

DICKY-WICKY!: Steve Fuger

Lying there in the dark, eyes fixed on the small figure. I'd insisted on being able to see him, and now I couldn't tear my eyes away. There he was, so tiny, he looked so far away, so far away in the distance. I was tired, though I couldn't accept that I was. Soon I would drift off; soon, no matter how hard I fought it, my eyes would drift and sleep would overtake me, though I didn't understand that it was sleep I was resisting. I stared hard at the little man, my eyes wide to stop them closing, and I smiled: we'd had such fun, and the little man had been part of it, it had been such an exciting day, and now at the end, his story had been told to me again and there he still was, I could still see him. And he would still be there in the morning when I woke.

But the second my eyelids drooped and closed, the little man leapt into them, right under my eyelids, right inside. My eyes sprang open and he hurtled across my sheet away from me then back towards me. I twisted sharply to avoid his headlong rush but he raced across the floor, then vertically up the wardrobe doors, across the windowsill and over the curtains, then back across the sheet towards my head again.

Then nothing. I remember nothing after that.

'You were screaming: Dicky-Wicky! Dicky-Wicky! Dicky-Wicky!' said Mum. 'You were two, or three? I can't remember which Christmas it was now. All the crackers had little black felted nursery rhyme figures stuck on them and you loved the one of Dick Whittington, with his cat at his feet. You insisted on peeling it off the cracker and sticking it on the wall beside your bed. And then, of course, you lay there staring at it. When I ran in you were pointing all over the room screaming Dicky-Wicky! It took me a while to work out what was wrong. You poor little thing.' And we laughed and hugged.

I remember little Dick Whittington being all over the room, everywhere I looked. I remember what I came to understand was the negative image on the wall when I glanced back to where I'd stuck him. I remember the terror.