
Forbidden Fruit

Part 5

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Chapter 1

Jon

“Jodie?”

The moment I said her name I knew Forbidden Fruit Part Five (The Forbidden Fruit Series Book 5) it couldn't be true.

How could it be? Jodie was dead. I'd seen the bullets hit her chest; all nine of them. I'd held her in my arms and watched her die. My head spun like I'd been dropped from a great height. I needed a sane explanation for this. But what could explain a person coming back from the dead?

Then I had it.

I was hallucinating. I had to be. Yes, that was it. The stress of the last few weeks had affected me more than I'd realized. This woman wasn't Jodie. She was an illusion my mind had conjured up.

She stood by the edge of the table, her thigh almost brushing my knee. It seemed as if I could reach out and touch her. But of course I couldn't, because she wasn't real.

“It's so good to see you again,” she said, the corners of her mouth turning up slightly.

She was thinner and paler than the real Jodie. Her eyes didn't have the same bright confidence I'd fallen in love with. Forbidden Fruit Part Five (The Forbidden Fruit Series Book 5) But otherwise she was a dead ringer.

“You're not Jodie,” I said, meeting her Forbidden Fruit Part Five (The Forbidden Fruit Series Book 5) gaze.

She slipped into the chair next to me. My eyes followed, riveted to her. Part of me noticed that Eduardo and Nikki had left the table, but right now I didn't care. I had to make this hallucination go away before it sent me insane.

“Carlos, it's me,” she said in Jodie's voice.

I shook my head.

“No, you can’t be. Jodie died five years ago. I don’t know *what* you are but you’re not her.”

Her faint smile Forbidden Fruit Part Five (The Forbidden Fruit Series Book 5) crumbled.

Seeing Jodie’s face, even if she was a mirage, brought back a flood of memories. In my mind’s eye I saw the bullets hit her chest and her body jerk like a drunken puppet. The floor shifted under me and I grabbed the edge of the table.

“Carlos? Are you alright?”

Alright?

My cheek twitched and I felt a Forbidden Fruit Part Five (The Forbidden Fruit Series Book 5) laugh begin in my throat. I Forbidden Fruit Part Five (The Forbidden Fruit Series Book 5) stopped it short, clamping my lips tight. My grip on sanity was already hanging by a thread. If I gave in to the urge to laugh I might not stop, until the men in white coats dragged me away and threw me in Forbidden Fruit Part Five (The Forbidden Fruit Series Book 5) a padded cell.

Jodie’s double pulled her chair close to mine and grabbed my wrist.

I jolted.

Her skin was warm and soft. Not what you’d expect from a ghost. I stared at her small pale hand. It seemed so real.

“Look at me, Carlos,” she said.

I Forbidden Fruit Part Five (The Forbidden Fruit Series Book 5) jerked and our eyes locked.

“Carlos, it’s me, Jodie.”

She lifted my hand to her chest. Her beating heart pulsed through my fingers, and suddenly the mist cleared.

“Jodie?” I said, softly.

Her face broke into a wide grin and she flung her arms around my neck and hugged me tight. Her face pressed against mine, and her hot tears wet my cheek. For a moment I stayed limp. Then I wrapped my arms around her slim waist and hugged so hard she gasped.

“I thought you were dead,” I said, softly.

We held each other for a long minute, then she pulled out a tissue from her pocket and wiped the tears away. When she’d finished she took my hand and held it tight.

“But I don’t understand,” I said. “I saw the bullets hit you in the Forbidden Fruit Part Five (The

Forbidden Fruit Series Book 5) chest. I saw you die.”

Jodie’s dropped her chin to her chest.

“I’m so sorry, Carlos.”

I shook my head.

“What happened, Jodie? Tell me how you’re not dead.”

She bit her lip, then took a deep breath and let it out slowly.

“Carlos, I faked it. There were no bullets – not real ones anyway, and no blood. The bullets were blanks. I was wearing a bulletproof vest; Kevlar, I think. I had fake blood packs on my chest that burst when the blanks hit me.”

My jaw was slack. Forbidden Fruit Part Five (The Forbidden Fruit Series Book 5) My mind was full of questions.

She leaned forward.

“I know it sounds crazy, Carlos. But it’s true.”

I shook my head. Bulletproof vests? Fake blood packs? Was she kidding me?

“But your heart stopped,” I said finally – grasping at a solid fact.

She winced.

“Carlos, you’re going to find this hard to Forbidden Fruit Part Five (The Forbidden Fruit Series Book 5) believe.”

I took a sharp breath in.

“It can’t be worse than what you’ve already told me.”

She looked down, then spoke quickly like she was confessing her life’s sins.

“I had a capsule in my mouth. When I heard the shots I bit down on it. A drug in the capsule Forbidden Fruit Part Five (The Forbidden Fruit Series Book 5) stopped my heart. To all intents and purposes I was dead – until I got the antidote a few hours later.”

For a moment I forgot how to move my face. The room spun. This was so unreal I couldn’t get a handle on it. The Jodie I’d known and loved was smart, but there was no way she could have planned all this. But somehow she had.

I faked it.

She'd done it *on purpose*. She hadn't been the victim but the perpetrator.

I was glad she was alive – more than I could say – but I felt something else now – anger. I'd believed for five years that Jodie was dead. I'd commiserated with her parents. I'd put her coffin in the ground thinking her corpse was inside.

Her parents had been distraught. I'd heard her father never recovered from the shock and died a year later from a heart attack. He died believing his 29-year-old daughter had been brutally murdered in a gangland attack. She made us believe it. *Forbidden Fruit Part Five (The Forbidden Fruit Series Book 5)* I could forgive her lying to me, but not the way she made her family suffer.

I met her eyes.

She must have noticed the change in me and flinched.

"You're telling me you did this, Jodie," I said in a carefully controlled voice.

She nodded.

I wanted to know how she'd done it and who had helped *Forbidden Fruit Part Five (The Forbidden Fruit Series Book 5)* her, *Forbidden Fruit Part Five (The Forbidden Fruit Series Book 5)* but something else was more important.

"Why?" I said, my voice *Forbidden Fruit Part Five (The Forbidden Fruit Series Book 5)* hard now.

She ducked her head. More tears fell onto her hands.

"Tell me!" I shouted.

"Carlos, I had to." She jolted, then met my eyes. "He made me do it."

I blinked at her. Who made her? Who would want to fake Jodie's death? Who could? Something like this took a lot of resources.

"Tell me his name."

She bit her lip.

"Promise me you'll stay calm."

My frown got an inch deeper.

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