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Reincarnation of Stardust

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During the industrious 90s both government agencies and brand owners faced a growing threat: rapid advances in the computer graphics technology allowed criminal syndicates to reach high sophistication levels in forging documents and branded products resulting in global losses of billions of dollars. Having studied various means to combat counterfeiting, we recognized the promise of IR luminescent ceramics and founded Stardust Materials. With little start-up capital, as novice entrepreneurs we truly believed that IR luminescence would stem the flow of fakes and “save the world”. Within two years after inception we won a coveted contract to provide security to US tobacco tax stamps. A group of investors became interested in our initial success and suggested forming a new entity. Lacking business experience, we made costly mistakes starting with drafting a technology licensing agreement. Pitching our technology, the new corporation managed to raise \$12 million in the investment-averse climate of post 9-11. However, its fortunes went downhill from then on. Soon we were forced to resign from the corporation leaving behind our technology, equipment, and high salaries. From scratch we commenced development of a new range of products. It would be surprising, if we did not get chased with an expensive IP law suit. Having successfully defended our new portfolio, we expanded the field of applications and began a steady growth. The story of Stardust sheds light on some of the tricky turns a scientist-entrepreneur may need to take to start and operate a company of his dreams.