

was forwarding my messages to the hotel. As I leafed through a little stack of white paper in the elevator, I saw one from Vadim that read, "Call me when you get this. Urgent."

Vadim never overreacted, so when he said "urgent," it really was urgent. My heart started pounding as I raced to my room to make the call.

He picked up on the first ring. "Bill, we got a call from a bailiff at the Saint Petersburg court early this morning. He said there's a judgment against one of our Russian investment companies, and he wants to know where he can find the money to satisfy it." Although we had sold all of our shares in Russia, we had to keep the empty investment holding companies in place for three years in order to liquidate them properly.

"Judgment? What judgment? What's he talking about?"

"I don't know."

"Do you know if this person is even real?" It was perfectly plausible that this was some kind of clumsy setup.

"No, but I don't think we should ignore it."

"Of course not. How much money was he talking about?" I imagined that we had misplaced a \$200 courier bill and this had somehow found its way to court.

"Seventy-one million dollars."

Seventy-one million dollars? "That's insane, Vadim! What is this about?"

"I have no idea, Bill."

"Vadim, get Eduard and Sergei on this ASAP. We need to find out what's going on."

"I will."

My week of distraction had been shattered. The Russians hadn't given up at all.

This whole bailiff thing was ludicrous. Where the hell did this claim come from? Who was behind it? How could they make a claim on assets that were no longer even in Russia? They couldn't. Or could they?

I could barely think about Korea anymore. I had to get back to London as soon as possible. I called Kevin, apologized profusely that I wouldn't be able to make dinner, and asked him to cancel the rest of my meetings. I then called Korean Air and booked the first flight to London the next morning.

After the long flight, I went straight to the office to meet Vadim and Ivan. We settled into the conference room and they debriefed me on what they'd learned while I was in the air.

The first thing was that the judgment was indeed real. Eduard had taken the train to Saint Petersburg, gone to the court, retrieved the case file, and taken pictures of the documents with his digital camera. Vadim pulled one of these pictures from a stack of papers and laid it in front of me. He pointed at a word on the page. "This says Mahaon," which was one of the fund's dormant investment holding companies. "And this is the amount." It was in rubles, but I did a quick mental calculation and could see that it was roughly \$71 million.

"How could we not have known about this?" I demanded, thinking it was some colossal oversight on our side.

"Sergei was wondering the same thing," Vadim said. "While Eduard was in Saint Petersburg, Sergei checked the company ownership database."

"And?" I asked with a sinking feeling.

Ivan sighed. "Mahaon's been stolen, Bill."

"What do you mean stolen? How do you steal a company?"

Ivan, who knew a bit about the company registration process, said, "It's not simple. But basically a company's owners can be illegally changed without you knowing if the person taking control of the company has the company's original seals, certificates of ownership, and registration files."

This hit me hard. "Those are the documents that were seized by the police," I said quietly. "When they raided Jamie's office."

"Exactly," Ivan confirmed.

He explained that once this was done, the new owners could ac