

the
spyglass

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twenty twenty-six



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DISCOUNT

35%



well loved

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A hand with a pink sleeve and a green and white striped cuff holds a red digicam. The digicam has a green screen displaying the text: "// Alex Yang PHOTOGRAPHY // Elena shan DESIGN // Angie Xu". The background is a bright blue sky with white clouds. A pink squiggly line is on the left side of the page.

There is no contest between my dad's fancy Nikon (tried-and-true, the vacation camera crew) and my gleaming red Nintendo 3DS (which I got for my birthday at least six years ago). I prefer my 3DS not only because it can run Animal Crossing: New Leaf, but also because I can count the pixels in photos captured by its camera... Except, that's supposed to be a bad thing. I mean, it is. Admittedly, my brand-new birthday gift was not quite built for photos. I came(ra) to this life-changing conclusion when I took my first few selfies, mushroom cut and all: the system makes this annoyingly loud shutter noise that you cannot turn off or even down. That makes it less than ideal for candid. It also doesn't even have flash, and whenever I want to see my photos on something other than a little red brick of a device, I have to manually transfer them using a fragile SD card. Unheard of to all you new techies. But it's no secret that the "old, dingy" digicams are making a comeback now more than ever.

Now, from a purely practical perspective, it makes no sense. Why would anyone walk into a clothing store and demand to buy a lower quality shirt at the same price, if not higher? Why would anyone trade an iPhone 16 for an older model (seriously, why are people going around buying iPhone 3s just for the cameras)? And finally, do you really need a digicam if you have a "good, professional" camera? At our society's rate of technological advancement, almost any phone made in the last ten years could outperform your sister's old Sony. Digicams: so needed, or so inconvenient?

A red digicam is shown in the bottom left corner of the page.

If we look at this objectively, old cameras do suck. That's a harsh truth we have to accept. They lose in every single criterion of camera quality when compared to newer models. They capture less detail, fit less into the frame, and they have fewer technologies equipped to render your mediocre photography skills into something beautiful. Sorry, I'm projecting.

But that's just the thing. These ancient lenses get so bad that they get... good? The crowd goes wild for pics all pixelated, the crowd being anyone who buys into the digicam daze. If you're someone who's never owned a shoddy photo snapper yourself, if you're someone who's never had a designated digicam friend, you might still be asking yourself why they're so coveted. The answer is as simple as these cameras.

Although obsolescence is a big concern for tech innovators today, that's not quite a problem for people like you and I. The average person doesn't really want more complex tech. They couldn't care less about the newest iPhone (what model are we on now, and how many unnecessary cameras does it have?) We may even groan at the releasing of new gimmicks and the seizing of storage space with every software update. I know for a fact almost every "improved" Spotify version has really just been a grievance to its users. Don't fix what isn't broken. It's okay to stick to ol' reliable.

The world moves fast enough as it is, anyway. Newfangled devices will still pop up whenever we least expect them to, (the other day I was caught off guard by robots in a restaurant) but let us have these scraps of simplicity. Let's freeze our favourite frame forever in our memories. We can escape the madness of it all through the dusty viewfinder of an old point and shoot. Let's endlessly rewind the tracks on our cassettes. We can untangle the stress knots in our necks if only with our helplessly tangled headphones, Walkmans, and iPods. I nod to my fellow 3DS carriers: to the boy finding better angles, to the girl recording a concert. The Nintendo has a ten-minute time limit, but I hope the digicam days don't.

*batteries not included

FOR THE BIRDS

Almost two centuries ago, Charles Darwin studied the physiologies of the finches of the Galápagos Islands, observing the differences in their beak widths and shapes. He found that survival of the fittest caused the birds to self-select for genetically beneficial traits, namely those that allowed them to thrive on the primary food sources on each of their isles. The work Darwin penned on adaptation and the continued survival of species created a new branch of biology, which was often referred to in his name.

“Eugenics is the self-direction of human evolution,” reads the logo of the Second International Congress of Eugenics. “Like a [tree, it] draws its materials from many sources and organises them into a harmonious entity.”

Social Darwinists argue that genetic purity and the endurance of “stronger” individuals fuel the continuous development of the human race. The problem arises when one tries to pinpoint what exactly makes one person’s traits better than another. In the 1930s, Nazi Germany utilised involuntary sterilisation and mass genocide to promote ideals of racial purity, arguing that non-Aryan individuals were inferior to Aryans. Years earlier, the Canadian government introduced the Sexual Sterilisation Act, a policy that authorised the nonconsensual sterilisation of disabled wards of mental institutions.

While talk of eugenics is now heavily taboo—and for good reason—the same rhetoric that fuelled social Darwinism lights the fire for many of the economic discussions present in the Western world today. If an individual is in poverty—largely neglecting other factors such as systemic and employment barriers, unfortunate economic circumstances, or plain bad luck—it is largely believed that it is nobody’s fault but their own. “Only the weak will fall,” stated the President of the United States of America in response to tariff anxiety. Growing political circles, ethnic purity and eugenic mindsets are once again being promoted. As fiscal policy allows existing billionaires to grow their wealth while making it harder for the less fortunate to get by, one can’t help but think that wealth is a trait being prioritised. A single man can own more money than the amount of seconds ever experienced by human civilisation, while countless families struggle to find a way to afford the rising price of food.

// JOY KIM
PHOTOGRAPHY // DANIEL SHAMOV
DESIGN // DORA DUAN



Humans only cease to be exceptions of nature when it's convenient. As a society, we pride ourselves on being civilised, and, well, more humane than other species—but we openly condemn those who don't fit a certain standard. Throughout the ages, evolutionary studies have been used as arguments to perpetuate sentiments like eugenics and to advocate for the removal of social services. Factors like the mass aggregation of wealth and the delicate balance of ecological frameworks go largely unmentioned in such debates.

In an era where Tylenol is villainised for allegedly causing a “family-destroying disorder” and the host of a major news network can propose euthanising the homeless population while keeping his job, one might begin to think the struggle of the masses isn't a byproduct of natural law.

Is There Sum Dim to Eat?

There are many different types of delicacies in Cantonese cuisine, from roast meats (燒味, pronounced seo may), to congee (粥, pronounced tsoke), to steamed fish (蒸魚, pronounced jing yu) and more. Today, we'll focus on my favourite: yum cha!

The two Chinese characters for it are straightforward: 飲茶, which quite literally translate to "drink tea." But it is so much more than that; it's a living tradition where tea is merely a supporting character in an incredibly lively environment full of food, joy, and laughter, in which dim sum is served for everyone to enjoy.

As an eat-first, eat-second person, the dim sum is arguably the best part. Having dim sum with your tea at these teahouses originated in the Han Dynasty, when travellers and merchants would stop by these teahouses for a quick pit stop on their trips through the Silk Road. The weary travellers would rest and drink the caffeinated tea while socialising with others who were making the same journey. As time went on, dim sum was introduced as a light snack to have alongside the tea: not too filling, but enough to satisfy the hungry soul.

Over the years, the development of teahouses in southern China (primarily in the Canton region) has resulted in the development of a myriad of dim sums and their complexities. Families and friends would gather together at these teahouses, not just for the food, but also for the tea (pun intended) and the socialising.

Of course, Cantonese people have a fine order in which they eat food: you always start from the steamed dishes first, before moving on to the savoury and fried foods, then you have dessert. The tiny bamboo steamers don't allow any room for error, with usually just three or four of each dim sum in them. You have to be able to strike fast to get one (speed and accuracy, accuracy first!), especially since you'll be at a disadvantage as one of the younger kids. After all, respecting your elders is a must, and you have to make sure to pour tea for them one at a time before you can do anything else.

But after the tea is poured and you're finally allowed to have food without receiving death stares, the table is a firework of flavour. You'll open the lids of the bamboo steamers, and you'll see all the classics.

Here are my personal all-time starting five.

Let's start with my favourite: 魷魚酥 (pronounced yao yu so), which is fried squid with a super light batter. The crisp and the crunch along with the tender chew of the squid inside creates a perfect taste.

Next up is 蝦餃 (often called har gow for some reason, but I pronounce it as hah gao), a steamed shrimp dumpling with a shiny, crystalline skin. The delicate texture, the slightly translucent wrapper, and the flavour when you take that first bite makes it one of my favourite comfort foods.





Third in the lineup is **叉燒包** (tsha seo bao), a steamed bun with **叉燒** (tsha seo, similar to sweet barbecued pork) on the inside. It's soft and fluffy, and the sweet taste of the **叉燒** strikes the perfect balance between taste and texture.



Fourth is **鹹水角** (ham suay gok), a fried dumpling with a sweet glutinous rice shell that's nice and crispy. Once you bite through the outside, there's a filling of minced pork, mushrooms, and dried shrimp. It's a perfect example of dim sum at its finest; texture, flavour, and technique all wrapped into one perfect bite.



Last but not least is **燒賣** (seo mai), an open-top dumpling filled with ground pork, shrimp, and mushrooms, with a super-thin yellow covering made of dough. It's juicy, fresh and a reminder of how good food can be.



飲茶 (yum cha for those of you who forgot) is more than just a typical meal with your family; it's the place where I learned half of my Cantonese, it's the place where I learned how to talk at a conversational volume in a crazy loud environment, and it's a place where I connect with my family. The Chinese characters for dim sum (點心) quite literally translate to "touch the heart", and every time I have another bite of dim sum, I find that my heart gets a little warmer.



// ADRIAN TENG
PHOTOGRAPHY // EMMA ZHU
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When Did You Stop Being Yourself?

// JONAH HEALTH
DESIGN // MAGGIE LI

Mild spoilers for Deltarune's first four chapters below!

I strongly believe that characters are the beating heart of a story. They're not only what drives the plot of the story forward, but they're what makes the twisting and turning of said plots so interesting. The defining traits, flaws, and emotions of these fictional people have the capacity to leave such an impact on so many people, including myself.

Many narrative-based video games, as many stories do, place emphasis on their characters. I have grown to love many of the characters in video games the same way I have grown to love them in other media. By playing as someone in a video game, I begin to feel like I am the character, and that makes it easier to understand them.

However, there has been one exception to this rule. One that changed my perspective on what a playable character could be. That character was Kris Dreemurr from Deltarune.

Deltarune is an ongoing turn-based RPG created by indie developer Toby Fox, who had already carved out a very prominent space online thanks to his debut game Undertale. In Deltarune, you play as Kris Dreemurr, a silent teenaged protagonist who lives in the quiet town of Hometown (what a clever name), in which they are the only human. After discovering a fantasy world known as the Dark World in their school closet alongside their monster classmate Susie, they meet the Dark World's

prince, Ralsei. He tells the two that they are the heroes of the Prophecy, which states that the three of them must seal the Dark Fountains that contain these Dark Worlds to prevent disaster.

Deltarune, much like Fox's previous game, has received much praise and attention for its charming and realistic characters. Watching their development is so satisfying and beautiful, even in the first chapter of the game. Just watching Susie develop from a





loyal friend of Kris and Ralsei was one of the game's defining character moments. That's why I didn't think much of Kris, a character who felt like nothing but a silent protagonist in the beginning of the game. The only times they speak is when the player prompts them to, and they don't seem to have much of a defined personality.

That is, until Kris rips their soul out of their body at the end of Chapter 1 and throws it in a birdcage.

This is where the game starts creating the divide between player and character. The soul, the heart-shaped object that inhabits Kris, is a direct representation of us, the player. For reasons unbeknownst to the player, we are controlling Kris. But Kris is not us, and they make that very, very clear.

As mentioned before, video games are very often able to project their characters on us due to their interactive nature. But oftentimes the exact opposite happens. For example, think of a video game like Super Mario Bros. When I would fall into a pit or get run over by a Koopa's shell, the first thing that would come to mind is that I died. When Mario slides down a flagpole, I don't think of Mario completing the level, but myself.

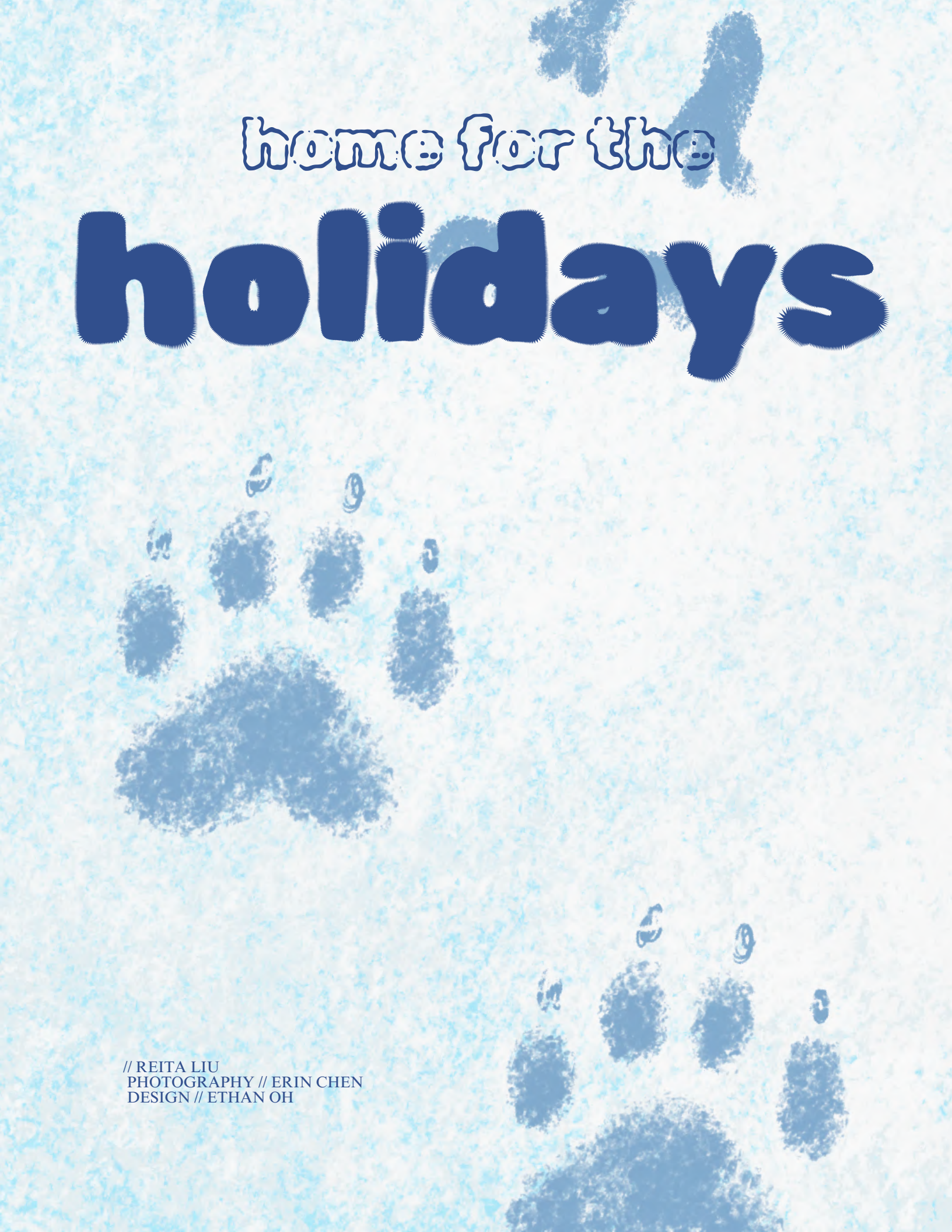
Kris, however, recontextualizes how I thought of this projecting. They often attempt to regain control over themselves, and throughout the game, we slowly start to learn about Kris' true motives. As they stray further into darker territory, away from the goals of the prophesied hero they are supposedly destined to be, we, as the players, are stopping them from enacting those motives. Kris is actively trying to send a message to the player: our control over them is something they are actively

forbidding, even though they need us, a human soul, to live.

Despite their tough, expressionless demeanor, however, moments of Kris' personality and backstory are revealed to us. Even before our involvement, Kris had always felt socially distant from their peers. Their adoptive monster parents, Toriel and Asgore, had recently undergone a messy divorce, and their older brother and closest friend, Asriel, had departed for college. While Toriel's secondary theme in Deltarune is named "You Can Always Come Home", home isn't always the best place to be for Kris.

And it's these details about Kris that enforce one of Deltarune's core themes: player choice. Kris' life had already been spiraling out of control before we were thrust into their body, and completely taking control over it is something that just feels unsettling for both parties. The player is rendered unable to project onto Kris, while Kris tries as hard as possible to prevent themselves from projecting onto us. Although you are playing as Kris, you no longer feel like you are playing as them as much as you are controlling them.

This is where I believe the heart of Deltarune's metanarrative lies, and it is where this indie game changed my perspective on video games as a medium. We play as a character, one with their own goals and feelings. Whether they tread into morally gray areas like Kris did or not, and no matter how interactive the game seems, we can never completely self-insert into a video game protagonist. As seemingly omnipotent we appear controlling a character, we end up just as trapped as they are. It begs the question: can we as players ever be more than an observer?



home for the **holidays**

// REITA LIU
PHOTOGRAPHY // ERIN CHEN
DESIGN // ETHAN OH

The winter is harsh, the wind does bite,
Iceicles freeze, while snowflakes take flight
One polar bear, strong but lonely
Braves the storm, the one and only

Patty is tired of being the only bear
She trudges along the with the snowy Hare
Her only companion as the year comes to an end
Small and grey, but the bear's only friend

"I wish I weren't so small and frail"
The Hare laments, against the bitter hail
Patty says "I wish I weren't so big and scary"
"Maybe then I'd find a home that's merry"

So they started on their little adventure
Up the iceberg, down another, it was quite the
venture
The clouds watched, and whispered to the moon
"Storm's a-brewin', I hope they find home soon"

And sure enough, like the cloud said
The blizzard came, filling all with dread
The birds tweeted that they should go home
Creatures burrowed down, afraid to roam

"It's too slippery, it's too dark!"
Patty and Hare heard the wolves bark
"If you keep going, you'll be a wreck"
But nonetheless they continued their trek

Against all warnings, the two decided to continue
But they had bitten off more than they could chew
Within a day of travel, the blizzard was icily
wicked
They couldn't move, not an inch, numbingly frigid

They couldn't give up now, no, not at all
For the night before Christmas Eve was about to
fall
Determined to find a home, Patty saw
A slab of ice in the ocean, just beginning to thaw

"Quick, let's climb on board! See where it can
lead"
And the Hare and the bear boarded the ice
without a heed

It floated and floated, day and night
Going too far, the North Pole was out of sight

The calm waves lulled them to sleep
Dreams came after they counted their sheep
The storm subsided, and the air was happy
They neared a village, thank goodness, the ice was
scrappy

The town was warm, bright, joyous, and aglow
Lamps lit the streets, people strolling in a flow
Families everywhere, decorating their trees
The spirit of the holidays wafted in the breeze

Patty and Hare knocked on the wreath-covered
doors
The homes all decorated right down to the floors
One family, welcoming, delightful, and sweet
Invited the Hare and the Bear in for a treat

"How cold is it in the arctic, out there in the
snow?"
The mother asked, for she wanted to know
The Bear and Hare recounted their tale
As outside it began to hail

"Stay with us! We'll love you dearly
In our humble home, it's not much, clearly"
It was a lot, to the Bear and the Hare
And they were so grateful to receive such care

And so that's where they stayed
In the warmth of the home, even as the winter did
fade
They became a part of the family
And forever they lived there happily

So that's the story of Patty and Hare
Of how they found a family, kind and fair
For all the seasons, but most importantly they did
pray
That they would find a home for the holidays

And they did.

The End.

The background of the entire page is a photograph of a city street. On the left, there is a red telephone booth with a crown emblem and the word 'PHONE' visible. The street is lined with historic, multi-story buildings with classical architectural features like columns and ornate facades. A black street lamp stands on the right side of the street. The sky is a clear, pale blue.

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