



**JEFF SOMERS**

**THE  
BOUNCER**  
a novel

# The Bouncer

26.

For a moment, I was crushed under his weight. I thought I could feel my ribs cracking under the strain, all the breath pushed out of me. Then I was crushed even more as Jill and Ivan jumped on Patsy, making him roar in my ear, a reek of tobacco and beer. I struggled to move, to do anything at all that would improve my situation.

More voices, and Patsy's roar went up an octave. A moment later and he lifted away from me, throwing Jill, Ivan, and Lisa aside like afterthoughts. I lay on the floor for a second or two, stunned. Then I realized I was covered in something warm and wet—blood.

I scrambled up, patting myself down. Patsy stood in the doorway, blood dripping from his fingers, breathing hard. We all faced him, gasping, and for one leaden moment everyone seemed content to just stare at each other.

Then there were voices in the basement behind him. Jill glanced back at me, an electric arc of alarm slamming between us. If Chewing Gum and the rest of them surged in here behind the big man, we were cooked. We were almost cooked with just *him*.

“Out!” I shouted, struggling to catch my breath when every inhalation made my chest hurt.  
“Back! Come on!”

Ivan, Luis, and I backed into the living room. Lisa came next, her gun nowhere to be seen. Jill was last, holding the Glock on Patsy as he stalked after us, snarling. I tried to remember how many shots she'd fired. Too many, I thought.

"Window!" I said.

Ivan turned and trotted to the back, throwing the sash up and glancing outside.

"Clear!" he shouted.

"My place!" Lisa shouted. "I got weapons!"

Of course she did. One by one we ducked through the window, Jill and me last, Pasty coming at a slow, steady pace, bent over to clear the ceiling. Out in the yard where we'd recently buried my father, Ivan leaped up and pulled down the fire escape ladder in one graceful motion, grunting with the effort. He scrambled up, Luis right behind him. I let Lisa go next, and then it was me and Jill facing down the largest man I'd ever seen as he stormed down the hallway. I could see motion behind him, too—Dubsey's and The Broker's guys, who couldn't take any shots at us because Patsy filled the window frame entirely. More than entirely. He hesitated, uncertain of squeezing through.

"Up!" I hissed, pushing Jill towards the ladder. "Third floor!"

She muttered something and shoved the gun into her jeans, leaping up and pulling herself onto the ladder with weird, wiry energy that had come out of a pill bottle. For a moment I just stood there staring at Patsy as he did calculus in his head trying to angle his shoulders through the window. Then I ran and jumped, catching hold of the ladder and pulling myself up with shaking arms and jelly legs.