

# Raven's Run

by

John D. Trudel

*Inspired by family history*

**Note:** Photos are from the Noville/Seely/Reading/Trudel family archives. The originals are on permanent loan to the WAAAM Museum, Hood River, OR



***Raven's Run is a work of fiction. Names, characters, places, and incidents either are products of the author's imagination or are used fictitiously. Any resemblance to actual events or locales or persons, living or dead, is entirely coincidental.***

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## **Dedication**

This novel is dedicated to the uncle I never met, an Exceptional American from the old school, George O. Noville.

[April 24, 1890 – January 3, 1963]

In my mind, I can see George and Aunt Ruth looking down from a higher plane, viewing my novel in bemusement across time and space, much as my character Josie would. I hope they approve.

I also dedicate this book to my wife Pat. Without her patience and understanding, this novel would not exist.

## Acknowledgements

Ernest Hemingway once said, "There is no such thing as writing, only rewriting." Novels are that way.

I would never have made it without my small band of critical readers and editors who assiduously scanned years of drafts with eagle eyes and brutally honest criticism. Each time they touched my words, my novels got better. Kay Jewett deserves special credit.

Many have contributed to the publication and success of this book. Thank you all for the inspiration, friendship, and support. One I must mention is Norm Jones [August 11, 1924 – June 1, 2014], a longtime friend and World War II veteran. Norm made the pen I use for my book signings from a shard of wood from the original deck of the USS Missouri. The story behind this pen is inspiring:

<http://blog.johntrudel.com/?p=645>

*Finally, you, my readers, are most important of all.* Thank you for your support. Enjoy!!!

Please post reviews on Amazon and tell your friends if you like *Raven's Run*. There are links on my web page [www.johntrudel.com](http://www.johntrudel.com) and [blog.johntrudel.com](http://blog.johntrudel.com) that will lead you to my author's pages around the world and allow you to get on my (private, never sold or shared) lists for information about my novels and interesting world events that overlap them.

I enjoy signing books and talking with fans. The best part of being a published novelist is getting to meet and talk with interesting and supportive people.

I welcome comments and questions through my web page. Next year, expect *Raven's Redemption*.

*“Without electricity we aren’t a civilization and this is a major vulnerability.”*

Former CIA Director, James Woolsey

## Chapter 1 – Busted

### Present Day, CIA Headquarters, Langley Virginia

The man sat ramrod straight in the armless chair. He wore his black hair in a military style buzz cut, and there was an insolent look in his hard blue eyes. His face and forearms were deeply tanned and there were a few flecks of gray in his hair. He wore casual civilian clothes: A white dress shirt open at the neck and gray slacks.

None of his combat scars showed. With his muscular forearms he might have passed as an aging professional athlete, but only if you ignored his eyes and the way he held his hands.

Facing him across the table was Robert Cross, the CIA's assistant Deputy Director of Operations. He arranged the papers before him into neatly squared piles, carefully setting his gold pen alongside them on the massive mahogany table.

Cross liked order. "You understand, Mr. Wayne, that this is an administrative hearing. You are not on trial."

The man shrugged his shoulders but said nothing.

*No wonder they call him Cowboy, Cross thought. A hard case. Just what we need to cause more embarrassment for the Agency and bring Congress down on my ass.*

He studied the man carefully. Those eyes had seen too many betrayals. *Just another over-the-hill field agent with blood on his hands and a bad attitude.* "This is not a legal hearing, per se, but is there anyone you wish to have present?"

"The Director," Wayne said softly.

Cross shook his head.

"That's who I want."

"Not a chance. The Director's office need not be represented here, and it will not be."

Wayne shrugged. "Walter Ott, my control."

"That's not possible. Mr. Ott was directing you administratively, but he wasn't *there*, was he?"

"Are you going to punish him for what I did?"

"He is not being punished. Mr. Ott has been – reassigned."

The swarthy man at the end of the table cleared his throat. Both Cross and Wayne looked at him. "Formal charges or not, Mr. Wayne is entitled to legal representation."

"Not bloody likely," Wayne muttered under his breath.

Cross looked at him sharply. "What did you say?"

Wayne shook his head.

"We should go on the record," the man said.

"Not yet," Cross said. He looked at Wayne. "Do you find these proceedings amusing?"

"Not in the least." Wayne's voice was surprisingly deep, an actor's voice. He said something in a foreign language.

"I don't speak Farsi," Cross said.

"That was Arabic. ' Hamas rules ' Do you know what it means?"

"I presume it's something about how Hamas asserts power in Palestine."

"You need to get out more."

"That's enough. We're going on the record now." Cross gestured at the man. "Mister Gomez is from the general counsel's office, and will take notes. I will be asking some questions about your operation in Iran."

"He's entitled to legal representation," Gomez repeated. "That would be me."

“I was getting to that.” Cross looked at Wayne. “Do you waive your right to representation?”

“I have a question first,” Wayne said. “Who’s the professor?”

He gestured at the bald man with the tweed jacket, rimless glasses, and goatee at the end of the table. In contrast, Gomez and Cross were wearing the dark suits that were *de rigueur* for executives from the seventh floor of Langley.

“Strike that.” Cross sounded irritated. “Dr. Goldfarb is here ex-officio. He has no official role at this hearing. He will not appear in the record.”

Wayne raised an eyebrow.

“I invited myself, Mr. Wayne.” Goldfarb chuckled, pulled a pipe out of the pocket of this tweed vest, looked at it, and then made a show of loading and tamping down the tobacco. Cross frowned, but the Doctor finally set it on the table in front of himself without lighting it.

“I knew about Hamas Rules when you were still wearing diapers. There are no rules.”

Wayne nodded.

“Some things don’t change. It’s the same as the methods the ancient Romans and Persians used: Total annihilation of enemies. Ruthlessness is quite effective in some situations, actually, but it’s troubling to Western sensibilities and Christian compassion. Why I chose to attend is not your concern. Do you have any more questions?”

“No, Sir.”

Cross said, “We’re back on the record now. Do you request legal counsel?”

Wayne shook his head.

“I need you to speak aloud.”

“I waive my right to legal representation.”

“Good. That will expedite matters.” Cross looked at Gomez. “You can leave now.”

“I’ll stick around if you don’t mind. There are protocols....”

Goldfarb was watching Cross, who finally said, “As you wish.”

“Now do I get to know what this is about? Why am I here?”

“The allegation is torture.”

“Are you serious?”

“You are accused of torturing an Iranian engineer, Mr. Rajabalinejad.”

“That’s absurd.”

“How do you know that?”

“I’m probably the last person who saw him alive. I don’t recall that he complained about torture.”

“The Iranians say he’s dead,” Cross said. “What do you say?”

“As little as possible, Sir. I don’t plan to send flowers.”

“Mr. Mohammadreza Rajabalinejad was a civilian employee of the Khatam al-Anbiya Construction Company. Khatam is a well respected firm that does Civil Engineering projects such as roads, dams, and tunnels. Your unauthorized act has created an embarrassment to the United States. It’s resulted in protests being filed with the UN and the League of Arab States. An apology has been demanded and Congressional hearings are being discussed. What do you have to say for yourself?”

“It wasn’t my intention....” Wayne said.

“Not your intention,” Cross threw his arms up.

Wayne shrugged.

“I need a response. What do you say?”

“I say your entire line of questioning seems off base, Mr. Cross.”

“Explain.”

“First off, according to the Iranian Press, over 70% of Khatam’s work is military-related. Secondly, Raja was a Colonel in the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps. In his college days he was a member of *Basij*, the zealots who prowl the streets looking for insufficiently veiled women and others who violate strict Islamic norms.”

“What’s your point?” Cross said.

“This guy wasn’t a social worker or choir boy; he was an Islamic thug.”

“So you tortured him because you didn’t approve of his religious practices....?”

“Negative.”

“In your own words, what happened over there?”

“Shit,” Wayne said. “Shit happens. In this case it was Natanz.”

“What are you talking about?”

“Natanz is a hardened Fuel Enrichment Plant covering 100,000 square meters that is built 8 meters underground and protected by a concrete wall 2.5 meters thick, itself protected by another concrete wall. Raja was involved in the design of this facility, including its security systems. Israeli military intelligence refers to the Natanz site as ‘Kashan.’

“Natanz is located between Isfahan and Kashan in central Iran. The facility is 100 miles north of Esfahan, located in old Kashan-Natanz, near a village called Deh-Zireh, itself located about 25 miles southeast of Kashan. It falls under the jurisdiction of the Governor’s Office of Kashan.”

Cross looked at his notes. “The State Department says the site you’re discussing is a project aimed at the eradication of deserts.”

“Right,” Wayne said. “Nuclear weapons eradicate things. That is why the Israelis have long been planning a first strike on the Natanz facility, and why the site is hardened.”

“Your mission had nothing to do with any facility. Nor did it involve torturing civilian workers. You were simply to meet a key asset and extract him, which you failed to do.”

“I met with the asset. He showed up on schedule.”

“Ali Rez Asgari.”

“Correct,” Wayne said. “The Governor of Kashan. He was a junior officer under the Shah and escaped the purge afterwards.”

“Mr. Asgari wasn’t with you when you were picked up,” Cross said.

“No, he was not.”

“What happened?”

“Like I said, Natanz happened. Ali didn’t make it.”

“Are you saying you violated your mission orders because of mitigating circumstances which you are now prepared to explain?”

“I’m saying Ali insisted on showing me the Natanz facility. He said it was urgent.”

“So you went off on a junket instead of following your orders, and in the process you lost the asset you were tasked with extracting? Mr. Asgari had extensive information about Iran’s military programs and policy. We wanted him brought to a safe place for debriefing.”

“He knew all about their weapons,” Wayne said. “Ali showed me six nuclear warheads, just out of final test and ready for deployment. Fifty more were in assembly. The uranium, incidentally, was Russian. The reports in the media about centrifuges were disinformation.”

“You saw these weapons with your own eyes?”

Wayne nodded. “Yes.”

“Do you have any photos or corroborating testimony to prove this?”

“No.”

“Why not?”

“Mohammadreza Rajabalinejad showed up unexpectedly at the facility. He was supposed to be in Tehran, and his appearance threw us off our schedule.”

“What schedule?”

“My schedule to get Ali out. His schedule to destroy the Natanz facility.”

“So you decided to abduct and torture Mr. Rajabalinejad?”

“I’m not sure if the definition of torture applies to this particular situation, but it might. In any case, Raja was alive when I last saw him.”

“After you’d interrogated him?”

“I didn’t interrogate him.” Wayne shrugged. “I wanted to, but we were in a bit of a hurry. I taped Raja’s mouth, tied him up, and left him handcuffed to one of the bomb caissons.”

“Are you saying he was unharmed when you left?”

“I may have bruised him a bit,” Wayne said, “but it’s of no consequence.”

Cross rolled his eyes. “I’ll be the judge of that. What happened next?”

“Ali activated the timers on three of the warheads. He said, ‘A pair, and a spare,’ twice in Persian, pointing at the bombs. Apparently he and Raja were not the best of friends and he wanted to get that message across. I think he succeeded.

“The door to the weapons vault was formidable. It was over six inches of armor-grade hardened steel but hung on massive counterbalanced hinges so it could be closed by one man. When we left, we welded it shut with thermite. I felt strong tremors just before the BlackHawk arrived to extract me, so I presume at least one of Ali’s warheads detonated.”

“The monitoring sites in Tel Aviv and Ankara confirmed two separate nuclear explosions eleven milliseconds apart totaling over a hundred kilotons,” Dr. Goldfarb was smiling beatifically, “and with no measurable radiation release. It was a relatively small event, actually, but the main thing is the Natanz facility no longer exists. We think there were quite a few casualties including some of their key scientists, but Iran isn’t saying. *Al-Jazeera* denies it was a nuclear test and is terming it a mining accident.”

Cross was glaring at Wayne. “Continue.”

“There’s not much more to report. We ran into opposition on the way out. Ali didn’t make it. The BlackHawk showed up exactly on schedule and extracted me without incident.”

“Let me see if I can briefly summarize this debacle,” Cross said. “You failed to complete your assignment. You were directly or indirectly responsible for the death of the most sensitive asset the Agency had in Iran. You attacked a nation with which we are not at war. On your own initiative and without any command approval, you employed weapons of mass destruction, nuclear weapons, against an Iranian industrial facility. Does that capture the essence?”

“I suggest there’s perhaps a better version for the official record, Sir.”

“Which is?”

“I failed to make the planned extraction because the asset I was tasked with recovering was killed in an unfortunate accident at the Natanz facility. The United States has no idea what happened, but we suspect the rumors that Natanz was a weapons facility may have substance and we demand a full investigation by the UN.”

“Are you joking?” Cross said.

“No, Sir,” Wayne said. “Reporting it that way would seem to solve a number of troublesome problems.”

“Do you have anything else to say?”

Wayne shook his head.

“I take it from your silence that you have nothing to say in your defense.”

“No, Sir.” Wayne’s gaze was steady.

Cross coughed nervously and looked away. Hastily he went on, “If you have nothing further, we’re adjourned for one hour.”

Gomez and the professor stood up. The hearing was over.

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An hour later Wayne was called back to the hearing room. This time it was just him, Cross, and Goldfarb.

“My recommendation was that you be charged with treason for the damage you’ve done to this country and our allies. That offense is punishable by death. But apparently someone up there likes you, though I can’t imagine why. You should consider yourself fortunate.”

Cross frowned as he pulled a single piece of paper from his jacket pocket. “Please stand. We are back on the record.”

Wayne stood up.

“A. C. Wayne, by order of the Director of Central Intelligence, you are hereby released from employment by the Central Intelligence Agency, and permanently enjoined from rehire.”