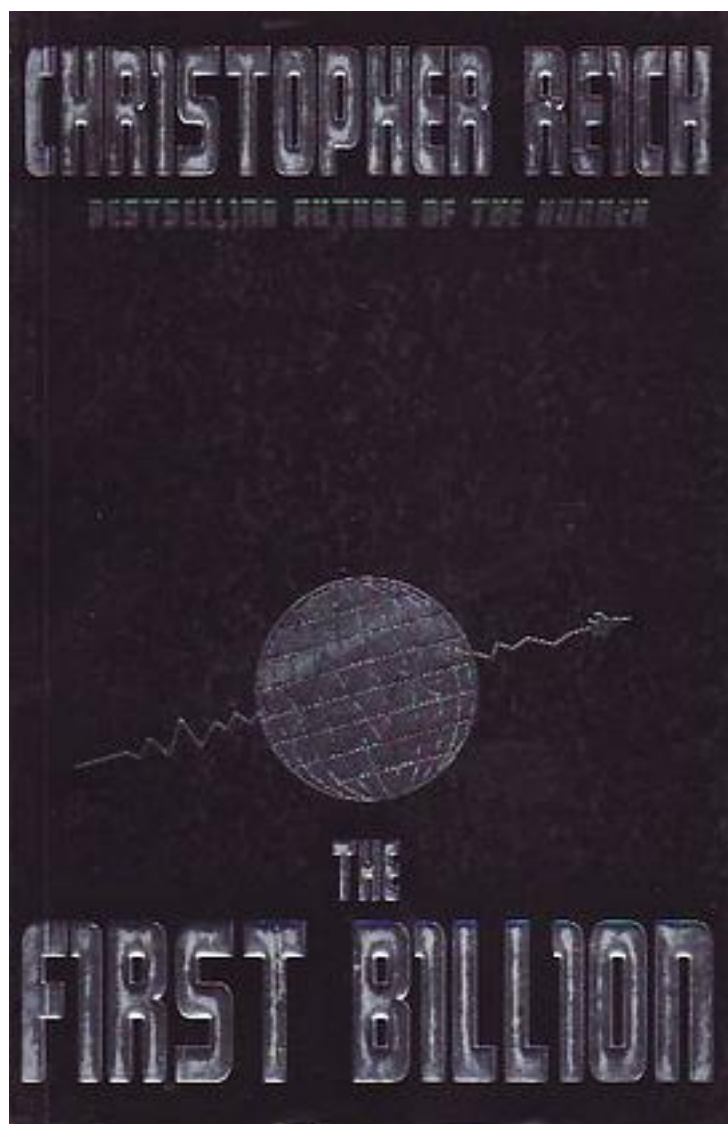


The First Billion



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Christopher Reich electrified readers with *Numbered Account* and *The Runner*, his first two international thrillers. Now the "New York Times" bestselling author whose work has been called "gripping" ("Chicago Tribune"), "chilling" ("The Denver Post"), "wonderful" ("The New York Times Book Review"), ratchets up the stakes in an ingeniously plotted story of nerve-jangling intrigue and hot-wired suspense. Using today's cutthroat global economy as a backdrop, *The First Billion* explodes into a breakneck tale of betrayal, revenge, and redemption... John "Jett" Gavallan is a former fighter pilot, now the high-flying CEO of Black Jet Securities, an investment firm that earned its first billion before the techno dream crashed and burned. Poised for an offering crucial to his company's survival, Gavallan is banking on the riskiest gamble of his dazzling career. In exactly six days, he will take Mercury Broadband, Russia's leading media company, public on the New York Stock Exchange. But rumors of fraud have suddenly surfaced that could send the deal south. Gavallan makes a preemptive strike by dispatching his number-two man--fellow Desert Storm fighter pilot Grafton Byrnes--to Moscow to penetrate the shadowy Russian multinational. When Byrnes fails to return, Gavallan fears the worst. But the truth is even more diabolical than he can imagine. Plunging into a desperate search for his best friend, the renegade top gun is suddenly fighting a different kind of war, where there is no safe harbor and no one he can trust. Not Konstantin Kirov, the elusive head of Mercury Broadband who may not be what he seems. Not the bankers and traders Gavallan does business with every day. Not the exotic beauty who has told him all her deepest secrets--except one. Suddenly Jett finds himself trapped in a conspiracy that could shatter the delicate balance between nations--and plunge the global economy into chaos. Hunted by the F.B.I. and a band of elite killers, Jett races from Palm Beach to Zurich to Moscow in a desperate search for answers. But for this brave ex-commando haunted by visions of war, the truth comes at a terrible price. With Mercury rising and the hours ticking down, he is moving closer to a place where murder and revenge are the currency of choice...and where the first billion is the ultimate insider secret--and the deadliest obsession of all. With breakneck plotting, stunning realism, and a sense of danger that keeps the heart racing, *The First Billion* is a knockout of a novel that will linger long after the final shocking twist is revealed. "From the Hardcover edition."

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