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Once I arrived, I was quite taken aback- the things were quite nearly everywhere; plastered on the walls, in bookshelves, some in tiny little chairs as if sitting down to a child's playroom teaset. There was even a little duck, whose name I was told, was Peter. To see the amounts of money, time, and love these dears put into the poor little things- abandoned in thrift shops and attics around the country- how they take true pride in devoting themselves to their passion- how respectable, how *noble*, how *brave*! And to think now, I never would have attended this club meeting if it weren't an assignment presented by my dear editor. Don't misunderstand me, my editor has a brilliant mind and has been a remarkable mentor to me these last few years... And whilst he hasn't really talked all that much to me, barely ever does really, his silences are truly inspirational. There was this one woman, Mary Elizabeth, sweet thing, who explained her admiration for the little (smug pause) *TY*-kes . She found some sort of comfort searching their deep, black eyes for the son who would never return... I at first found their gazes quite off putting, who was I to judge? It distracted her from the hot welling sorrow of living in such a cold dark world. She, the forgotten, abandoned mother, alone in her spinsterhood, found solace in nurturing the lifeless creatures of fabric and bean. I was given the important and unexpected responsibility to hold one, a kindly, quite charming zebra named Spot, and as soon as he was placed in my hands, it was love at first sight. He looked up to me, longing for the attention so forlorn a toy requires, and when I pulled him close, my heart beat reflected from that void of nothingness back to me- a hunched over well of eternal stillness, a mirror of back and white felt. How could one think to abandon it, denied the breath of life, innocent beyond reckoning, the wretched thing asked to be loved, and goddamnit, it truly was.