

16 SING SPEAKS

For a week, Professor Maxon, von Horn, and Sing searched the jungle relentlessly for Virginia, unable to enlist help from the local natives due to fear of Muda Saffir's revenge. They were constantly shadowed by a vengeful tribe aiming for retribution against von Horn. The trio returned intermittently to their starting point, hoping for news, while von Horn secretly aimed to recover the buried treasure near their search perimeter.

During this period, Virginia tended to Bulan, who suffered from fever and delirium, revealing his deep love for her interspersed with the cryptic phrase "Nine ninety-nine Priscilla." When Bulan recovered consciousness, he was weak but hopeful, only to be confronted by von Horn and Professor Maxon. Von Horn attempted to shoot Bulan, calling him a beast, but Sing intervened, disarming von Horn and suggesting Bulan wasn't a monster but a man.

A confrontation ensued, where Sing accused von Horn of treachery and being after the treasure for himself, suggesting Bulan wasn't one of Maxon's creations but a man Sing had discovered adrift and amnesic, which he had hidden amidst Maxon's creations for Virginia's sake.

Von Horn's threats escalated, but Maxon demanded evidence of Sing's claims and contemplated the truth about Bulan's identity. Virginia declared her unyielding love for Bulan regardless of his origins, and Sing continued to argue for Bulan's humanity. Maxon realized his assistant's betrayal—mirroring Sing's allegations—and reconsidered Bulan's status, not as a creation but potentially as a man deserving respect and kindness. Agreeing to a provisional acceptance of Bulan, Maxon proposed further discussions.

Bulan, plagued by fragmented memories, agreed to keep a distance from Virginia until he could unveil his past and prove his worthiness. However, Virginia refused to accept separation, valuing the love and nobility Bulan had shown above all else. Maxon, witnessing their resolve and Bulan's dignity, began to see Bulan in a new light, emphasizing companionship over suspicion as they decided to return to their base for deeper discussions, marking the beginning of a new understanding amidst the tumultuous revelations.

