Among the Sleep is one of those games that spikes your curiosity by holding audacious concepts. In this game, you are put as a two years old baby who is left to himself while wandering through the oneiric plane.

You erupt into the game the day of your birthday, in the kitchen, while your mom prepares your birthday cake. Knocks on the door leave your mother worried as she assures you she will be back in a few seconds. After a bit of loud talking, she comes back with a gift, presumably from the stranger at the door.

Just before you experience your first night, you find yourself a friend: Teddy is your magical plush that will reassure you through your nightmares: light will emanate from it as you squeeze it against yourself. This will be the only source of comfort you fill find through the game.

Even though Among the Sleep sets you in a dark, nightmarish environment, it shines bright. The game’s art style is refreshing and is really an eye candy. Lightning effectively illuminates small parts of the scenery, revealing interesting colors; you will search for those illuminated areas not only because they provide safety but also because it reveals the beauty of the clouded world you crawl into.

Unfortunately, this is probably the game’s biggest achievement. When it comes to controls and storytelling, Among the Sleep greatly lacks substance and stands under the bar of what is normally expected by modern games.

While it is conceivable that the range of actions in a game does not restrain its ability to live as an entertaining one, it feels like Among the Sleep does in in an unwieldy way. Little mechanics such as moving and throwing objects are implanted so distantly in a game that their contribution is neglect able. Some games do give simple ways of behaving to the player and some of them, in the past, were greatly successful by doing so.

It is also true that when they do so, they focus on other parts of the game: storytelling for example. In the case of Among the Sleep, I found it hard to develop interest into the story as only a few cues issued from my own analysis led me to believe there was a meaning behind the nightmarish journey.

The game started with an interesting view on how to describe your character. While I was waiting for the moment where I would be told: “It’s a little boy”, never the sex of your character was explicitly told. Even the toys in your room are a bit mixed up between what would be traditional boys or girls toys. This can be an interesting asset to a game as is helps the player identify itself to the character.

I also thought, in first place, that the first scene where your mom takes care of you was a great inclusion to the game. It makes your baby role more believable and gave an enjoyable representation of a female character in ways that are rarely shown in video games.

However, while I cannot, and do not wish to, spoil anything, I will say that I found this deplorable that this great start was ruined through the game. Maybe partially because of the uneven storytelling, I felt the role of your mother then fell into weird stereotypes in a way that was not really congruent with the story and considering this later was weak, I felt the choices made were inappropriate. It is a shame that such great opportunity of having an important female character was drained.

At first glance, the game looks like it may be an atmospheric horror game. While I would not qualify the atmosphere as constant, there were some moments where I had shivers. On some occasions, I really felt the helplessness of the little baby, wandering around with only his teddy bear to be comforted by.

I had high hopes for Among the Sleep but I was disappointed with many aspects of the game. However, I would recommend it to whoever finds the concept interesting as it can be stimulating and somewhat interesting for those who have been warned of the game’s shortcomings.

Pros

Refreshing vivid visuals

Some scary moments

Cons

Nothing to compensate for the passive gameplay

Incoherent female representation

Among the Sleep is an ambitious game that plunges you back in the body of a little baby and puts you face to face with his nightmares. The visuals and the atmospheric aspects of the game are its strengths: every new environment feels and looks unique and with it comes its dangers. However, the game has some major drawbacks that will act as a warning for whoever wants to try it. Storytelling and game mechanics are sometimes incoherent and incomplete. That being said Among the Sleep is worth the try if you are curious about the whole concept.