

Dramatis Personae

Ludwig II: the last Bavarian King; heavily in debt Prince Paul: Ludwig's *aide-de-camp*, and lover
Rabe Perplexum: an artist; wearing feathers Peter Gauweiler: an angry, fearful man

Ben d'Armagnac: an artist; standing inside a large glass box David: a statue, who has no lines; is only fallen in love with Louis: a cat

Setting

A neighborhood bar, a quiet place you eventually forget the name of, as your first visit recedes in your memory, indistinguishable from the hundreds of times you've returned, drank, and drank to forget more than just the name of the bar. Lined with floor-to-ceiling mirrors in ornate gilt frames, the tight space doesn't let you stray far from your own image. As you walk behind the row of bar stools with their patrons, there you are in the glass, looking over your own shoulder. Sometimes there are film screenings in the basement, the only time that the familiar scene is interrupted, when the regulars are again reminded of the name of the place: "Is this Reflections?" the newcomers ask as they enter the doorway, their skeptical expressions doubled in the mirror. Before anyone answers (and no one ever does) you've already entered, as if you've always known that this was the place. There's no sign on the front, but you can always find Reflections if you really need to.

The stage is empty except for Ludwig the King. He lingers over a glass, perhaps designing another extravagant castle in his imagination, or working out the details of his still unfinished Herrenchiemsee Palace. After bankrupting the royal purse and the monarchy *tout court*, he was declared insane and deposed by his ministers. Now an emigré living in a little German enclave in Chicago, he goes by Louis, but most of the regulars at the bar call him Lou. No wonder he recognizes himself more in the face of the cat, with whom he shares the feeling of being somehow irreconcilably different from his fellow drinkers, than in the reflection in the mirror.

Across the surface of these mirrors gauzy images transpire. Something familiar is queerly figured, a spectral face blending with our own. A bit like magic, we see other lives which rendered ours visible, and through our life something of theirs appears. In this little bar we see a distant transfer of Louis XIV's Hall of Mirrors at Versailles, or Ludwig II's copy of it at Herrenchiemsee. The light of the sun reflected off the moon shimmering at the bottom of a glass; a Louis, a Ludwig, a Lou. Don't think of it as a decline, but a transference of desires no less urgent or refined. Perhaps this bar is just as much a fantasy as the castle of Linderhof. Reflections is a real place, but you've never been there;

I used to go there, but now I can't remember.

Becket Flannery, 2019

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