



JEFF SOMERS

**THE
BOUNCER**
a novel

The Bouncer

29.

The sudden sense of openness, the cold, crisp air biting at my sweaty face, was disorienting. We were trapped, but we would have been trapped anyway in one of the apartments—and now we had just one bottleneck to worry about. If they were coming, it was through that door. And we would be ready.

I stepped back and faced the door, which began to shake and vibrate as the hardcases sent by The Outfit threw themselves against it. “Trade me the shotgun,” I said to Tony. He nodded and tossed it to me. I skidded the pistol over to him and checked the shotgun over. “Lisa—behind me.” I looked at her. “I go low, you go high.” She nodded. I checked to make sure Jill was still standing. She was sweating like a pig, but she stared back at me fiercely, the same girl who could do heroic amounts of drugs in a club and still, somehow, remain standing through sheer obstinacy. “Jill, left. Crossfire.”

I knelt down, shotgun braced against my shoulder. Lisa stood behind me with the other shotgun. Tony and Ivan stood by Jill, ready to take whatever opportunities they got.

We waited. The door shook and rattled in its old frame. Then it stopped, going still and silent.

“Wait,” Jill said, her voice quiet and snatched away by the wind. “Wait.”

In that moment, I wondered if I was about to die. If we all were. I was marked for it—even if they didn't kill me outright on the roof, right then, as soon as they figured out that Mats was dead and I was the only person left who could satisfy his debts, I was dead. And in my experience when you irritated half-sentient thugs, they got violent first and worried about what they'd done later.

If it was going to happen, I was glad it was at the 293. I was glad it was with Jill. With these people who'd made life bearable while I'd crawled up towards zero these past few years.

With an explosive crash, the door flew off the hinges and Patsy, face bloody and twisted in rage, came barreling through. Lisa and I both fired, buckshot.

Patsy kept coming.