

## make and model

red pre-booked taxis only saloon  
white taxi  
white sports  
silver estate  
almost every other car is a taxi today  
black saloon  
maroon range rover  
two buses cross one another, both double deckers  
red saloon stops still in traffic, back window opens  
and fills with the serious face of a small boy. Holding  
his hand up to the space where the glass should be  
the boy fans it under the fat raindrops while looking  
intently at water pooling in a manhole cover  
from this vantage point, it is hard to hook anyone  
straight in the eye  
man in grey tracksuit and black baseball cap,  
hurrying  
i'm too far away to judge the weave of their shirt, or  
to catch what they're mumbling under their breath  
man running awkwardly carrying four full plastic  
bags, black puffer hood pulled up  
people pass under me in a dark line that contracts  
and expands, bends and straightens  
everyone is trying to get somewhere  
man in bus takes his glasses off, rubs them, and  
places them back on his nose  
even if that somewhere is nowhere they want to be,  
or can imagine just yet  
blue  
turquoise (metallic)  
taxi  
only sometimes does a dog stop and look up at me,  
ears pricked, before jogging on ahead of its master.

[pause]

two people, one tall with a long ponytail, one short  
in a denim skirt, neither carrying an umbrella. The  
taller one grabs the shorter for one last kiss before  
they go their separate ways, one crossing at the  
lights and the other continuing south towards the  
park  
from when I was very small my dad taught me  
small silver 4x4  
to be observant  
silver saloon  
it was his way of equipping me  
black vw  
white 4x4  
for what was coming.

[pause]

other people's dads taught them how to use a knife  
to gut fish,  
or  
how to fix lengths of bamboo together using only  
one kind of knot,  
for shelter.  
they'd take my friends up into the hills for shooting  
practice, or make them  
hold their breath for almost too long under water,  
until they learnt not to panic.  
but my dad  
silver hatchback tentatively parking  
woman bouncing along with a black wheelie  
suitcase  
would put me to bed  
mongrel on a short lead  
with stories of heroes  
sieving gems from what they saw  
and heard  
from windows,  
or the edges of crowds.

[pause]

an early lesson came one Sunday.  
I was nine, or ten.  
we were out driving when suddenly he pulled over  
onto a narrow green verge.  
I was to stand there and make a note of every car,  
colour, make  
and model  
and he would come back for me when the four  
hours were up.

[pause]

as I stood there armed with a clipboard  
and pencil  
under the heat of an August sun  
I could taste the burnt exhaust fumes  
and at intervals dodged the projectiles thrown from  
car windows  
cigarette butts  
crisp packets  
a twix wrapper  
but I knew my dad  
had the other end of the line  
and that I was safe.

[pause]

dark grey saloon  
black hatchback  
young woman dodges traffic  
man in shorts munches on a supermarket sandwich  
woman dressed in black and white and with grey  
hair swept over one eye crosses the road to the café  
silver taxi  
police car with sirens  
man in red cap reads something on his phone and  
narrowly misses bumping into two teenagers  
my mum  
woman is eating from a large orange packet  
I learnt different things from my mum  
man with white hair and a pink shirt pushes a buggy  
when she gathered friends in our living room to  
discuss 'them'  
cyclist  
or 'it'  
balding man  
when 'it' might happen here  
to us  
woman in green headscarf, animal print dress and  
two branded bags of shopping  
I would hide behind our pale blue sofa to snag what  
I could.  
but the talk of adults,  
then,  
was as cryptic to me as a foreign alphabet  
and their gestures  
couple in shorts with backpacks  
untrustworthy as lines, drawn in the sand.

[pause]

grey saloon  
silver taxi  
white hatchback  
woman with small dog on extendable lead  
man coming out of marie curie with small white bag  
once, during that time,  
couple in black walking quickly  
i was carrying a net bag full of oranges  
an orange 4x4 with a white roof  
and their bright rumbling against my legs  
was reassurance.  
it is often what people carry  
woman in tartan shirt  
that intrigues me the most  
man walking very slowly hand-in-hand with a small  
boy  
I never get to see  
more plastic bags  
just what people think is so important  
an open boot  
as to miss it when the bag is empty.

[pause]

if I twist a certain way  
there's a smoker  
I can follow people just a little bit further  
and a white van  
but they always end up fraying at the edges  
and a black 4x4  
or fading in a blur  
and a cyclist with a large red pack on his back  
and my gaze slackens  
and a man  
walks out of his shop  
scratches his crotch  
looks up and down the street  
then heads back inside.

### **References**

George Perec **An attempt at exhausting a place in Paris**, 1975

Ursula K. Le Guin **The Carrier Bag Theory of Fiction**, 1986

Katherine Angel **Daddy Issues**, 2019

Ursula K. Le Guin **Direction of the Road**, 1974

Doris Lessing **Memoirs of a Survivor**, 1974

Octavia Butler **Parable of the Sower**, 1993

Sophie Mackintosh **The Water Cure**, 2018

### **Joanna Peace, 2019**

Commissioned by Edinburgh Sculpture Workshop  
in response to Lucy Wayman's 'Clovehitch'.