

**It Takes One to Know One (Short-listed, Worcestershire Literary Festival Flash
Fiction Competition, 2012)**

They'd spotted her as she'd entered the station bar, expensively dressed. They noted her eager gaze, the slight droop of her shoulders on realising that he – in their experience, it was usually a he – was not there and the way she ordered a drink and chose a quiet table in the corner. As always, they'd tossed a coin; Tony had won.

Figuring fifteen minutes was about right, he'd slowly sipped his pint and then strolled across the room. She set down her newspaper and smiled as Tony stopped next to her table.

“You look like you need cheering up, darling” he said. “Anything I can do?”

“Not really” she replied in a soft voice. “I was hoping to meet someone – but I got caught in traffic and missed them.”

John watched as they continued their conversation. They would have one more drink, then Tony would suggest they went somewhere for a bite to eat. In the narrow alleyways around the station, no-one would notice a young couple strolling hand-in-hand – or the man in dark clothing, following them in the shadows. It had worked so many times; why should this be different?

Much later, after the fatal mugging and Tony's funeral, John thought back to that night in the bar. They'd not paid much attention to the other young woman sitting alone, although he thought she reminded him of someone. She'd slipped out immediately after the couple. By the time John reached the door, it was too late.