

## 9 INTO SAVAGE BORNEO

Von Horn, lamenting the loss of Virginia to Malay and Dyak pirates, hopes to reclaim the treasure believed aboard the Ithaca. Dyaks swarm the ship, oblivious to the chest von Horn covets. Eventually, the Dyaks set a jury mast, taking the ship away, while von Horn and a lascar watch, planning their next move towards camp, believing there's no longer any danger there. On arriving, they find Professor Maxon and Sing alive. Von Horn reveals to Maxon that Malay and Dyak pirates, led by the creation intended for Virginia, have abducted her to Borneo. Maxon regrets not destroying the being, now beyond his control. Von Horn attempts to console Maxon with a promise of action, despite the Ithaca's disappearance and their slim chances against the formidable pirates and Maxon's creations, now their enemies. Maxon offers von Horn his daughter and wealth for Virginia's safe return.

Investigating the camp and workshop, they find no forced entry, suggesting someone with knowledge was responsible, possibly implicating Number Thirteen. Von Horn speculates that Number Thirteen, desiring Virginia, allied with the pirates to flee with her and the treasure, cunningly employing the chaos to his advantage. This theory, although speculative, aligns with their observational evidence and the circumstances surrounding their current plight.

As Rajah Muda Saffir, the Malay pirate holding Virginia, makes his escape, Number Thirteen (Bulan) and his grotesque crew navigate the dangers of Borneo's rivers in pursuit. With superior physical strength, Bulan's group quickly overcomes resistance from Dyak warriors, earning reluctant allies in their mission. Remarkably, the group adapts, uniting under Bulan's leadership against the pirates. Their fierce loyalty and singular focus on rescuing Virginia underline the depth of their transformation from mere experiments to sentient beings capable of complex emotions and social cohesion.

Virginia, trapped with Rajah Muda Saffir, clings to hope for rescue by the enigmatic Bulan, whose timely interventions and mysterious nature captivate her. The narrative converges on a tense moment of confrontation, with Virginia's fate hanging in the balance, illustrating the intertwining of human ambition, science's unforeseen consequences, and the indomitable will to survive and protect.

