

The New Criterion

Poems

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Domestic Cappadocia

by [Ben Downing](#)

I

They seemed content enough, the married pair
who owned my charming cave hotel,
and ran the place commendably well,
solicitous yet casual, always there

when needed yet never hovering,
and often snatching (where they could)
quick private moments when they would
allow themselves some little couple thing

—a squeeze of hands, a whispered joke
or endearment, once even a furtive kiss—
that made their life appear harmonious.
Until, that is, the night I awoke

at three o'clock to yells and cries
rumbling up from their rooms below;
sporadic at first and fairly low-
intensity, they became by five

continuous, hysterical, and loud,
culminating in a door flung wide,
the wife's wails further amplified,
the husband's now-threatening shouts,

her frantic steps across the floor,
his execrations, her disdain,
a slap, a crash, a h ...

Ben Downing is the author of *Calligraphy Shop* (Zoo Press), a book of poems.

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