

## *Death in Small Doses* - Bernard Steele

Then everything began to happen at once. Blanchard and his team hit the bricks, tumbled into the subway station with guns pointed and voices screaming. Everyone, including Akbar Khan, was herded into a corner at gunpoint. Arlish and his team then entered the platform. The men ran, jumped onto the tracks, and headed toward 33<sup>rd</sup> with weapons drawn and mounted flashlights sweeping from side to side. On the Church Avenue platform, Blanchard and his men extracting passengers from the subway carriages, searching them one at a time, and then moving them to another section of the platform.

Akbar Khan kept to the rear of his group, watching and waiting. The other end of the scene was much the same. That station was also locked down and the searching had begun. Children were crying, women were screaming, and men were demanding to see warrants.

Mustafa was standing with a group under guard, also watching and waiting. Medson and his team were already making their way along the tracks from 33<sup>rd</sup> to Church Avenue. Blanchard was standing back, keeping an eye on everyone's position, when he saw one of his men jump into the carriage, pushing his way inward. He grabbed a man by his coat and dragged him alone onto the platform, shouting.

"Why are you backing away? Search him." In an instant, the man was braced against the carriage and searched. Someone shouted, "Bingo" and held up a plastic bottle with tubing attached. Blanchard turned and barked, "HAZMAT." Two men in white suits appeared as if out of nowhere. The device was secured and the prisoner handcuffed.

At the other end, the same scene was unfolding. Three devices were found and three prisoners secured. The searching continued and Mustafa waited. In the tunnels, the DEA teams were moving toward each other with nothing to report.

In the hallowed halls of the media, editors, reporters, directors, and anchors were mulling over the strange sounding email they had received and wondering what to make of it. The word finally came from every direction, cell phones, I-pods, emails, blogs, you name it, *Trouble in Brooklyn Subway*. The media descended like a swarm.

Blanchard turned his attention to the group that was huddled to his left on the platform. He pointed and snapped his orders, "separate and search." His men moved swiftly toward the group and the separation was set in motion.

Akbar Khan moved slowly forward, his hands in his coat pockets, his eyes fixed on Joel Blanchard. He kept murmuring to himself, *This man is evil, he is the infidel, he must die, Allah Akbar*. Akbar was three deep in people when he slowly removed the weapons from his waistband and quietly released the safeties. He pushed his way forward, pointing his

guns at the heads of the two men who were searching passengers and fired two bursts at point-blank range. The SWAT team men were dead before their bodies hit the ground. The people they were searching were shot and tumbled over, too. The group behind Akbar scattered or dropped to the ground.

Blanchard turned toward the sound of the gunfire and the two men faced each other across the platform. Blanchard saw people huddled against a wall behind Akbar. It took a split second to switch from automatic to single shot. Akbar fired first. He sprayed bullets at Blanchard and everyone around him-people were dropping like ninepins. Blanchard was hit, but he did not go down. He pumped four rounds into Akbar's chest, the impact forcing him backward. He fell onto the people huddled behind him. Akbar Khan was dead. Blanchard dropped to his knees and fell forward, bleeding from wounds to his legs, arms, shoulder, and face. His team surrounded him, facing outward looking for more trouble. Paramedics at the top of stairs were waiting for the all-clear signal before descending, while people lay bleeding, dying, and dead across the platform.

When the all-clear finally sounded and the paramedics descended, it was onto a scene that they would never forget. It was reminiscent of 9/11, but on a much smaller scale. Seventeen people, including three children, were pronounced dead at the scene, four agents, including Blanchard, were rushed to emergency rooms.

The leader of the SWAT team radioed an urgent message to the team at 33<sup>rd</sup>, "Look for shooters on the platform, Joel down, many dead and wounded." Medson and Arlish both listened to the transmission, spoke to each other, turned around and made their way back to their locations on the run.

Mustafa continued to look from his position on the platform. He was in despair as one after the other of his men were caught, stripped of their devices, and handcuffed. So far, he had counted five. He hoped and prayed that they had sprayed enough to contaminate the carriages. He sensed the change in the attitude and posture of the SWAT team. They were whispering to each other and looking around, while a second SWAT was positioned to join the one person guarding his group. Mustafa surmised that something was happening at the other end and he decided that his time had come. He bent his head, said a prayer, and stepped out of the crowd, screaming, "Allah Akbar!"

Mustafa fired at two guards and then another. He aimed above their flak jackets and his bullets found their marks. Both men went down with shattered faces. Once again the SWAT team could not return fire-too many people were cowering behind the target. The SWAT team was moving to the left and right of Mustafa in an attempt to cut him off from the people behind him. Mustafa continued to take pot shots at anyone who moved, including terrified women and screaming children.

John Medson and his team arrived at the station in the middle of the firefight. Medson peeped over the edge of the station floor at the edge of the carriage and saw a man facing west and firing two weapons wildly to his left and right. There was no time for analysis he had to be stopped and Medson had a clear shot.

Medson raised his automatic, steadied it with his left hand and fired one round. Mustafa's arms were raised and pointing forward. The shot from Medson entered his ribcage just below his armpit and ripped its way past his lungs and into his heart. Mustafa stumbled sideways and lay still on the ground. Sammy the Butch walked slowly to his car and drove away.