

Bourne
toWrite...
creative writing
workshops

Instinct

by Martin Bourne

Instinct is a marvelous thing. It can neither be explained nor ignored. The blaze from the warehouse lit up the faces of the crowd. Detective Constable Becton accepted his instinct was not always right, but one man looked out of place among the onlookers. He ran as soon as Becton approached and that was good enough. He eventually caught up with him in blood alley. The unofficial name for a 50 yard twisting walk through between office blocks in the Aldgate area of London. A favourite area for prostitutes and pimps. If you knew the alley, you only went in if you could handle yourself. Innocents going in unawares did not often come out the other end unscathed.

It was dark, but the light from offices above was enough to reveal the suspect was carrying matches and a can of lighter fuel. Sufficient evidence of going equipped for arson, and in Becton's view enough to arrest him. As he moved towards the alley exit, suspect in handcuffs, the way was blocked by two heavyweights.

"You guys look like you're lost. Why don't you ask for directions at that pub over the road?" said Becton.

They did not move.

"Clearly you're not lost, and don't fancy a drink. Look guys, whoever you are, get out of my way, unless you fancy a night in the cells"

The alleyway was barely wide enough for the two men and one moved forward. As he went to pull the suspect away from Becton, he felt the full force of a police issue oak truncheon hit the side of his head and his legs crumpled. The other leapt over his stricken accomplice. The suspect wriggled and snapped his head back into Becton's face followed by a fist from the heavy. As Becton fell against the wall dazed, the two men and the suspect escaped. The suspect making a comical sight as he tried to run with his hands shackled behind. The trio vanished into the night time crowd. Becton had not recognised any of them but he committed their faces to memory.

A few nights later, in the same area, a raid resulted in a number of prostitutes being arrested. This was an expected interruption to business for many of the girls and their pimps, and although it did not rate highly for the police officers involved, it helped clear the streets for a while and paid lip service to the problem of kerb crawling.

Becton walked slowly down the line of girls in the station.

“Any of you girls know about a warehouse fire in Whitechapel the other night, and a couple of heavies who took a dislike to me.”

“Get a clout did yer” called out one.

“Right, all in for a few questions one at a time”

Becton got his break. One of the girls revealed that her brother had been forced to start the fire to buy her freedom. Investigation revealed that the goods in the warehouse were stolen and the reason for the fire was a feud between two crime families.

.