

Reading

“One of Us” by Joyce Sidman¹

“That kid is weird,” says
the teacher, flipping her shining hair.
“I don’t know where he’s at.”
Indeed, he is quiet
in the way of a giraffe:
ears tuned to something we can’t hear.
He turns his sleepy eyes on me—
chocolate brown
with long, extraordinary lashes—
as I hand him a seashell:
something to write about, you know,
something to focus on.

Suddenly, silently,
in the mysterious way of poetry,
he is at
 that shell,
he is in it,
his heart fills up with it.
*O Shell, he writes,
you make lizards dance
in the sky with birds.
Never leave me, Shell.*

During sharing time,
he reads his poem aloud—
reverently,
almost to himself.
Half the class is stunned,
half embarrassed.
The teacher shakes her head.

I am barely breathing.
One of us, I sing, one of us!

¹ “Poem by Joyce Sidman “One of Us”, Poetry Foundation, accessed September 3, 2022.