THE LAST REFUGE
A DEWEY ANDREAS NOVEL

BEN COES
AUTHOR OF COUP D'ÉTAT
To Teddy

At age ten, you’ve given me as much pleasure as most people do in a lifetime.
CONTENTS

Title Page
Dedication
Epigraph

Chapter 1
Chapter 2
Chapter 3
Chapter 4
Chapter 5
Chapter 6
Chapter 7
Chapter 8
Chapter 9
Chapter 10
Chapter 11
Chapter 12
Chapter 13
Chapter 14
Chapter 15
Chapter 16
Chapter 17
Chapter 18
Chapter 19
Chapter 20
Chapter 21
Chapter 22
Chapter 23
Chapter 24
Chapter 25
Chapter 26
Chapter 27
Chapter 28
Chapter 29
Chapter 30
Chapter 31
Chapter 32
Chapter 33
Chapter 34
Chapter 35
Chapter 36
Chapter 37
Chapter 38
Chapter 39
Chapter 40
Chapter 41
Chapter 42
Chapter 43
Chapter 44
Chapter 45
Chapter 46
Chapter 47
Chapter 48
Chapter 49
Chapter 50
Chapter 51
Chapter 52
Chapter 53
Chapter 54
Chapter 55
Chapter 56
Epilogue

Acknowledgments
Also by Ben Coes
Their blood has washed out their foul footsteps’ pollution. No refuge could save the hireling and slave from the terror of flight, or the gloom of the grave.

—FRANCIS SCOTT KEY, “THE STAR-SPANGLED BANNER”
President Rob Allaire sat in a comfortable, red-and-white-upholstered club chair. His worn L.L.Bean boots were untied and propped up on a wood coffee table. Allaire wore jeans and a faded long-sleeve red Lacoste rugby shirt. His longish brown hair was slightly messed up, and there was stubble across his chin.

To his right, Allaire’s yellow Lab, Ranger, lay sleeping. Another dog, an old English bulldog named Mabel, was napping by the fireplace, the sound of her snoring occasionally making Allaire look up.

To most Americans, the sight of the slightly unkempt president of the United States might have been off-putting, perhaps even a little shocking. If Allaire looked as if he hadn’t taken a shower in two days and had worn the same pants an entire weekend, during which he chopped half a cord of wood, hiked ten miles, and shot skeet twice, it was because he had done just that. However, most Americans would have been pleased to see their president in his element, with his unadorned love of the outdoors, his simple joy in physical labor, his affection for his dogs. And now, at five fifteen in the afternoon on a windswept, rainy Saturday in April, his satisfaction at the sight of a bottle of beer, Budweiser to be exact, which one of Camp David’s servants brought him as he sat staring into the fireplace.

“Thanks, Ricko,” said Allaire.

“You’re welcome, Mr. President.”

In President Allaire’s six years in office, he’d been to Camp David 122 times. Allaire would not, by his term’s end, set any records in terms of time spent at the presidential retreat; that record would still belong to Ronald Reagan, who visited Camp David 186 times during his two terms in office. Still, Allaire loved Camp David just as much as Reagan, both Bushes, and every other president since Franklin Roosevelt had the retreat built almost a century before. Allaire loved its rustic simplicity, the quiet solitude, and he loved most the fact that Camp David allowed him
to escape the backbiting, lying, sycophancy, and subterfuge of Washington. If Allaire was compared to Reagan for his constant escaping to Camp David, and for his conservative politics, that was okay by him. Allaire believed it was important to have a set of beliefs and to stick by them, through hell or high water, no matter what the polls or the prevailing wisdom said. It’s why America loved Rob Allaire.

Allaire sipped his beer as he stared down at the iPad, leaning closer to try and see, adjusting his glasses. He looked up. Seated on the far side of the room, reading a book, was John Schmidt, his communications director.

“I can’t read this goddamn thing,” said Allaire.

“You’re the one who said you wanted one,” said Schmidt. “Remember? ‘It’s the future’ and all that?”

“Yeah, well, I changed my mind. I’m sick of pretending I like these fucking things.”

Schmidt nodded.

“We’ll go back to the daily notebook, sir.”

“Good. In the meantime, have you read this editorial by our friends at The New York Times? How the hell is The New York Times editorial board aware of what’s happening in Geneva?”

“It’s coming out of the Swiss Foreign Ministry,” said Schmidt. “They’re taking the credit, which is not necessarily a bad thing. To the extent it adds to the public pressure on Tehran, it’s helpful.”

There was a knock on the door and in stepped two men: Hector Calibrisi, the director of the Central Intelligence Agency, and Tim Lindsay, the U.S. secretary of state.

Calibrisi and Lindsay, who had been out shooting at the camp’s private skeet range, were both dressed in shooting attire. Calibrisi was an expert shot. He came up through the ranks of the CIA paramilitary and was deft with most weapons known to man. Lindsay, a retired former admiral in the navy, and lifelong hunter, was even better.

“Well, if it isn’t Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid,” said Allaire, a shit-eating grin on his face as he watched the two men stomp their boots on the welcome mat and remove their Filson coats. “Either of you manage to hit anything?”

“No, Mr. President,” Calibrisi said politely. “We thought it would be impolite to hit more clays than you.”

Allaire laughed.

“Wise guy,” said Allaire as Ricko returned to the sitting area near the fireplace. “Do you two have time for a drink before you leave for D.C.?”

“Sure,” said Calibrisi. “Same thing as the president, Ricko.”
“Pappy Van Winkle,” said Lindsay, looking at Ricko, “if there’s any left. A couple rocks. Thanks, Ricko.”

“Yes, sir,” said the bespectacled servant, who turned and left for the kitchen.

“Seriously,” continued Allaire. “Who won?”

“It’s not a contest,” said Calibrisi, his confident smile leaving little doubt as to who hit more clays that afternoon. He moved to one of the sofas and sat down.

“I’m sixty-four years old, for chrissakes,” said Lindsay, sitting across from Calibrisi, next to Schmidt. “I’m surprised I hit anything.”

“I’ve heard that one before,” said Allaire, taking a sip from his beer and shaking his head at Lindsay. “Right before you took twenty bucks off me.”

“That was a lucky day, Mr. President,” said Lindsay as Ricko brought a tray with drinks on it.

The four men sat talking about skeet shooting and hunting for a long time, the president regaling the others with a story about the time when, as governor of California, he’d gone dove hunting with then vice president Cheney just a few months after Cheney had strafed someone with an errant shot. The story, as with most of Allaire’s elaborate and expertly told stories, left the other three in laughter.

Allaire stood and put more wood on the fire, played with the arrangement of the logs for a time, then returned to his chair.

“Before we take off, Mr. President,” said Lindsay, “we need to discuss the proposal by the Swiss foreign minister.”

“We’ve already discussed it,” said Allaire. “I gave you my answer two days ago, Tim. I refuse to sit down with the president of Iran. It’s that simple.”

“Ambassador Veider believes that if we agree to a summit, with you and President Nava meeting one-on-one, that the Iranians will renounce their nuclear ambitions and might even agree to begin talks with the Israelis.”

“I trust Iran about as far as I can throw them,” said Allaire. “They’re lying. I’ve seen this movie before, Tim. I don’t like the ending.”

Lindsay nodded at the president.

“We have to consider the larger objective,” said Lindsay. “The Iranian government is reaching out to us. This meeting would be the first step toward normalizing relations between our countries.”

“They’re playing the Swiss and they’re attempting to play us,” said Allaire, nodding across the room at Ricko, indicating he wanted another beer. “President Nava has created a distraction which he’s using to get us to take our eye off the ball. So while he makes the world and The New York Times believe he’s had a change of heart, Iran continues to pour tens of millions of dollars into Hezbollah and Al-Qaeda.
And they continue to build a nuclear weapon.”

“We don’t have definitive proof the Iranians are constructing a nuclear bomb, sir,” said Lindsay.

Allaire glanced at Calibrisi. “Here we go again,” said Allaire, shaking his head.

“We know they are, Tim,” said Calibrisi. “They have enough highly enriched uranium to assemble at least half a dozen devices. They have the uranium deuteride triggers. We know that. These are facts. They’re getting close.”

“Our objective, Mr. President, is to put Iran in a box,” said Lindsay. “We do that by allowing the Swiss to bring our countries together, and then holding our noses and sitting down with President Nava. He publicly commits, we get inspectors in there, and the box is complete.”

Allaire nodded, but said nothing.

“We have to be willing to be the adults here,” continued Lindsay. “The reward is worth whatever risk we take by virtue of standing on the same stage as Nava. This is a good deal. They’ve agreed to on-demand inspections, access to their scientists, and details on their centrifuge supply chain.”

“Tim, there are certain things that, for whatever reason, you don’t seem to understand,” said Allaire, leaning back. “One of those things is Iran.”

“I think I understand Iran, sir,” said Lindsay sharply.

“You understand Iran from a policy perspective. You know the names of the cities, the history of the country. You’ve studied their leadership, their institutions, their culture. You’ve been there how many times? Five? Six? A dozen? I know all that. But I don’t think you understand that the Iranians are, quite simply, the most dishonest group of people on this planet.”

“You can’t seriously mean that, Mr. President,” said Lindsay.

“Yes, I can. And I do mean it. I don’t trust those fuckers one bit. The Supreme Leader, Suleiman, is insane. President Nava is a menace.”

“You’re misunderstanding me, sir,” said Lindsay. “I don’t trust them either. But you’ll forgive me if I take a slightly more nuanced view of Iran. It’s a country ruled by a corrupt group of individuals, but a large majority of the country desires freedom. The Iranians are a good people.”

Allaire paused and stared at Lindsay. He looked around the room, caucusing Calibrisi and Schmidt for their opinions.

“I think it would be a mistake,” said Schmidt. “A big mistake. Nava and the president of the United States, on the same stage, tarnishes America.”

“Hector?” asked the president.

Calibrisi shook his head in silence, indicating his agreement with the president’s
and Schmidt’s negative assessment.

“For you to extend the olive branch to Iran would send a positive message to the Iranian people and to all people in the Middle East,” said Lindsay.

“I understand the concept, Tim,” said Allaire, “but my decision is final.” Allaire took a swig from his Budweiser. “I don’t trust Suleiman and I don’t trust Nava. They’re pathological liars. I will never step foot on the same stage or shake the hand of Mahmoud Nava.”

The president arose from his seat. He walked to the large picture window that looked out on the fields, trees, and forests of the Maryland countryside. The rain was coming down hard now, slapping atop green leaves that had just started sprouting in the early springtime air. He grabbed a brown coat that was draped over a bench near the door. Ranger, his Lab, awoke and moved quickly to the door, anticipating going outside.

“Come on,” said Allaire. “I’ll walk you guys down to the helipad.”

“You don’t need to do that,” said Calibrisi, who stood and put his coat on. Schmidt and Lindsay followed suit. “It’s pouring rain out.”

“Are you kidding?” asked Allaire. “Nothing wrong with a good rainstorm. Besides, Ranger needs a walk.”

“What about Mabel?” asked Schmidt, nodding to the large bulldog asleep in front of the fireplace.

“Mabel will be asleep until Christmas,” said Allaire, smiling.

The four men, followed by the Lab, walked out across the terrace, then down the old road that led past the commandant’s quarters, past the tennis courts. In the distance, they could hear the smooth, high-pitched drumming of the helicopter’s blades slashing through the air. As they reached the edge of the tarmac, Allaire turned to the three men. All of them were soaked. Allaire smiled.

“You and your team have done remarkable work,” said Allaire, staring at Lindsay, talking above the din. He placed his hand on the secretary of state’s shoulder. “You, in particular, Tim, deserve a great deal of praise and credit. I will speak nothing but positively about the developments in Geneva and the potential for Iran to rejoin the civilized world. But they’re going to need to do it without the involvement of the United States. They need to do it because they want to, not because I agree to sit on the stage and legitimize their past behavior.”

“I understand, Mr. President,” said Lindsay. “Thank you for the day of shooting.”

“See you three in a couple of days,” said Allaire, smiling.

Allaire shook Lindsay’s, Calibrisi’s, and Schmidt’s hands, then watched as they climbed aboard the dark green and white chopper. A moment later, a uniformed soldier
aboard the craft pulled the door up and sealed it tight. The chopper lifted slowly into
the darkening, rain-crossed sky.

Allaire stared at the flashing red and white lights as it disappeared into the slate
sky. He glanced around the now empty helipad, watching the rain bounce off the dark
tarmac. He reached down and gave Ranger a pat on his wet head.

“Good boy,” he said.

As Allaire started to walk back toward Aspen Lodge, he felt a strange warmth on
the left side of his body, emanating from his armpit. He went to take a step but his foot
was suddenly stuck in place, frozen still. His voice, which he tried to use to call out to
the agents, now up the road more than a quarter mile, didn’t work either. As the
massive stroke swept down from his brain, his body convulsed in a warm, hazy,
painless set of moments. He tumbled to the grass, his face striking first, the sound of
the spring rain and the dog’s desperate barking the last sounds President Rob Allaire
would ever hear.
MARGARET HILL
CASTINE, MAINE

Dewey awoke with the first light. On the other side of the bed, Jessica slept quietly. Her auburn hair was spread across her face as she slept. On the table next to her were two cell phones and a specially designed, customized Blackberry.

From the duffel bag at the end of the bed, he found a green T-shirt, running shorts, socks. He dressed quietly. He put on a pair of Adidas, then knelt to tie the laces.

He heard the sheets ruffle. He looked up. Jessica had turned and was looking from the pillow at him.

“What’s up?” she asked sleepily.

“Run. You wanna come?”

“Oh, man,” she said, yawning.

“You’ll like it.”

Jessica smiled. She reached out and put her hand gently in Dewey’s hair.

“Sure,” she said. “How far? This isn’t going to be some sort of Delta training thing, is it?”

“I thought you played lacrosse at Princeton? You can probably run me into the ground.”

“Probably,” she whispered. “Princeton girls are tough. Certainly a hell of a lot tougher than Deltas.”

Dewey smiled.

Jessica pulled the quilt and sheets aside and climbed out of bed. Dewey was still kneeling next to the bed, tying his shoes. She stepped in front of him, naked, less than a foot from him. She was not shy; she didn’t have any reason to be. At thirty-eight, her body was the same sculpted, voluptuous object that had driven nearly every boy at Andover crazy. In silence, Dewey stared at Jessica. First at her knees, then, climbing with his eyes, her thighs, then higher and higher until his eyes met hers.

She’d watched the entire eye scan, and now a slightly scolding, slightly playful look was on her face.

“Troublemaker,” she said, shaking her head. “After the run.”
“It might help us get loosened up,” said Dewey, moving his hand to the back of her thigh.

“After, dirty dog. And only if you beat me.”

Softly, Dewey’s hand rubbed the back of Jessica’s thigh. She leaned toward him. She was silent; then she put her right hand onto his shoulder to steady herself.

“Jerk,” she whispered.

He stood and their lips touched.

“I suppose we should loosen up,” she whispered, opening her eyes and looking into his. She smiled and pushed him back onto the bed. She giggled as the bedsprings made a loud squeaking noise. She climbed on top of him. “I don’t want any excuses after I beat you.”

* * *

The idea for the trip had been Jessica’s.

“I’m taking a week off,” she’d said. “I want to go to Castine. Meet your parents.”

“They don’t talk very much. Just warning you.”

“Gee, I never would’ve expected that,” she said sarcastically.

“How can you possibly take a week off? You’re the national security advisor. You’re not supposed to take vacations.”

“Watch and learn, Dewey.”

“Who’s going to be in charge?”

“Um, this guy named, wait, what’s his name? Oh yeah, Rob Allaire. He’s the, ah, president of the United States? You may have heard of him?”

“You know what I mean.”

“Josh Brubaker,” she had said, referring to her chief of staff. “I told him not to bother me unless it’s a national emergency. If there’s a problem, I told him to call Hector.”

So far, four days in, no calls. The only visible evidence of her job was the FBI agent posted around the clock at the entrance to the farm.

Dewey and Jessica began the run down the long dirt road to the Castine Golf Club, then went right on Wadsworth Cove Road. After a mile or so, they went left on Castine Road. The small, winding road went for several miles. They ran alongside each other, with Dewey on the inside, closest to the road and the traffic, but there was hardly any. When they passed something and Jessica asked what it was, who lived there, where does that road go, Dewey would patiently answer.

At a sagging, moss-covered wood fence, they hopped over and went right. A path opened into a long, rectangular field overgrown with hay grass. The sun was out and it
warmed them as they ran through the thick grass downhill toward the ocean, Dewey cutting a path, Jessica right behind him.

At the end of the field, the sea filled a rocky cove with calm blue water and the smell of salt and seaweed. A small dirt path was etched just before the rocks, and they ran along it for several more miles, trees to the right, rocky coastline left. Finally, in the distance, a church steeple, the beginning of the town proper. They came to a low, old stone wall, behind which lay row upon row of tombstones.

Dewey stopped, followed by Jessica. They were both drenched in sweat. Dewey leaned over to catch his breath.

“So,” he said after several minutes. “How was that?”
Jessica breathed heavily. Her face was bright red.
“I let you win,” she said.
Dewey stared at the ocean, then looked at Jessica.
“Are you hungry?”
“I like blueberry pancakes.”
“I know a place,” he said.

* * *

In town, Dewey and Jessica went to a small diner near Maine Maritime Academy called Froggy’s. Jessica ordered blueberry pancakes and Dewey ordered eggs and bacon.

“When do you go to Boston?” Jessica asked.
“Day after tomorrow.”
“Are you nervous?”
Dewey sipped from his water glass. He was interviewing for a job in Boston, an interview arranged by Jessica, running personal security for a wealthy hedge fund manager named Chip Bronkelman.
“No,” said Dewey.
“Do you want the job?”
“Sure,” said Dewey unenthusiastically.
“You’re the one who said you didn’t want to come back into government.”

Dewey nodded. She was right. Calibrisi had offered him a job at Langley, and Harry Black, the secretary of defense, had done the same, asking Dewey to join his staff at the Pentagon. Black had also offered Dewey a job he came close to accepting, going back to Fort Bragg and becoming a Delta instructor. But Dewey wasn’t ready to make the commitment. He’d already sacrificed years of his life for his country, had already risked his life for America more times than he could count, and he knew that if
he went back in it would consume him all over again. He didn’t want that.

But with that decision made, he needed a job. Bronkelman, a forty-something billionaire, was a very private man who lived in Wellesley, outside of Boston, and had homes in Manhattan, Palm Beach, Paris, Montana, and Hong Kong. Dewey would be well paid and he’d get to travel. But, in the end, he’d be little more than a glorified bodyguard to Bronkelman and his family.

“Do you want to come down to D.C. after your interview?” Jessica asked.
“I’m going to New York City,” said Dewey.
“What for?”
“I’m meeting Kohl Meir,” said Dewey matter-of-factly, after the waitress brought him a cup of coffee.

It had been nearly three months since the bloody night at Rafic Hariri Airport in Beirut, when Dewey nearly died following the coup in Pakistan. Dewey had been saved by a team of commandos from Shayetet 13, Israel’s equivalent to the U.S. Navy SEALs. Kohl Meir was the leader of that Shayetet team who saved Dewey from near-certain death. Six of the eight-man S’13 team died that night.

Jessica took a sip from her coffee cup and slowly put it down on the Formica table.

“Why?” she asked.

“He’s visiting the parents of Ezra Bohr,” said Dewey, referring to one of the fallen Israeli commandos. “He asked if I’d meet him.”

Dewey’s face remained as blank as stone.

“Why does he want to see you?” she asked.

“I don’t know, Jess,” said Dewey.

“Did he say anything?”

Dewey looked across the table at Jessica.

“He said he needs my help,” said Dewey.

“What for?”

“I don’t know.”

“Did you ask him?”

“Yeah,” said Dewey.

The waitress brought over the plates of food and placed them down on the table in front of them.

“And….?”

“He said he needed to talk about it in person.”

She raised her eyebrows.

“You don’t find that in the least bit unusual?” asked Jessica.

Dewey smiled at Jessica, then shrugged his shoulders.
She looked back at him, raising her eyebrows, smiling, expecting him to say something. But he stayed quiet.

They finished breakfast. When Dewey asked for the check, the waitress shook her head, then nodded toward the counter. Behind the counter, a bald man with a University of Maine Black Bears baseball cap smiled, then shook his head.

“Your money’s no good here, Andreas,” he said.

“Thanks, Mr. Antonelli,” Dewey said, smiling.

* * *

As Dewey and Jessica walked up the grass-covered dirt driveway from the golf club to the farm, a faint noise caused Dewey to turn around. Jessica’s eyes followed his. Above the trees, from out over the ocean, a black object no bigger than a bird moved across the blue sky, followed, a few moments later, by the faint sound of whirring; the telltale rhythm of a chopper.

“Why do I have a sinking feeling?” asked Jessica.
The swaying of the white lace curtain, pushed by a soft breeze from the open window, was the only movement in the apartment.

Beneath the window was a small wooden dining table. On top of the table were two teacups, both filled, tiny clouds of steam rising up from the tea. Two plates; on top of one was a hard-boiled egg, cracked open, and a piece of rye toast, a bite missing. On the other plate lay a toasted onion bagel, cream cheese smeared on both sides, one of the pieces missing a few bites. Between the plates sat a bowl full of fresh-cut fruit—strawberries, pineapple, tangerine slices, blueberries. Two wooden chairs had been pulled out from the table.

The only sound in the kitchen came from the open window. The low background noise of Boro Park, of Brooklyn, of New York City—car engines, an occasional distant horn, the voices of children outside playing on this warm, sunny spring day.

The empty kitchen led to an open, arched doorway. Through the doorway was a dimly lit hallway. Across the hall stood another door, slightly ajar, that led to a small, plainly adorned bedroom. Above the simple wooden bed hung a small Star of David, made out of wood. Next to it was a framed photograph of a thin adolescent boy with a long round nose, thick black hair in a jagged, uneven crew cut, and a gap-toothed smile on his freckled face.

Outside the bedroom, the long hallway’s walls were covered with watercolor paintings, of various sizes, and photographs. Photos in simple frames; of people, family, engaged in different activities, standing in front of recognizable landmarks such as the Eiffel Tower, hiking on mountain passes, snow-covered peaks in the background, or just seated at tables filled with food and drink. Most showed the same people: a good-looking couple with their son, a large, striking-looking boy who always seemed to have a big, infectious smile on his face, the same boy as in the bedroom photo. The photos showed the progression of time, but what never changed was the
sense of family connection, of love.

Down the long, silent hallway was a living room, high ceilings crossed with thick mahogany beams, two big windows on the far wall partially covered in flowered curtains. The walls were lined floor-to-ceiling in bookshelves, every inch filled, and in the corner of the room was a simple desk, neat and orderly, a few piles of paper stacked in the middle, and a small light on. In the center of the room, two red sofas faced each other across a large, round glass coffee table. The living room, like the other rooms, sat in virtual silence, the only noise coming through the walls from the random clatter of the city.

At one end of the sofas sat a pair of leather club chairs, behind which hung a large, mesmerizing photograph. Slightly faded, it was an aerial photo of Tel Aviv. At the bottom of the big photograph, like paint thrown from a child, a spray of dark red liquid coated the glass; it shimmered, still wet.

In one of the leather chairs, the one on the right, a man sat, motionless. It was the man from the photos. He was, perhaps, seventy years old, his once thick hair had receded and what remained of it was mostly white. He had a thick gray and black mustache that hung down at the edges. He wore brown-framed Coke-bottle-thick eyeglasses. They were slightly askew. Behind the lenses, the man’s brown eyes stared out across the room.

On the chair next to him was an older woman whose beauty was still obvious despite her years. Her long black hair was streaked in white; her simple, aquiline nose appeared as if it had been sculpted. She, too, was as still as a statue.

In the middle of the man’s forehead, just above the bridge of the nose, an inch-wide bullet hole had been neatly blasted through his skull. Beneath it, a rivulet of blood oozed down the nose, then dripped in a slow but steady stream into the folds of his shirt.

The woman’s skull was perforated in the identical spot.

The bullets had been fired from the same gun: a suppressed Beretta 93, clutched in the same leather-gloved hand by the same woman, who now stood, calmly, silently, as still as stone, against the far wall, near the front door.

The woman had long blond hair. It was a wig, and it covered short black locks that were slightly visible just above her ears. She was no more than twenty-five, simple-looking, a small, plain nose. The brown hue of her skin was accentuated and framed by the blond wig, and it made her look exotic. She wore a long-sleeve black Nike running shirt and matching running pants that looked as if they’d been painted on her hard, muscled body. She held the silenced .45 caliber weapon in her right hand, at her side. She stood patiently, motionless, waiting near the front door.