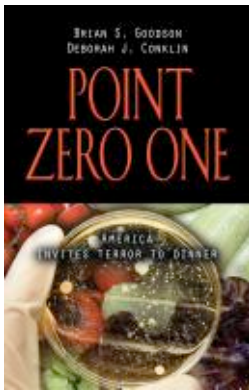


BRIAN S. GOODSON
DEBORAH J. CONKLIN

POINT ZERO ONE

A petri dish containing a mixture of food and bacteria, held by a gloved hand, surrounded by fresh vegetables.

AMERICA
INVITES TERROR TO DINNER



A nameless, faceless enemy uses an invisible army to poison America's food supply. Through existing legislative loopholes, America invites terror to dinner.

Point Zero One

Order the complete book from

[Booklocker.com](http://www.booklocker.com/p/books/6092.html?s=pdf)

<http://www.booklocker.com/p/books/6092.html?s=pdf>

**or from your favorite neighborhood
or online bookstore.**

Your free excerpt appears below. Enjoy!

Point Zero One

America Invites Terror to Dinner

Copyright © 2012 Brian S. Goodson Deborah J. Conklin

ISBN 978-1-61434-905-1

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, recording or otherwise, without the prior written permission of the author.

Published in the United States by Booklocker.com, Inc., Port Charlotte, Florida.

The characters and events in this book are fictitious. Any similarity to real persons, living or dead, is coincidental and not intended by the author.

Printed in the United States of America on acid-free paper.

Booklocker.com, Inc.
2012

First Edition

Chapter 1

An out of control bus darts left, this time ramming an older Volkswagen Beetle destroying its front passenger quarter. Aaron Markson briefly watches the defeated V-Dub limp off the freeway onto the shoulder, settling at last upon its own disjointed tire.

Still ahead, the bus swerves right, onto the shoulder and flattening a sign before returning to the road resuming havoc. It accelerates, arcing left into the passing lane forcing commuters into one another initiating a symphony of airbags.

The bus broadsides a car, sending it into a violent spiral, and leaving a variety of shattered parts sprawled on the road. One after another, commuters roll into the tire-puncturing field of debris further building a gathering inventory of unanswered screams.

Severed upon impact, the rear hatch sails upward briefly before crashing into the windshield of another vehicle. The commuter hits the dividing barrier head on drawing the southbound traffic into the calamity.

At last recognizing what it is Markson watches the situation continue to deteriorate as once accommodating flowers litter the freeway.

The battered Hearse loses its unique cargo.

The G-Force from the impact spits the casket out of the spinning Hearse and onto the freeway. In an array of sparks, it slides as a morbid bobsled.

“Holy shit!” Markson says, wrestling with which direction to swerve to avoid the fast approaching casket. It continually rebounds from debris as if the sphere within a pinball game.

Impact with various auto parts causes the once eternal resting place to tumble. It begins to fall apart until catching at last the protruding end of a mangled fender. The bulky auto part halts the base of the casket ahead of the top causing the coffin upward, to stand. The opposite end of this same fender dislodges the lid, revealing its occupant. For reasons unexplainable, his focus is upon the extensive makeup on the face of the corpse. Markson passes uncomfortably nearby in the adjacent lane as the body catapults out of the casket, the former occupant greeting eternity in a way never imagined in a lifetime. A brief glimpse in the rear view demonstrates a pair of vehicles passing helplessly over it, two unwitting commuters drawn one by one into a memory which a lifetime of prayers fail to help them forget.

“That’s a hell of a thing,” Markson says, grimacing and redirecting his eyes mercifully forward. “That is one *hell* of a thing.”

Markson resumes and, returning his attention to the out of control bus once again hears the distinct sound of metal crunching.

A pulverized motorcycle spits out from under the bus, the riders *Bell* helmet cracked, splintered.

The bus belches a thick plume of smoke. Engine fluids spill onto the freeway coating the road into a jubilee of slick.

Markson veers left as a reflex, wincing as he narrowly skirts the rider.

“*Christ!*”

He dials 911, his eyes alternating from the phone to the road, the bus.

“911 can you please hold?”

He pulls the phone away from his ear and looks at it briefly with disbelief.

Point Zero One

The bus crashes into a Mercedes, knocking it into a Ford Pinto already so repeatedly dented Markson briefly suspects its driver has his attorney on speed dial.

Markson steers past the gathering accident and accelerates to catch up to the bus. At last, still on hold for emergency services he pulls alongside.

He hits his horn, gaining the attention of passengers. "Take the wheel," he yells.

A number of frightened and confused faces stare at him, the front of the bus, and back at him repeatedly. Markson discards his phone and points to a particular young man. "*Drive the goddamn bus!*"

The passenger, at last understanding begins forward and loses his footing as the bus jerks erratically left once more.

Markson mimics the maneuver, narrowly averting a collision of his own. He hits his horn yet again, this time seeking the attention of another passenger, anyone.

The passenger that lost his footing stands once again and continues toward the front of the city vessel.

It strikes yet another vehicle. Upon impact, the passenger bangs his head along the handrail, bloodying his nose.

The commuter at last recovers and grasps the shoulder of the unconscious driver and begins to unbuckle the seat belt. The driver jerks the wheel right and the passenger falls into him, bashing his face on the steering wheel, this time breaking his nose. One front tooth falls to the floor.

Seat belt undone, the bleeding commuter pulls the unconscious driver out of the seat, and rests him uneasily on the floor before positioning himself behind the wheel.

The bus pulls into the breakdown lane one exit south of Interstate 10. The tires lock up as he brings it to a halt in a gathering cloud of mixed vapors. Flames begin climbing from beneath.

Markson pulls ahead and gets out of his Mustang to evaluate. "Open the door," he says, grabbing the bus entryway. The driver swings open the door and Markson sees blood streaming down his face onto the original operator, lying prone. "Are you alright?" he asks entering. The cabin is filling with smoke. "Everybody get off. If you are okay, and someone needs help, then give assistance. Get out of the bus and well away from it, up onto the embankment. Move out!" He looks at the former passenger still seated behind the wheel. "Are you able to help me get him out of here?"

The bloodied stranger nods.

The two carry the unconscious man up the slope, away from the volatile vessel as smoke continues to plume from the underside. It soon clouds the freeway, augmenting the pandemonium with limited visibility. "Is everyone okay?" Markson asks, as he sets the unconscious operator down. Vomit covers the man's shirt, and his crotch is wet. The pungent odor of feces wafts, drawing a brief wince. "You did a good job," he says to the man that took control and ended the ordeal.

"Thanks, but I think my nose is broken," the man says.

Markson briefly examines his face. "Yep, it is, but I am sure you saved a lot of lives today," he says while retrieving his phone from his pocket and dialing 911 once again.

"911, what is the nature of your emergency?"

"Don't put me on hold! We have a multiple vehicle accident with numerous injuries. We are on the northbound 405, just south of route 10. The driver of the bus that caused this is unconscious. It appears he passed out while driving. There is another man about a mile back that was riding a motorcycle. I think maybe the EMT's should check on him immediately," Markson says, continuing. "The bus ran him over. It didn't look good. A bunch of other vehicles are involved, I can't tell you how many. There is also a corpse on the road. A casket was

Point Zero One

dislodged; slid down the freeway, hit something and opened...” He pauses briefly, terminating description of the horrific incident, wondering how anyone could possibly complete such a sentence. “This scene is polluted with ugly,” he says at last, wincing. “We need immediate assistance.”

“A corpse?” she asks, pausing in consideration before resuming. “Are there life threatening injuries?”

Markson looks at the former occupants of the bus. None appears to have anything more than bumps and, perhaps emerging bruises. “I don’t know the severity of injuries of other commuters involved, but the bus driver is unconscious. I’m not sure what is wrong with him. We need an ambulance, and right away,” he says.

“Is he bleeding?”

Markson inspects him briefly, and finds only residual droplets from the man with the broken nose. “No, he doesn’t appear to be.”

“Is he breathing?”

“Yes, he is breathing, and although his pulse feels thready, his vitals seem fine, to anticipate any further questions, but he needs...”

“Sir, do you have a functional vehicle?”

Markson considers the inquiry, the latest in a developing list of ambush. “Yes, of course. Why?” *What do you need the make, model and color?*

“Take him to the nearest hospital as quickly as you can,” the operator says. “Right now, emergency services are overwhelmed. It may be some time before we can get anyone out there,” she says.

Markson tears the phone away from his ear and stares at it in disbelief. Resuming, he asks, “Are you telling me you can’t get assistance out here? This is a monumental disaster...”

“It may be a while. If you want to help, get the victim medical attention. Once you get to the hospital, you will better understand. The ambulances are backlogged, and for an hour minimum,” she says. “The victim could be dead by then. Don’t delay, and drive safely. Good luck.”

“Alright,” Markson says, bewildered. “Thank you.” He disconnects, and considers the hard-to-believe words. He cannot imagine what might cause such a surge of demand for emergency services, or what other dramatic incident could possibly have occurred to take precedence over this extensive disaster. Following the operator’s advice, he recruits the other man’s help. Markson suggests he also go to the hospital and see a doctor.

The two carry the victim to Markson’s car.

Moments later, Markson creeps onto the bottlenecked freeway and begins toward Harbor Medical. He thinks of the corpse speeding past him upright, the brief but somehow crystal-clear restorative makeup of the mortician, a stranger obscurely introduced in death. He wrestles to deny the vivid clarity of such memory. His mind jaunts involuntarily to the more enchanting mental imagery of the poor soul on the motorcycle, a distinct recollection of the misshapen body spit ruthlessly from under the bus. He hopes he survives, and that someone is helping him. He tries to convince himself someone, some stranger must certainly have enough compassion to get the victim out of the middle of the freeway. Upon further consideration, Markson realizes the rigid steel structure of the motorcycle tore up the underside of the bus motor and drive train, ultimately contributing to disabling it, terminating its wanton destruction. Combined with the passenger now riding in his car, the two ended an insidious incident. Heroes *both*, Markson concludes, although one perhaps never to be aware. Markson ponders the fathoms of the surrounding tragedy.

Point Zero One

Amidst all of this, he confronts a disturbing question...
What is going on?

Chapter 2

A sprawling line of vehicles awaits one behind another at emergency receiving. “What the hell is this?” he asks, thinking aloud. The reflexive comment draws a response from the rear passenger.

“God help us,” he says before crossing himself in the Catholic tradition.

Markson spares him a glance in the rear view mirror. “I don’t have time for this,” he says. “Are you able to help carry this man from the parking lot? It is right over there,” he points.

“That’s fine. It looks like we might be all day in this mess,” he says, speaking in a nasally voice. “I would like to see a doctor. My face is *killing me!*” he says, and laughs briefly before wincing, the facial expression an invasive reminder of his injury.

“Okay, we’ll do that,” Markson says as he maneuvers his car out of line. “My name is Aaron Markson. My friends call me A-Mark. My girlfriend is a doctor in the emergency room. I’ll do what I can to get you in there, but it looks like you are going to be here for a while, regardless.”

“I appreciate your help, A-Mark. My name is Tom. I am glad you came along when you did. I think a lot of others feel that way, too. Thanks.”

“Let’s just get you and this poor guy taken care of,” A-Mark says as he at last finds a space absurdly distant from the entryway. He parks, and the two begin moving the victim.

“Man, is he *ripe!* What’s he been into?” Tom asks, wincing as they continue to remove the still unconscious victim from the front seat. “He must have eaten bad food, or something.”

Point Zero One

“Could be,” A-Mark says while grabbing the casualty under his arms.

The two proceed to the door in strenuous silence.

Upon entering their silent companion vomits, a crimson puddle.

“This man is puking blood!” A-Mark barks, before turning him on his side and then placing him onto the floor. He looks about and discovers no available gurneys. Every seat and most of the floor space is overflowing with people. One man helplessly retches in a corner.

A-Mark stands staring at the surrounding bedlam as his girlfriend Doctor Jan Michaels enters the reception area. “This man is puking blood,” he says, skipping past any greeting.

“What are you doing here?” she asks, squatting and pressing her fingers on the victim’s abdomen.

“I got caught up in the goose chase from hell. I will explain later. Or, try, anyway.” He looks around at the chaos. “It looks like you have your hands full. What is going on?” he asks.

“It is mostly food poisoning. There has also been an escalation of gunshot wounds, for some reason. It’s crazy,” she says pausing. “Most of these people are...”

“She’s coding!” an EMT declares, interrupting as he enters receiving pushing a gurney bearing an old woman.

A-Mark and Jan exchange a brief glance before standing. “Wheel her into ER, stat!” she says, pointing and then resuming. “This man is hemorrhaging it is too late,” she says, looking at A-Mark, and then at his unknown companion. She briefly examines the other that arrived with her boyfriend. “I am sorry, but your broken nose will have to wait,” she says. “Get this man an ice pack,” she barks, directing a triage nurse before resuming. “Where did you find him, or, them, rather?”

“The unconscious victim was driving a bus filled with passengers when he passed out,” he explains.

“Oh, my!” she says. “That is very bad timing.”

“It was a nightmare, and you’ll be feeling the brunt of it soon. If there is good news it is the rest of the passengers were only shaken up, and not injured. They have this man to thank. Tom got behind the wheel and took control, saving lives. Get him help, he deserves it,” he says, pausing.

“We’ll get to you soon, Tom.”

A-Mark shakes his head as he ponders the extensive chain of cause and effect. “The bus operator should have stayed home if he was feeling so sick.”

“Nobody calls in sick anymore,” Jan says. “They fear losing their job, easily replaced by potential employees desperate for any income they can get their hands on. Crazy demands in our workplace these days,” she adds, considering.

“I think emergency services called in sick, or might as well have. Nobody was available to help at the scene-*That* scene. I have never seen anything like it,” A-Mark says, still vexed at the bursting dam of events.

“None of them are at the beach right now, I assure you,” Jan says. “This surge of sickness is crippling the system. It is unprecedented. Many first responders are here, in fact.”

A woman storms in with a bundled-up infant cradled in her arms. “My *baby!* Somebody help my baby!” she wails with fear-filled eyes. “My baby stopped *breathing!*”

“I have to go,” Jan says. “See you tonight -- *sometime*,” she adds, walking swiftly toward the woman with the child and directing her to follow. “Code blue, infant,” she yells before the three disappear into a doorway.

“What about him?” he asks Jan too late, pointing at the original driver, a gurgling carcass.

“I’ll take care of him,” Tom asserts, seeing what is happening and crossing himself.

Point Zero One

“Here, use this,” A-Mark says, before removing his white jacket. “Will you be okay?” he asks.

Tom takes the jacket to cover the victim, but is slow to reply. He looks around, studying the lunacy. “Will any of us be okay?” he asks.

A-Mark briefly explores the question. “Thanks for what you did,” he offers at last, leaving Tom’s profound inquiry unanswered. Markson’s only certainty is he will be traveling to Santa Monica on Western Avenue, and avoiding the freeway. It is obvious there will be other sickened drivers out there. He considers the volume of vehicles on the road, the *odds* and the enhanced potential of another commuter duplicating the bus driver’s helpless loss of control, incoherent victims piloting deadly projectiles. Slower routes might increase the odds of arriving safely. Such conviction is short-lived, however as he remembers the bus driver accelerating. A-Mark fast determines the already maniacal streets of Los Angeles may have become far more dangerous indeed. All at once, the marginal distance to UCLA seems a journey far, far away.

As he slides behind the wheel A-Mark is acutely reminded his classic Mustang reeks of vomit, urine and feces. A-Mark’s phone rings, his boss. He answers battling the imposing aroma.

“A-Mark, where are you? They are waiting for you at the substation.”

You have to be kidding, he thinks before beginning an explanation. Wrestling with nausea from the residual odor, A-Mark briefly describes the events of his recent past. As he proceeds, the resulting wind from acceleration relieves him of the overpowering stench. After a moment and in consideration he asks why the meeting is so damned important.

“Because the shit has hit the fan,” his boss returns, pausing and allowing A-Mark to absorb the words.

“What are you talking about?”

Brian S. Goodson

“We are under attack.” After a brief silence, he proceeds. “I’ll advise them about your delay. They will brief you. Just get there as quickly as you can,” his boss says, and disconnects.

A-Mark’s earlier inquiry returns to him, a daunting question preceding an evasive reply.

What is going on?

Chapter 3

Well aware those already there have been waiting for him, A-Mark takes a silent seat at a desk within a makeshift substation at UCLA.

A man enters in silence and stands before everyone. He proceeds to loosen his necktie. “Ladies and gentlemen I want to thank you for coming, and especially on short notice. My name is Lawrence Haggerty and I am with the Food and Drug Administration. All of you will get to know me so, if you prefer you can call me Larry. I think after what I tell you today you may find yourselves inclined to dispose of a number of formalities,” he says, looking about.

Two others begin dispersing manila envelopes, placing one with each in attendance. All look about as they become aware each has their name on it, typed neatly onto a label.

They are very prepared for this, A-Mark concludes with silent intrigue. *There is even facial recognition by the couriers, perfect strangers*. The determination offers strong implications. *How could they have so many names organized already?* He wonders.

“What is this about?” another inspector asks.

“We are getting to that,” Larry replies, proceeding. “Let me inform you we are working hand in hand with Homeland Security to resolve this problem. The FBI is involved, as well as the CIA, and the CDC, among others. Rest assured every detail would be subject to scrutiny to produce determinations necessary to address this issue. We ask each of you to perform your tasks with your highest level of professionalism, and remain vigilant about accomplishing our collective objective,” he says, once again pausing and looking about the room, studying their faces. “Ladies and gentlemen, we have reason to

believe the United States is once again under attack,” Larry says, letting the words settle into disbelieving ears.

“*What are you talking about?*” a woman asks, as a reflex. Others begin with questions. The room explodes with inquiries.

Larry holds up his hands, settling them. “By definition it is *Agroterrorism*, or *Bioterrorism*. Categorically, it is by every legal definition both,” he says before growing once again silent. None speaks for an extended moment.

“Given your profession, each of you realizes after 9/11 the United States initiated a varied perspective toward our resources. We adopted a posture of defense, which includes anticipation. Among our extensive list of concern is food. A significant change came about where we redefined our food safety program to become a food defense initiative. Despite our efforts to intervene, security has been breached and our nation’s meats, fruits and vegetables have been tainted, compromised and now contain bacterial, chemical and viral contaminants. Pharmaceuticals have been likewise sabotaged, and many are being removed from store shelves, or halted in production as we speak.”

A-Mark considers the implications. The odds, he concludes are simple; “If what you are describing is actually occurring, I calculate the destruction as 9/11 times 100, minimum.”

The insightful comment draws an understanding glance from Larry.

“*Oh my god!*” one woman blurts. She immediately opens her cell phone, excuses herself and dials home. “Johnny, don’t you or your sister eat anything until I get there. I mean it, not a bite of *anything*,” she says. “I will explain later. I can’t talk right now,” she adds before snapping her phone shut and apologizing for the interruption.

“That’s alright, I understand,” Larry says. “I would suggest all of you do that, and as soon as you can. Once we are through

Point Zero One

discussing it, you will have a more clear understanding. For that reason, it might behoove you wait. The fact is, statistics reveal people all over the country are, this moment getting sick, and in some cases dying,” he says. “Right now people with comparable credentials as each of you possesses are being similarly briefed. We have to assemble a task force that can arrive at conclusions, and in a prompt manner. There is a considerable variety of duties to perform. Some inspectors will interview victims, and ask them to do their best to document what they ate as far back as ten days before they became ill. I don’t know about you people but I have to focus to recall what I had for lunch two days ago, and I may not necessarily arrive at a definitive answer. Other individuals will perform random but thorough testing of our foods still in the field, or on the farm. Additionally, our existing surplus requires examination. Special agents from the FDA have assignments that include thorough inspection of our nation’s food production facilities. All international shipments will be held pending confirmation of their compliance of our food defense initiative. This is extensive, and many of these products are perishable. These imported items will henceforth be subject to an expanded level of chemical detection devices. Any foods suspected of contamination will remain under quarantine while the process of determining their safety is completed. Translated, that means much of the imported foods may rot in holding containers pending evaluation. The financial and political challenges of this are nearly impossible to calculate. Some governments may deem this a victory for the terrorist organizations, whoever they are.”

“*Whoever they are?*” the same woman asks. “Do you mean you don’t know? No one has assumed responsibility for this?”

“So far, none has done so, but we will find them. Now, this can become an international public relations nightmare we may

never recover from, and one that may adversely affect our own export relations. The projected expenses of such an occurrence as this are astronomical. The worst-case scenario appears to have become reality, and can potentially cripple the United States economically and consequently many other nations as well. This very moment, world leaders are meeting, and discussing this event. Until this situation is ratified, we expect some of our exports will make it no further than the docks of the receiving nations, if they even leave our country at all.” Larry pauses once again to allow sufficient time for consideration. After a moment, he resumes. “In your envelopes are various testing devices. Most of you may already know what pulsed-field gel electrophoresis tests are, essentially genetic fingerprinting. If you are unsure how to use this instrument, there are people at your disposal to train you. We need to arrive at accurate conclusions, so if you are at all uncertain please, request assistance. Within your packet, you will also find your own designated targets of interest. In order to ensure thorough examination it is important that each of you remain focused on your specified facilities.

The contact information of each is within the envelope. Also within your packet is a cell phone.

It may ring at any time, night or day. We urge you to use it to call as needed, for any reason if you suspect anything out of the ordinary that potentially warrants an inquiry. We ask that you leave it on always, even while recharging. The final ingredient,” Larry says, clearing his throat. “The last, perhaps most important item within the contents of your packet are a variety of antibiotics. There are also antidotes to the most common poisons and neurotoxins. This last one is as a precaution. Keep your own safety in mind first, and foremost. I know many of you are prior military. I want there to be no mistake: This is war. Act accordingly, as necessary. Tracking

Point Zero One

down individuals with this deteriorated level of moral character may result in retaliation if confronted. You will be issued a firearm for defense. If you are not familiar with it, shooting safety courses and a practice range with a qualified instructor will be made available to you for as long as may be required. You may find yourselves targets of citizens holding you responsible for this incursion. I recommend carrying the weapon, and keeping it loaded at all times,” Larry says, pausing and searching the faces about the room. “Last, but not least is if any of you are uncomfortable with this, decidedly varied assignment now is the time to speak up. If you find yourself feeling this way later we will, of course allow you to walk away, and with your career and dignity intact. We do ask, however that each of you at least try, as a civic duty. The many citizens victimized by this bioterrorism epidemic are counting on both your courage and your expertise. It is you people, our nation’s food safety inspectors, working hand in hand with other agencies involved that are our best front line of defense,” Larry says, pausing to allow for reflection. “Any questions?” he asks.

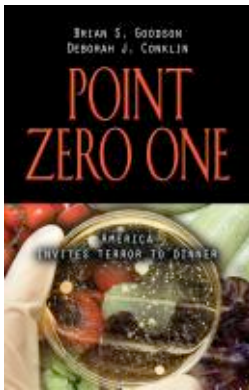
“Yes,” A-Mark begins, commanding his voice over every other. The gesture gains the attention of everyone present. “I can see you accessing our files, written information about our careers, etcetera all plotted out on paper, computer, whatever. I want to know how those handing us these envelopes physically recognized us, individually. The labels are names -- text, not photographs.”

“Like you people, they are trained professionals,” Larry says, then pausing briefly.

A-Mark concludes the brevity of Larry’s reply indicates volumes of information. The very best are involved, and even at this level of the investigative hierarchy.

Brian S. Goodson

“Any further questions?” Larry asks.
There are indeed.



A nameless, faceless enemy uses an invisible army to poison America's food supply. Through existing legislative loopholes, America invites terror to dinner.

Point Zero One

Order the complete book from

[Booklocker.com](http://www.booklocker.com/p/books/6092.html?s=pdf)

<http://www.booklocker.com/p/books/6092.html?s=pdf>

**or from your favorite neighborhood
or online bookstore.**