Back in the 1850s this town just teemed with life 150,000 Miners all were dreaming of a strike 7,000 live here in Castlemaine And he still works for the mines Extracts 2 grams of gold per ton of sand Dust the gold rush left behind.

I met him on a November Day The Australian sun was bright He squinted his eyes He lit a cigarette Another rough night. The house he shared with his wife and babies He had built with his own two hands He could no longer call it home In his place, another man So he lives here with a friend of his His wife lives down the street They joke that it's a halfway house for men Suffering temporary defeat He makes me a cup of coffee I notice his young (bud) weathered hands Tanned except for where it was he wore a wedding band.

He askes me about America A place he would love to be He's been all over Australia He's seen all there is to see He shows me pictures of Ayers Rock Wild Birds and Kangaroos Pictures of his little ones And his wife too Then he said put out your hand And I will give to you what I found on a recent trip He lays in my palm a mound of multi colored opal chips When his fingers touch mine I feel a longing from within Did that originate from me or from him? But it's 4:00 He leaves for work He returns home late that night I'm in the room right down the hall I can hear him snap on the light I hear him softly humming I hear a turning of a page I dream that night of wild birds trapped inside an opal cage.

In the morning when I get up
He's in the kitchen making tea
He smiles and he says he's got one more parting gift for me
"Close your eyes, put out your hand"