

# Raindrops

*by* Frank Dahai

'Every raindrop sounds different.' says Barney. He's bouncing along beside his mother, twisting in her hand like warm milk. She looks down at his Big Bear hat and tugs. They wait together at the edge of the busy road.

'How do they sound?'

'Zzzing. Plish. Squalk. Plash. Smeeaaow.'

The little man on the far side ticks over from red to green. Barney's mother leads him smartly onto the zebra, looking left and right, just to be sure.

'You're a lucky boy. They all sound the same to me. Dum, dum, dum.'

'The same? How can they sound the same?'

Betrayal. She hears it in that rising inflection. Sees it again as a horde of warriors riding across the plains of his vision. She lowers her free hand soft against his shoulder. A moneybag dangles from her wrist, rivulets of silver collecting in its imitation leather.

She thinks: this again, yes, but today is full. There's tax forms to complete and the batteries to buy for the smoke alarm. I could phone a doctor later on. It might be one time too many. Oh, just look how the street stretches away into the grey of the rain. It's as if it were going forever.

No, she decides. This has to stop. Barney doesn't have that Nabokovian thing, that whatchamacallit, that condition. Just an overactive mind. Normal for a child. She calms herself remembering something she saw on television when she was a little girl. A huge

raindrop fell, ever so slowly, into a cloud of dust. It threw up rainbows like a bomb. Silent. That's how she remembers it, anyway.

They arrive at the bank and stop at the steps, flanked by pastel doric columns. She crouches to his level.

'Do you like the sounds?'

'I like rain. I like it when I'm tucked in bed, too.'

She squeezes his hand to remind him. Barney stares up the steps and into the black beyond. What does he see in there? Shapes that loom? Ruthless monsters?

'I'm scared.' he says.

'Now, Barney, there's nothing to be frightened of. It's just an ordinary building with people working in it. People like daddy.'

'I know,' says Barney, 'but it tastes yellow.'

