

Podcast Name: *The Isle of Imaginaria*

Episode Name: Chapter 4 - Oh Sweet Niblets

As this fourth chapter of *The Isle of Imaginaria* begins, Markie's eyes are adjusting to the early morning light and the different smell in the air. The air smells fresh, wide, and open, but it also smells like fish - not rotten fish, but salty, seafood fish. There are no tall buildings, buses, or cars, and the surroundings remind Markie of a flea market or rummage sale. The floating market where she finds herself is a maze of canals that connect two rivers, with the canals lined by wooden boats and houses out of which vendors sell their wares. The morning fog has not yet fully lifted, and as she stands on the soft ground, Markie looks at the boat stalls all around.

As she looks around, Five pipes up with a question about whether or not Markie likes mango or banana sticky rice. As she notes that she likes both and as she spots donuts, she and Five begin to explore the market before it formally opens. Markie sees all manner of seafood, from squid, to crab, to prawn. She also sees small boats of dumplings, soups, and noodles, and long boats of souvenirs. The market slowly grows crowded, and Markie and Five get in line for bubble tea.

In line, Five realizes that it is later than he thought, and he leaves to find his father, telling Markie to find him after she receives her drink by looking for the blonde bouffant. Five's father's stall will be close by! After she gets her tea, Markie searches through the market for the bouffant, finally finding it near the end of the canal. The figure with a two-foot spectacle of blonde hair turns and smiles, and Markie realizes it has corn niblet teeth!

The figure is not a woman at all, but is a four-foot corn - the same corn from the boardwalk. Markie knows she's in the right place because the vegetables for sale nearby are familiar, and she follows the sounds of laughter until she finds Five on the canal bank with a brussel sprout taking turns launching each other off a boat paddle into a large produce basket. Five asks Markie to keep score, but before she does, she wants to know about the corn figure.

The corn figure is named Virgil, Five explains. Everyone knows him. Turning his attention back to the game, Five insists he won't five up his lead. Markie launches him into the basket herself before picking him up and talking again about Virgil. He's like a mayor or an uncle at a family reunion, Five says, and Markie will surely like him. The two leave the game for the time being, and Markie carries Five on her shoulders down a bamboo path to a clearing.

In the clearing, Markie and Five see Virgil. He's sitting in a chair with a parasol, telling a story to gathered children while his hair is braided by two grandmothers. Markie and Five listen and join in a signalong before spending time personally with Virgil.

As Virgil pours them tea, Markie begins to ask him questions. Virgil has spent much of his life here, and while he is not a kite fighter (he is, after all, cylindrical!), he knows the legendary former coach of the kite fighters, Tarsha. Tarsha is his dragon best friend, and he details her "butt cut," 42-foot stature, and much more. He also explains how she has a remarkable

coaching record, but the kite fighting team performed far worse after she left. No one knows exactly why she left, but for some reason, she had a disagreement with the queen and was banished.

Tarsha now resides in an old temple, and she even invited Virgil to visit her! He shows Markie and Five the invitation - which features a map - briefly, before pulling it away and saying he must consider or ask Tarsha before allowing them to get a good look. What he does not realize is that Markie has already memorized many details of the map, which she has Five record for her in her notebook while she prepares the basket for a trip.

While Five is worried about the time, Markie is eager to find Tarsha. She and Five spend hours in the basket traveling along the canal, and eventually reach an area of cotton fields before coming to the cacao field and finally reaching the temple. The temple is marked by an impressive crow carving, and looks rather cave-like. Markie walks with Five along with long, dark corridor lit only with tiki torches, touching the rough stone wall until she finally feels it give way to smooth, soft skin.

Markie and Five struggle to awaken Tarsha, and even to figure out where her face is, until she finally releases a huge fart as she arises and turns to greet Markie and Five. Markie is windblown, but she picks up Five from where he's been knocked to the floor by the blast, so that that the two can begin their conversation with Tarsha.

Key Takeaways:

0:12 - Markie adjusts her eyes to her unusual setting.

1:14 - Does Markie like mango or banana sticky rice?

2:19 - Five realizes the time and runs off to find his father.

3:55 - "Oh, sweet niblets."

5:06 - Markie finds Five playing a game with a brussel sprout.

6:06 - Markie and Five leave the canal bank and walk toward the clearing where Virgil is sharing a story with gathered children.

7:00 - The two friends spend time with Virgil and hear about his story and about Tarsha.

8:58 - Markie seeks more information about Tarsha being in hiding and about why she left.

11:16 - Five and Markie return to the canal banks, but this time Markie has plans to go on an adventure to find Tarsha.

13:26 - The minutes turn into hours as Markie and Five approach the temple.

14:20 - Markie sees the old stone temple, and she and Five go inside.

15:48 - Tarsha farts and awakens.

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SEO Keywords:

Fish, seafood, canal, floating market, sticky rice, dumplings, bubble tea, bouffant, corn, niblets, bamboo, parasol, kite knight, "butt cut," banish, temple, cotton, cacao field, crow, tiki torch