

Marcel's Dream as told by Jacques Villon

When he was in grammar school Marcel had a dream, the same dream, over and over. He told me about it many times. He dreamt of a small pond in a meadow. It always smelled like rotting weeds. A ring of golden reeds grew up around the pond, hiding it. The reeds would sprout up, curve around, and head back into the earth. They wove themselves into a network of tunnels. In summer, in the dry season, the pond became a patch of mud. Two small pipes stuck out of the mud at odd angles. Marcel became fascinated by them. He longed to retrieve them. One day he took off his shoes and pushed up his pantlegs. He stepped into the pond, sank into the mud up to his knees, and made his way to the pipes. They were covered with dark slime. He knew there must be many more in graceful curves or square configurations in a network beneath the mud. When he pulled, they came out easily. He wiped them with his sleeve and saw they were made of brass. He fashioned them into a musical instrument of his own design. The pipes took several turns around his body before they headed toward the sky. When he blew into his horn, puckering his lips, it made a sound never heard before, different from any of the instruments in the brass band in town. And it was loud. Not loud enough for our mother to hear, because she couldn't hear anything, she was deaf. Marcel spotted our mother and was surprised. She never came down to the meadow. It was wet, and the hem of her dress could get muddy. She had been looking for Marcel. She squinted, and the sun glinted off her eyes. She couldn't hear Marcel's new horn. But she could see Marcel playing it, an instrument of his own invention. She could see his cheeks puffed out and his face turning red. He had already decided; he would only play his own compositions, written in a musical notation that he had devised, and that only he could read.