

The Golden Mean

I live at the middling level
panning for my type of gold
waving to those who hike on upward
beyond the timber line
to those who settling for less
slope down to the steamy cities;

some sneer at garden gnomes
others at ancient cities rebuilt
with a million spent matchsticks
at body snatchers
and butterfly collectors
at a man who tries to communicate
with heaven's dead eyes
by spelling messages of hope
with an alphabet of tiny shells;

wisdom begins in wonder
a gentle amazement that we are loved
that tears at times well up in others' eyes
that someone listens when we speak
that something very like esteem
seems to be what we're held in for a time;

even that most ambiguous thing
(compost of flattery and embarrassment
of amusement and mockery), laughter,
can float in the evening air
whisps of autumnal smoke
to make us feel witty and wanted
to make us hope there's still abundance
to be mined out in the middle ground
between the steamy city and the timber line.

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