

Oh, if Uncle Frank had lived, would my father have forgotten how to smile on pleasure? This man was his great, his best, perhaps his only friend.

1974

HELEN HORTON

PISONIA FOREST

Go quietly in the pisonia forest
the noddies are nesting,
sitting out the long bright days
wrapped in the green shade of their own patience
and the ritual changeover of their
mirror-patterned seasonal love.

Tread softly over pisonia roots
the shearwaters are nesting.
All night the dark is full of their calling
as if they had caught the vast expanse
of windswept ocean in their bills and brought it here
to spill it out in lost cries
on the sandy goal of their summer compulsion.

Go gently in the pisonia forest,
the landrails have nested
and tucked their tiny darkling chicks
into cups of shadows left untidily under boughs
fallen from the past.

Stand still awhile in the pisonia forest,
for here the air is soft
and the enfolding trees contain their own fulfilment
in the stillness of centuries.
The white glare of the parading beach
is another world away.