

Transcribed by Sena Bryer.

A note for our readers: "Jess" is Jesse's in-game avatar's voice. "Jesse" is the voice of his internal thoughts.

[A single distorted note reverberates softly. Footsteps echo, then stop, and a match is lit, then left to burn as a gentle flame.]

High Priestess: Gracious Bao in Heaven

[A congregation of followers repeats her words.]

Congregation: Gracious Bao in Heaven

High Priestess: See us through this night

Congregation: See us through this night

High Priestess: May your splendor grant

Congregation: May your splendor grant

High Priestess: Our guttered lanterns light

Congregation: Our guttered lanterns light

High Priestess: Save our wayward brethren

Congregation: Save our wayward brethren

High Priestess: Who shun your Seeing Eye

Congregation: Who shun your Seeing Eye

High Priestess: Bask them in your vision

Congregation: Bask them in your vision

High Priestess: And raise them up on High

Congregation: And raise them up on High

[Sound slowly fades out. The main theme plays.].

Jess: Evening prayers of the Baoist faith, translated.

Episode 9: The Rainbow City

[Slow fade-in to the quiet interior of an inn room in Soi Fen.]

Jesse: Ungh... I don't want to get up.

[A bird starting chirping from outside a window.]

Jesse: Piss off, bird, I'm staying in bed.

[He pulls a pillow over his head.]

Jess: [Mumbling] Stupid bird, gotta wake me up...

[It works for a second, but then the bird chirps louder.]

Jess: Grargh!

[He throws off the blanket, stomps over to the window and bangs on the glass. An in-game warning beeps.]

Notifications: This is a non-destructible environment!

Jess: Oh shut up!

[The bird keeps chirping.]

Jesse: You win this round, bird.

[Jesse opens the door to the inn room, and as he is monologuing, walks out to the lobby.]

Jesse: I shouldn't let the guild know I'm on just yet. I have to make it look like I leave the game same as everyone else. Proto said he doesn't have access to a list of guild members, so as long as I keep quiet sometimes, no one will know I'm on literally all day. I guess I explore the city now? While I could I go see this Grand Inquisitor, the game's quest can wait as long as I need it to. My real quest is a little more important. The only way I can see to get back to the real world quicker is to gather information. And to gather information, I need to know this city. [Pause.] So, exploring I go.

[He opens the door to outside. Sounds fill the air--chattering crowds, the movement of people, the ringing of bells, merchants shouting their wares--the city is bustling. A drum beat begins a song, then breaks out into a full, medieval melody that plays for a few bars.]

Jesse: So let's see, I've been to the south and the north lifts; I've seen all three gates, the north, the east, and the south; I've been to the Sapphire Lake on top of the Spine and the Ruby Lake was the one I saw at the bottom; I've been to the Old Town, which was way too rich for my blood, and I've been to the slums, which they made sound way worse than it actually was; I've seen a university, a cemetery, a bank, a theater, a barracks, and at least fifteen temples to Bao... I think I've pretty much mapped the city. Which would be great if I had actually seen any people in it. People people, I mean. Not thousands of NPCs. At least, I assume they were NPCs. No one I saw acted like they were clearly a player. No silliness, no trolling, no disregard for common courtesies...

Jess: So how am I supposed to do this?

Jesse: Even if I knew how on earth to ask the questions I need to without setting off a million Ethan alarms, I don't even know who I should be asking in the first place. It's pretty clear by now that progressing through my quest won't do the trick, and it doesn't seem like it's a common glitch. If it *were* common, I would have heard about it, and it would have been patched out in no time! [Pause.] Wait...

[The music slows to a halt. Then, ding! Literally, a ding sound effect.]

Jesse: A patch! Of course! The game has to be taken down eventually to be updated! Even if it's just a few minutes, that's a few minutes that they will need to kick everyone out for!

[He giggles gleefully at the idea, in both his character's and his real voice.]

Jesse: It's so simple! No online game goes without its updates, and no program can be updated while it is still in use! All I have to do is wait! [Pause.] So! For now, I will simply play the game as they want me to. I will listen. I will watch, and I will wait. If there is information, I will let it come to me, rather than seek it out and try my luck with my evil roommate.

[The song reaches its end.]

Jesse: So, with that, to the Tower of the Inquisition. Assuming that's where I'll find this Grand Inquisitor. It sounds like the right place, and I'm close by anyw--

[A voice suddenly speaks, distorted like it's coming in through an old telephone, or on a vinyl record player.]

Robin: Gooooood afternoon, everyone!

Jess: Nyagh! Where did that come from? Who's there!?

[A pause.]

Robin: Ah, suppose no one's on.

Jesse: Oh wait, duh! It's guildchat! [Frantic] Crap, how do I talk in...

Robin: It is a little early for everyone.

[Jesse opens his hud and quickly navigates through it.]

Jesse: Agh! Guildchat, guildchat, how do I talk in guildchat? C'mon, c'mon... Aha!

Notifications: To speak in guildchat, simply put a finger, or two, to your ear.

Jesse: 'To my ear'?

Notifications: When done correctly, you will hear a small beep, and a lighted green 'G' will appear in the top-right corner of your vision. Then, simply speak as normal! Do note that the chat is not entirely private--anyone in your immediate vicinity will be able to hear what you are saying.

Jesse: [Hurriedly] Okay, okay! Got it!

[A small electronic beep plays, indicating that guildchat is active.]

Jess: Sorry, I was trying to remember how to talk in guildchat. Hi.

Robin: [Elated] Ah! It's you!

Jess: ...I beg your pardon?

Robin: Proto messaged me last night saying he invited an enchantingly lovely high elf lass into the guild! And here she is!

Jesse: I don't remember hearing any of that.

Jess: Proto said that about me?

Robin: I may have added a few embellishments.

Jesse: Oh boy. This guy's a card.

Jess: You've never even seen me before. I could be as ugly as a pig.

Robin: Nonsense, all women are beautiful. Inside and out. [Pause.] You're a priest, right? What level are you so far?

Jesse: Uhh, that's a good question. I was eight when I met with Proto yesterday, but I haven't paid any attention since then.

[He opens his HUD.]

Jesse: Whoa, ten! Cool!

Jess: Ten.

Robin: Yay! Me toooooo! So, what's your name, new guildmate-that's-the-same-level-as-me?

Jess: Jess.

Robin: Short for Jessica?

Jesse: Short for something.

Jess: Just Jess.

Robin: Very good! My name is Robin. Also "Just Robin". I believe Sal said hers was short for something but I can't remember what. Oh! Speaking of the others, Sal is level eight last I heard, Proto is sixteen, and our final member who I believe you have yet to meet, Lunar, is eighteen.

Jess: Eighteen!? How do people level so quickly!?

Jesse: I'm literally always on and I'm nowhere near that!

Robin: Haven't the foggiest. But those two were both in the beta, and Lunar is a real hardcore gamer.

Jess: Huh. Well, I should probably catch up then. I was about to go do some quest stuff at this tower before you showed up anyway. I'll talk to you later, okay?

Robin: Okaaaaay!

[Scene transition to the Old Town. Thought still in the city, it is quieter here, with the sounds of the gentle rushing of a nearby canal. Footsteps, as Jesse approaches a guard.]

Guardsmen: Hold! Civilians are prohibited from passing beyond this point. Even a priestess. Please turn around and continue the way you came.

Jesse: Uh huh. And here's where I be a good video game player and pull out my quest item to show him. Writ of passage, meet guard. Guard, writ of passage.

Guardsmen: [Gasps.] You are the Survivor of Yai Wen? I had heard there was one who had lived, but I did not know who you were. My apologies. You may pass, of course.

Jess: Thank you!

[Jesse passes by and walks a bit further until he stops.]

Jesse: Let's see, two roads, and it looks like the yellow one leads to the Tower. Cool.

[He continues on the last leg of the road.]

Jesse: Follow the yellow brick road, Jess, and when you reach the Emerald City, smash Ethan's head against a wall three times and say the magic words.

[He laughs under his breath.]

Jesse: Ah, knowing my luck, I'd probably get cast for a munchkin instead.

[Reaching the tower, he stops. There is a pause.]

Jesse: So... I'm here, and it's pretty--for real, love the opaque glass look... but...

Jess: How the hell do I get in?

Jesse: The road just stops in front of one of its walls.

Jess: [Calling out] Hello!? Is anyone there?

[Silence. Nothing and no one responds.]

Jess: I'm really confused! This is the Tower of the Inquisition, right--

Voice of the Tower: Speak your business before the Eye, and be judged.

Jess: [Caught surprised] Whoa! Uh... okay. Um. I need to see the Grand Inquisitor.

Voice of the Tower: Grand Inquisitor Po Milan.

Jess: Yes! That's him. Can I see--?

Voice of the Tower: And who would stand before Bao's greatest champion? Speak your name.

Jesse: Okay, we can do without the constantly interrupting me, thanks.

Jess: I am the Survivor of Yai Wen.

Jesse: Me and thousands of other players, but hey, the tower doesn't need to know that.

[A long pause.]

Jesse: Did I break it? Is it waiting for my character's real name? Because I don't want to say it. I really don't want to say it.

Jess: Hello? Are you still--

Voice of the Tower: The Grand Inquisitor will see you.

[Loud magical sound effects, as if someone is casting something.]

Jess: Whoa, whoa, wait up, what's--

[Then, a quick cut to silence.]

Jess: --going on?

[A pause.]

Jess: What just happened? Did it teleport me?

Po Milan: [Muffled through a door] Enter.

Jesse: Oh. I guess that's the guy.

[Cautiously, Jesse opens the door and walks through. A fireplace inside crackles softly.]

Po Milan: I had not known you were a priestess.

Jesse: Everyone's been making this symbol with their hands whenever they realize I'm a priestess. Er... priest. Whatever. Should I be giving it back? I probably should for this guy at least. This very important NPC. [Pause.] V.I.N.P.C.

Po Milan: My apologies, I should have provided an escort for you. Come, sit. I know we have much to discuss.

[Po Milan takes a seat. Jesse does the same, though not without hesitation. There is an awkward pause after.]

Jesse: So I guess I start the conversation.

Jess: [Slowly, carefully] Thank you for having me, Grand Inquisitor.

Po Milan: Please. Po Milan is fine.

Jess: Y-Yes, um... sir.

Po Milan: [Small chuckle] Or that. Now, let's get down to business. I imagine you have news for me from the South? From Shan Tir?

Jesse: How does he know all this? Well... other than the developers programming him to. Duh.

[He navigates his inventory to the letter, pulls it out and gives it to Po Milan, who breaks the seal and unfurls it.]

Jesse: He doesn't look surprised by it. [Pause.] He actually looks pleased with it.

[Po Milan sets the letter down on a small table.]

Po Milan: My time governing Han Tol has told me the orcs are always planning something. I am glad you did not reach Shan Tir in time. Most likely you saved a great deal of lives in doing so.

Jess: But--

Po Milan: But... what?

Jesse: But... entire orc villages were wiped off the map, weren't they? I mean, yeah, they're not real villages and they're not real... people.

Jess: N-Nothing.

Po Milan: The past cannot be changed, but we may still learn from it.

[He picks up the parchment and waves it lazily in the air.]

Po Milan: Captain Som Menlei thought Binésa would strike Shan Tir. They did not. Admiral Var Holam thought it would be the western coast. Again, they did not. In truth, since putting Yai Wen to the flame, Binésa has not so much as lit a torch after. Why do you think that is?

Jesse: What does he want me to say? That's an entirely open-ended question. His A.I. can't possibly understand anything I tell him, right? Like, I know there are artificial intelligences that know a spoken language well enough to converse fluently with humans, but I had always been under the impression that they were rare and costly.

Jess: I don't know.

[A pause.]

Po Milan: Tell me, what is Binésa's target? Their enemy?

JESS

Um... us?

Po Milan: Us being...?

JESS

Us... high elves? Han Tol?

Po Milan: That is what everyone believes, and with good reason. But I would disagree. Come, follow me.

[He stands up and walks over to a table. Jesse follows.]

Jesse: A map of Han Tol. Isn't that what I just said? Han Tol is their target?

Po Milan: You see these seven pins? They represent everywhere there has been a dark elf attack. Yai Wen obviously, but these others...

Jesse: One in Shin Til, three scattered around the Upper Forest, one at... [Reading it] ...East Pass, and where's the last? [Pause.] Oh. Way up here. Almost off the map.

Po Milan: These were not mass killings, but targeted assassinations. Tell me, have you met with any dark elf assassins on the road here?

Jesse: That hunter that killed Buki. And, of course, Sal, but well, now she denies it. We'll see about that.

Jess: I have. Here and there.

Po Milan: I assume you slew these dark elves, yes? You did not flee from them?

Jess: That's right.

Jesse: One of them, at least. Still waiting to see on the other.

Po Milan: Unfortunately, the other survivors were not so lucky.

Jesse: Others? Does he mean the NPCs on the...

Po Milan: Do you see what you are looking at now? These were all survivors of the tragedy at Yai Wen, just like you.

Jess: ...All of them?

Po Milan: All of them... except you. They haven't gotten to you yet.

[He walks close to Jesse.]

Po Milan: That is why I need you, why the people need you. Though you may not know it yet, you are a hero to them. You are their hope: the Survivor. And at the same time, you are Binésa's fear.

Jesse: That's close enough buddy, please don't touch me.

Po Milan: I do not know what they want with you, or why they would slay hundreds just to get to you, but I will find out, and I will protect you, Survivor. This I promise.

[Po Milan leans forward, but Jesse jumps back.]

Jesse: Nope, nope, nope! I draw a fierce line at creepy abuelo kisses on the forehead. You are not doing that. Jess is backing the hell away from this conversation right now.

Po Milan: [Clears his throat] You will be provided lodging in Soi Fen, and a personal guard while you are here. Here, I will make note on a map of the city where your quarters are. You may leave the city if you desire, but I would advise against it for obvious reasons. If you still wish to help in our investigation, you are free to gather information within the city. Just be careful: you are still a marked girl.

[Scene transition back to the Old Town.]

Jesse: I guess this is the place? I definitely wasn't expecting somewhere this rich. We don't each get our own house, right? I mean, there are definitely hundreds and hundreds of buildings in Soi Fen, but that's the kind of thing you buy for obscene amounts of money, not get for free at level ten.

[A priest, Lionet, instantly appears further along the path, walking out as if from an invisible wall.]

Lionet: I was right! It is an instance!

Jesse: Or yeah, it's an instanced area and we all get our own version of the house.

Jess: I guess this is where they send everyone, then?

Lionet: [Just noticing Jesse] Not everyone. Just the priests. My friend is a summoner--they stuck him by the graveyard.

Jesse: [Gleeful] Oh man, I bet that made Ethan so mad.

Lionet: It's pretty nice in there. It's like one of those fancy Chinese gardens, with the trees and the pools of water and everything. Very calm. You could easily fall asleep in there.

Jesse: Oh. That gives me an idea.

Jess: [Feigning ignorance] Can you fall asleep in-game? Is that even possible?

Lionet: You can. I've heard people say they've done it. It's not a good idea, but you can do it.

Jess: Why isn't it a good idea? I mean, as long as you're good on the outside you can stay in here as long as you want, right?

Lionet: Well... I suppose, but you don't want to stay in the game forever, do you?

Jesse: Almost there...

Jess: N-No, of course not! [Pause.] What, do you know anyone who is? Like, who hasn't left the game since coming in?

Lionet: No, nothing like that. I know a couple guys who've stuck it out for long periods of time, but hunger got to them eventually.

Jess: Ah, I see.

Jesse: Damn. I thought I might get something there. I could try to squeeze some more information out of him, but... No, I've already pressed my luck enough. I have to be sly when dealing with Ethan. Like he would be.

Jess: Well, take care.

Lionet: Hold on. You're probably on the same part in the quest as me, right? 'Uncover the Binésan plot against you'?

Jesse: Does he want to do the quest together?

Jess: Yes.

Lionet: That summoner friend I told you about? He managed to get a little extra information out of someone in the tower. Remember those pins on the map? The one that was all by itself north of here was the most recent attack, only yesterday. It was one of those two brothers. The other one is still alive.

Jesse: You know, even though I know we're all given the same quest, more or less, it's strange hearing him talk so casually about things that seem like they only happened to me.

Lionet: He's at the First Temple of Bao. I plan on getting off after I put some things up at the auction house to sell, but I'm headed there tomorrow to see what he has to say. It's the only lead we've got so far.

Jess: Thank you! I'll go there right now actually. If I see you again, I'll let you know what I find out.

Lionet: I'd appreciate that. The name's Lionet by the way.

Jess: Jess.

Lionet: Good luck, Jess.

Jess: You too.

[Lionet leaves, walking down the road.]

Jesse: I'll come back for you later, house. For now, I've got other matters to attend to.

Credits, read by Sena Bryer: This was episode 9 of Dreambound. Dreambound is written, directed, produced, and edited by Sena Bryer. The role of Jesse was played by

Brandon Acosta and Daisy Guevara. The role of Robin was played by Tarek Esaw. The role of Po Milan was played by Rhys Lawton. The role of Lionet was played by Anthony Ray Morales. The guardsman was played by Cole Burkhardt. The high priestess was played by Bonnie Bogovich, and her congregation was played by Marnie Warner, Brad Colbrook, Tal Minear, Jazzy Oliver, Leslie Grant, Cole Burkhardt, Brandon Nguyen, and Ken Vo. The notifications voice was played by Sena Bryer.

Dreambound's main theme is "Blue Light", by Pinofas. Other music used in this episode was by Lilo Sound and Alexander Nakarada. Proper attribution can be found in the show notes and on our website at www.senabryer.com/dreambound.

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Stay safe everyone, and we'll see you in the game.