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The Brownsville Beanie Baby Collectors Club are a unique and reserved fellowship. But one thing is evident: their passionate solidarity in the reverence of a myriad of Beanie Babies. This was clear as soon as I entered the venerated space at 190 Faust Street...which is actually a club member's cousin's house...said cousin is not a member of the club. As the door opened for my colleagues and I, a distinctive whiff of glazed cranberry orange scones (gluten free? I wondered hopefully) and Folgers Coffee (why?). Secretary and Media representative Jeffrey Simmons, a scone baker, greeted us with a curious, yet genial smile. I asked Mr. Simmons how long he had been a member of the club, to which he replied, "since birth." Which I must assume was hyperbole intended for dramatic effect, seeing as such a length of membership would be quite impossible.

After a few more questions, a scone eaten, and a simply designed polystyrene cup of (again, I must ask the readership to forgive my oversight in the lack of detail) Folgers Coffee. Mr. Simmons lead us down a set of stairs...there, at the bottom, was a door frame decked out with, what looked to be a collection of cat and dog beanie babies, which according to the official guidebook, were quite common variants of plush. We had arrived. Scanning the room, there appeared to be a slightly disordered functionality. There were beanie babies everywhere I looked, which gave me a false sense of anxiety and bewilderment, like being at a zoo where, all of a sudden, the animals turn and stare right at you, and even though you just want to keep moving, you find yourself mesmerized and staring right back. I had not prepared for the variety. I had not read the guidebook past the first few chapters (*Introduction, History, Mentionable Babies and Values Table, Maintenance*) the night previous (due to a frightful encounter with a muffin gifted by my colleague, who must surely have forgotten my allergy). But I assumed there must have been some system to the arrangement of the things, and rationally, of course, this fluffy menagerie wasn't going to attack me anytime soon, and I *must* calm my nerves if I'm to be chosen, this is far too important to be getting all upset for, I need to keep myself in line. I got over my initial uneasiness at their disarray. A young and affable female club member introduced herself to me and proceed to pass into my hand one of the objects of interest- a mid-leveler if I was correct in my identification.

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