches its first major conclusion: the carton was not empty when it was returned. It was abandoned.

This distinction matters.

An empty carton can be understood. An empty carton represents completion. It has fulfilled its purpose and is ready to be discarded. A carton containing one swallow is different. It represents an interrupted responsibility. It is a task that has been transferred without permission.

The person who discovers it is now required to make a decision that should have been made by someone else.

Should the carton be thrown away? Should the remaining milk be consumed? Should the carton be returned to the refrigerator because perhaps someone else might want it? Should the individual confront the suspected offender?

Most people simply throw it away, although not without forming an opinion.

That opinion is frequently stronger than the quantity of milk would seem to justify.

The reason is that the offense is not measured in ounces. It is measured in inconvenience, expectation, and the quiet message communicated by the abandoned carton.

The message appears to be this:

“I have completed my portion of the task. Whatever remains is now your problem.”

The suspect may deny sending such a message. The suspect may insist that no message was intended. The suspect may argue that the remaining milk was too small to bother with, that the trash can was too far away, or that the person was in a hurry.

All of these explanations are possible. None of them changes the central fact that someone else has been left to resolve the situation.

The kitchen crime scene, therefore, is not simply a place where milk has been neglected. It is a place where individual convenience has been placed above shared responsibility.

The carton is the physical evidence. The refrigerator is the location. The next person is the unwilling participant.

And the suspect is still at large.

CHAPTER TWO

The Psychology of the Last Swallow

To understand the person who leaves one swallow in a milk carton, it is necessary to examine the psychological difference between finishing and abandoning.

Finishing is a relatively simple behavior. A person begins a task, recognizes that the task is nearly complete, and performs the final action necessary to bring it to an end. The final action may require little effort. In many cases, it requires less effort than the actions already performed.

The person who pours the last swallow into the glass has completed the process. The glass contains the milk. The carton is empty. The carton can now be discarded.

The person who returns the carton to the refrigerator has also performed a final action, but it is a different kind of final action. The individual has finished using the milk without finishing the responsibility associated with the container.

This creates a psychological separation between personal satisfaction and practical completion.

The suspect has obtained the desired result. The person wanted milk, and the person obtained milk. From the suspect's perspective, the objective has been achieved. The carton is no longer relevant because the individual's immediate need has been satisfied.

The problem is that the carton remains relevant to everyone else.

This is one of the defining characteristics of minor domestic selfishness. The person does not necessarily intend to harm anyone. The person simply stops considering the consequences once personal needs have been met.

The behavior may be described as selective completion.

Selective completion occurs when an individual completes the portion of a task that provides personal benefit while abandoning the portion that requires responsibility toward others. The person eats the last cookie but does not replace the package. The person uses the final sheet of toilet paper but does not replace the roll. The person empties the ice tray but does not refill it. The person finishes the coffee but leaves the empty pot on the burner.

These behaviors are not identical, but they share a common structure. The individual recognizes the beginning and middle of the task but treats the final obligation as optional.

In the case of the milk carton, the individual may not even experience the action as selfish. The person may regard the remaining milk as insignificant. The amount is so small that it seems unworthy of attention.

This is where personal standards become important.

One individual sees one swallow as waste. Another sees it as an inconvenience. A third sees it as someone else's opportunity. A fourth does not see it at all.

The last category is especially interesting.

Some people appear to possess a psychological blind spot when it comes to shared household resources. They can identify their own needs with extraordinary precision. They know when they are hungry, thirsty, tired, uncomfortable, or inconvenienced. They can locate the exact item they want in a refrigerator filled with other people's belongings.

However, their awareness frequently ends at the moment their personal need is satisfied.

They do not see the empty carton. They do not see the person who will later open the refrigerator. They do not see the inconvenience they have created. Their attention has moved elsewhere.

This does not necessarily mean they lack empathy in every area of life. A person may be generous with money, compassionate toward animals, helpful to neighbors, and considerate in public while still leaving one swallow of milk in the refrigerator.

Human beings are inconsistent creatures. A person can demonstrate remarkable kindness in one circumstance and astonishing laziness in another. Character is not always expressed through grand decisions. Sometimes it appears in the smallest moments, when no one is watching and no reward is available.

The milk carton provides one of those moments.

The suspect may claim that the remaining milk was intended for someone else. This defense is occasionally offered in a tone of apparent innocence.

“I left some in there.”

This statement is technically accurate, but psychologically incomplete. The issue is not whether milk was left. The issue is why it was left in a container that could no longer serve a practical purpose.

The suspect may also say, “I thought somebody might want it.”

This explanation requires additional investigation.

If someone genuinely believes that another person might want the remaining milk, the logical action would be to pour it into a smaller container, use it in a recipe, or notify the other person. Returning the carton to the refrigerator does not preserve a meaningful resource. It preserves the appearance of a resource.

The suspect has not saved the milk. The suspect has postponed the moment when someone discovers that it is effectively gone.

This postponement is central to the psychology of the offense.

The person who leaves one swallow in the carton does not eliminate the problem. The person merely moves the problem into the future, where another individual will encounter it without having participated in the original decision.

The carton becomes a time-delayed inconvenience.

And the refrigerator becomes a storage facility for unfinished responsibilities.

CHAPTER THREE

The Subject Profile

The investigation of any recurring behavior requires the development of a suspect profile. Such a profile must be used carefully. It should identify patterns rather than establish certainty, and it should recognize that individuals may engage in the same behavior for entirely different reasons.

The person who leaves one swallow in a milk carton may belong to several psychological categories.

The first is the Optimistic Abandoner.

This individual believes that the remaining milk is still useful, although the person has no specific plan for using it. The carton is returned to the refrigerator under the assumption that someone will eventually find a purpose for the final swallow.

The Optimistic Abandoner is not necessarily malicious. In fact, the person may consider the action responsible. Throwing away milk, even a small amount, feels wasteful. Returning it to the refrigerator appears to preserve the possibility of future use.

The flaw in this reasoning is that the person has confused theoretical usefulness with practical usefulness.

Technically, one swallow of milk can be consumed. Technically, a single grain of rice can be cooked. Technically, one square inch of wrapping paper can be used to wrap a gift for an extremely small and emotionally undemanding recipient.

The question is not whether the remaining milk is theoretically usable. The question is whether it is useful enough to justify keeping the carton in circulation.

The second category is the Task Avoider.

This individual understands that the carton is empty but does not want to perform the final disposal action. The trash can may be several feet away. The lid may need to be opened. The carton may need to be flattened. The individual may be holding a phone, preparing to sit down, or experiencing a profound emotional attachment to remaining stationary.

The Task Avoider does not necessarily believe the next person should handle the carton. The individual simply does not want to handle it personally.

This is a form of immediate convenience bias. The small effort required now is perceived as more significant than the inconvenience imposed later on someone else.

The Task Avoider's internal reasoning may sound like this:

"I'll deal with it later."

The problem is that the person has no intention of dealing with it later. The statement functions less as a plan and more as a psychological exit.

The third category is the Domestic Minimalist.

This individual believes that household responsibilities should be performed only to the extent absolutely necessary. The person may argue that the carton is not technically empty, and therefore it is not technically trash.

The Domestic Minimalist often relies on literal definitions.

"Is there milk in it?"

"Yes."

"Then it isn't empty."

This reasoning is difficult to defeat because it is factually defensible while remaining practically absurd. A container does not become useful simply because it contains a trace amount of its original contents.

The Domestic Minimalist may also apply this principle to other areas of life. A person may leave a roll of paper towels containing one sheet, a tube of toothpaste containing enough for a microscopic dental emergency, or a bottle of shampoo containing a quantity that requires the user to turn the bottle upside down and negotiate with gravity.

The fourth category is the Responsibility Transfer Specialist.

This individual is the most psychologically interesting because the person may understand exactly what is happening. The suspect recognizes that the carton needs to

be discarded but chooses to return it to the refrigerator because doing so transfers the responsibility to someone else.

The action is not accidental. It is efficient.

The suspect avoids the inconvenience of disposing of the carton and increases the probability that another person will eventually perform the task. The transfer is accomplished without discussion, permission, or acknowledgment.

The Responsibility Transfer Specialist may be skilled at other forms of domestic delegation. The person may leave dishes beside the sink rather than inside it, place dirty laundry near the hamper rather than in it, or put an empty package on the counter approximately three inches from the trash can.

These actions create a strange domestic geography in which objects approach their proper destinations but never quite arrive.

The fifth category is the Unconscious Repeater.

This individual performs the behavior without meaningful awareness. The person may have developed the habit over many years and no longer registers the carton as a decision point. The carton is picked up, used, and returned to its usual location.

The behavior is automatic.

When confronted, the Unconscious Repeater may respond with genuine surprise.

“I do that?”

This question is not always deceptive. Some habits operate beneath conscious attention. People drive familiar routes without remembering every turn. They lock doors, switch off lights, and place objects in predictable locations without recording each action in memory.

The challenge with the Unconscious Repeater is not simply identifying the behavior but bringing it into awareness. Once the person recognizes the pattern, change becomes possible.

However, recognition does not always produce change.

There is also a sixth category: the Defensive Accused.

This individual has been confronted with the evidence and immediately begins constructing a legal defense. The suspect may claim that someone else left the carton, that the carton contained more milk than alleged, that the person was interrupted, or that the investigator is exaggerating the significance of the offense.

The Defensive Accused may respond to a simple question with a complicated explanation.

“Did you leave this in the refrigerator?”

“I poured some milk earlier, but I don't know what happened after that. Besides, I was in a hurry, and I thought there was still some left, and I don't think we should be making a big deal about something this small.”

The length of the explanation does not establish guilt. However, it does indicate that the suspect has recognized the seriousness of the accusation, at least within the domestic legal system.

The investigator should remain calm.

The purpose of the investigation is not to humiliate the suspect. It is to determine whether the behavior is accidental, habitual, or intentional, and whether the household can establish a procedure that prevents future incidents.

In most cases, the procedure is simple.

When the milk is gone, throw away the carton.

The difficulty lies not in the procedure but in persuading certain adults that the procedure applies to them.

CHAPTER FOUR

The Social Consequences of One Last Swallow

It may seem excessive to describe the social consequences of leaving one swallow of milk in a carton. After all, no one has been physically injured. No property has been destroyed. No emergency services have been required.

Yet small behaviors can create significant emotional consequences when they occur repeatedly within close relationships.

The milk carton is rarely an isolated event. It is usually one example in a larger collection of unfinished tasks, overlooked obligations, and minor inconveniences that accumulate over time.

A spouse may not become angry because of one nearly empty carton. The anger may develop because the carton is part of a pattern.

The same person who leaves one swallow of milk may also fail to replace the toilet paper, leave cabinet doors open, abandon dirty dishes beside the sink, and use the last of the coffee without mentioning it. Each individual act is small. Together, they communicate a consistent lack of attention to the shared environment.

The person who repeatedly encounters these behaviors may begin to feel that the household responsibilities are unevenly distributed.

This is where resentment develops.

Resentment is rarely created by one dramatic incident. It is often constructed from a series of minor experiences in which one person feels that another person is not paying attention, not contributing, or not recognizing the effort required to maintain ordinary life.

The milk carton becomes symbolic.

It represents the feeling that someone else can consume the benefits of a shared system without participating in the maintenance of that system.

This dynamic appears in families, friendships, workplaces, and public spaces. A person uses the final paper towel in a shared bathroom without replacing the roll. An

employee empties the printer's paper tray without refilling it. A coworker uses the last of the coffee and leaves the empty pot on the warmer.

The immediate problem is small, but the underlying question is substantial:

"Why am I expected to notice and correct what you repeatedly ignore?"

The answer may be that one person has developed a greater sense of responsibility. It may be that the other person was never taught to recognize shared obligations. It may be that the household has unintentionally established a system in which one individual handles all the finishing work.

In some families, the person who notices the unfinished tasks eventually stops mentioning them. The individual simply completes the tasks without discussion. Over time, the behavior becomes normalized.

This creates a dangerous condition known as silent accommodation.

Silent accommodation occurs when one person repeatedly corrects another person's behavior without requiring acknowledgment or change. The household appears to function, but the underlying imbalance remains.

The person who leaves the milk carton may never realize how often someone else throws it away. The problem disappears before the suspect encounters its consequences.

This is one reason habits can continue for years.

The person responsible for the inconvenience is protected from the inconvenience. The evidence is removed by someone else. The refrigerator is cleaned, the carton is discarded, and the household moves forward.

No lesson is learned.

No corrective feedback is received.

The behavior remains available for future use.

Eventually, the person who has been accommodating may confront the suspect with a level of frustration that appears disproportionate to the immediate incident.

“Why do you always leave one swallow in the carton?”

The accused may be confused by the word always. The person remembers one incident, perhaps two, but does not recognize the cumulative pattern.

This is a common feature of interpersonal conflict. The person who performs a behavior experiences it as an isolated event. The person who repeatedly manages the consequences experiences it as a continuing condition.

The argument is therefore not about the current carton. It is about the history of cartons.

The suspect may respond, “You could have just thrown it away.”

This statement introduces another psychological complication. It is true that the second person could throw the carton away. However, the statement ignores the fact that the second person should not have been required to discover and correct the problem.

The ability to solve a problem does not eliminate the responsibility of the person who created it.

A person who leaves a shopping cart in the middle of a parking space may argue that someone else can move it. A person who drops trash beside a public bin may argue that a maintenance worker will pick it up. A person who leaves one swallow of milk may argue that the next person can dispose of the carton.

In each case, the defense depends on the existence of someone else willing to complete the task.

This is why seemingly minor domestic behaviors can reveal broader attitudes toward community and responsibility. The individual may not consciously believe that other people exist to serve them. Yet the repeated behavior produces that effect.

The milk carton becomes a small test of whether a person understands that shared living requires more than avoiding major wrongdoing.

It requires finishing the ordinary things.

CHAPTER FIVE

Interrogation, Rehabilitation, and the Final Pour

Once the suspect has been identified, the investigator must determine how to proceed. The goal should not be punishment for its own sake. A milk carton is not worth destroying a relationship over, and no household should require a formal criminal trial to establish who is responsible for taking out the trash.

However, the absence of criminal intent does not mean that the behavior should never be addressed.

A reasonable conversation begins with the facts.

“You left one swallow of milk in the carton.”

The suspect may deny the allegation.

“I did not.”

The investigator should avoid emotional escalation and present the evidence.

“The carton was in the refrigerator. You were the last person to use it. There was approximately one swallow remaining.”

The suspect may offer an alternative explanation.

“Maybe someone else used it.”

This possibility must be considered. A responsible investigator does not assume guilt solely because the suspect was present in the kitchen. The household may contain multiple individuals, and the milk carton may have been handled by more than one person.

The investigation should remain fair.

“Did you use the milk?”

“Yes.”

“Was there enough left for another glass?”

“No.”

“Why did you return the carton to the refrigerator?”

At this point, the suspect may pause.

The pause is not proof of guilt. It may indicate confusion, embarrassment, irritation, or the sudden realization that a behavior previously considered insignificant has become the subject of an organized inquiry.

The suspect may finally say, “I didn't think about it.”

This answer is plausible and may be entirely truthful.

The investigator should then ask a more useful question.

“What could you do differently next time?”

The purpose of this question is to move the conversation away from blame and toward behavior. A person who feels attacked may become defensive. A person who is asked to identify a solution may be more willing to consider change.

The answer should be straightforward.

“If the milk is gone, throw away the carton.”

There may be additional considerations. If the carton is recyclable, it should be handled according to the household's recycling practices. If the remaining milk can be used in cooking, it may be saved appropriately. If another person has specifically requested that the carton be retained, that request should be honored.

But in ordinary circumstances, the rule is simple: do not return a functionally empty container to a shared refrigerator.

The suspect may agree.

Agreement, however, is not the same as rehabilitation.

Behavioral change requires repetition. The person must encounter the same situation in the future and perform a different action. The next time the carton is nearly empty, the suspect must recognize the decision point.

This is where awareness becomes important.

The individual should be encouraged to pause briefly before returning the carton. Ask:

“Is there enough milk here for a practical purpose?”

If the answer is no, the carton should be discarded.

The pause may last less than a second. It does not require meditation, counseling, or a formal behavioral intervention. It simply requires the person to recognize that the task is not complete until the container has been dealt with.

This principle can be applied beyond the refrigerator.

When the last roll of toilet paper is used, replace it.

When the last coffee is consumed, make more or notify the next person.

When the trash is full, take it out.

When the dishwasher is finished, unload it if that is the household agreement.

When a shared item is depleted, do not merely return the empty packaging to its original location as though the supply remains intact.

These are not grand moral achievements. They are ordinary acts of consideration.

A person who performs them consistently may never receive praise. No one will applaud the replacement of a toilet paper roll. No award will be presented for taking out the trash without being asked. No biography will be written about the individual who throws away the milk carton.

Yet these small actions make shared life easier.

They communicate awareness.

They tell other people, “I recognize that I am not the only person who uses this space.”

The person who finishes the milk may also begin to notice other unfinished responsibilities. The individual may recognize that the kitchen is not maintained by magic, that household supplies do not replenish themselves, and that the final stage of a task often matters more than the first.

There is a particular satisfaction in completing something properly.

The glass is filled. The milk is consumed. The carton is empty. The carton is discarded.
The refrigerator contains one fewer object that will later disappoint someone.

The process is complete.

The investigation is closed.

Or at least it is closed until someone leaves one swallow of orange juice in the container.

CONCLUSION

The person who leaves one swallow in a milk carton is not necessarily a bad person. The behavior does not prove that the individual is selfish, dishonest, inconsiderate, or incapable of personal growth. It establishes only that, at a particular moment, a task was not completed in a way that served the needs of everyone sharing the environment.

That distinction is important.

Human beings are not defined by a single carton of milk. They are defined by patterns, choices, responses to correction, and the willingness to recognize how their actions affect others.

The milk carton is useful because it provides a simple example of a larger problem. Much of daily life consists of small responsibilities that are easy to ignore because the consequences are delayed or transferred. The person who leaves one swallow in the carton may never experience the inconvenience created by the decision. Someone else opens the refrigerator, discovers the problem, and handles it.

The behavior continues because it works.

The suspect obtains the desired benefit and avoids the final obligation.

This arrangement may be convenient, but it is not sustainable in a household where everyone expects consideration from everyone else. Shared living depends upon a basic understanding that the person who uses something has some responsibility for what remains afterward.

That responsibility does not require perfection. People will forget. People will become distracted. People will make mistakes. A person may leave the milk carton in the refrigerator once and sincerely apologize when the mistake is discovered.

The concern begins when the behavior becomes a habit and the habit becomes a standard.

There is a difference between making a mistake and defending the right to repeat it.

The first can be corrected. The second creates conflict.

Perhaps the most revealing question is not why someone leaves one swallow in the carton, but why the person believes the final swallow is worth preserving while the time and effort of another person are not.

The answer will vary. Some people are careless. Some are distracted. Some are operating from habits they have never examined. Some believe that if a task is technically unfinished, it can be left for someone else. Others simply have not considered the effect of their actions.

Whatever the reason, the solution remains remarkably uncomplicated.

Finish what you start.

If the carton is empty, throw it away. If something needs to be replaced, replace it. If another person will be inconvenienced by your decision, consider that person before you walk away.

These actions will not solve every problem in human relationships. They will not eliminate conflict, guarantee gratitude, or transform an inconsiderate person into a model citizen overnight.

But they will reduce the number of unnecessary inconveniences created by people who believe that their responsibility ends when their immediate need has been satisfied.

The milk carton offers one final lesson.

A person's character is sometimes revealed not by what the person does when watched, praised, or rewarded, but by what the person does when the task is small, the effort is minimal, and no one is present to insist that it be completed.

The last swallow is not the problem.

The decision to leave it for someone else is the problem.

And somewhere, right now, inside a refrigerator illuminated by a small electric light, a carton containing one swallow of milk is waiting for the next investigator to arrive.

POSTSCRIPT

A Completely Unqualified Professional Opinion

Before anyone takes this investigation seriously, I feel obligated to clarify something: I am not a licensed psychologist, certified milk-carton behavior analyst, or registered specialist in the criminal tendencies of people who refuse to finish dairy products.

This book is based entirely on observation, experience, and the disturbing number of times I have opened a refrigerator expecting milk and discovered what can only be described as a dairy-related betrayal.

I have not conducted controlled experiments. I have not interviewed a statistically significant sample of milk-carton offenders. I have not installed surveillance cameras inside refrigerators, although I admit the technology exists and the temptation is considerable.

Everything presented here should therefore be considered an informal observation rather than a scientifically validated psychological assessment.

I am simply a man who has encountered this behavior often enough to begin asking questions. Why leave one swallow? Why return the carton to the refrigerator? Why make the next person shake it like a maraca while standing there with a bowl of cereal and diminishing hope?

Perhaps there is a reasonable explanation.

Perhaps the offender was distracted. Perhaps the person was in a hurry. Perhaps the remaining milk was being preserved for a future emergency involving one teaspoon of pancake batter.

I remain open to these possibilities.

However, until convincing evidence is presented, I will continue to regard the nearly empty milk carton with suspicion.

Not hatred.

Not even anger, necessarily. Just the quiet, professional suspicion of someone who has seen too much and poured too many disappointing glasses of milk.

This book is not a diagnosis. It is not a scientific conclusion.

It is an observation wrapped in humor, lightly seasoned with frustration, and stored in the refrigerator beside the mustard that expired three years ago.

If you recognize yourself in these pages, please do not feel judged.

Simply finish the milk.

Then we can all move forward.

Steven David Lampley,
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