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Never Caught: The Washingtons' Relentless Pursuit of Their Runaway Slave, Ona Judge

By: Erica Armstrong Dunbar

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A startling and eye-opening look into Americas First Family, Never Caught is the powerful story about a daring woman of extraordinary grit (The Philadelphia Inquirer). When George Washington was elected president, he reluctantly left behind his beloved Mount Vernon to serve in Philadelphia, the temporary seat of the nations capital. In setting up his household he brought along nine slaves, including Ona Judge. As the President grew accustomed to Northern ways, there was one change he couldnt abide Pennsylvania law required enslaved people be set free after six months of residency in the state. Rather than comply, Washington decided to circumvent the law. Every six months he sent the slaves back down south just as the clock was about to expire. Though Ona Judge lived a life of relative comfort, she was denied freedom. So, when the opportunity presented itself one clear and pleasant spring day in Philadelphia, Judge left everything she knew to escape to New England. Yet freedom would not come without its costs. At just twenty-two-years-old, Ona became the subject of an intense manhunt led by George Washington, who used his political and personal contacts to recapture his property. A crisp and compulsively readable feat of research and storytelling (USA TODAY), historian and National Book Award finalist Erica Armstrong Dunbar weaves a powerful tale and offers fascinating new scholarship on how one young woman risked everything to gain freedom from the famous founding father and most powerful man in the United States at the time.

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