

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 soft piano melody plays. Layo III narrates, her voice haughty and elevated, with the cadence of a history teacher.]

Layo: After leaving what was once their homeland, the Lost became nomads of the world. They first traveled west, through the firelands of Kana Keo, but were spurned by the djinni who ruled there. They attempted then to settle in the Land of the Giants, the abandoned ancestral homeland of the draken, but the great beasts from whom the land received its name extinguished that hope. The naku factions to the south were only slightly kinder, letting them pass through, but offering no shelter.

Further and further south they traveled, until they reached the lands we now know as Han Tol, which at that time were the wild dominion of the harpies. Unlike the other wildkin races, the harpies did not exist in any organized nation, but as a scattering of various tribes always at war with one another. As their kind generally stay in the mountains, the lowlands were an easy area to stake a claim in, as the Dandesian people had been doing for centuries. A particularly weak tribe made their home between two lakes along the Spine, and by allying with a rival tribe, the lost were able to clear them out and make the location their new home.

They called the town they settled 'Soi Fe En', 'conquered lakes' in Old Elvish, though over time the name was shortened to simply 'Soi Fen'. From there they swept over the harpies in a blaze of conquest, driving them to the highest peaks of the Spears and the Sahlgees, where only they could survive, and where they still do to this day.

[The melody fades out, and the main theme fades in.]

Jess: From "The History of the Lost, vol. I", written by Layo III, of House Fisel'leya.

Jess: Episode 11: The All-Seeing Eye.

[Fade in to where the previous episode left off. The magically propelled boat speeds across sea waters, not far from the shore. A gentle rain trickles.]

Notifications: Warning! Vehicle is leaving its designated zone!

Jesse: Yeah, whatever. I'm not keeping the thing, just looking for a place to beach the--

Jess: Whoa!

[With a bit-crushed sound effect echoing, the boat disappears, and Jesse splashes into the water, going under for a moment before resurfacing.]

Jesse: Jeez, you could have at least let me find somewhere to beach the damned thing first! You didn't have to just make it disappear under my feet!

[He starts swimming towards the shore.]

Jesse: What dev thought that was good game design? Ugh.

[The scene fades out, returning with Jesse on shore, walking along a road. The weather has intensified to a proper rain now, and every one of Jesse's footsteps squish.]

Jesse: Thank goodness the road is right here. I'm not sure, but Soi Fen should be to the south. I guess I'll just head that way and find out.

[He shivers.]

Jesse: Soaked to the bone. And it's really raining now, so no hope of drying off. Cool. I wonder if I can pull my arms in through my sleeves.

[A rustling of clothing.]

Jesse: Nice, I can. Hopefully this will actually create some warmth. [Pause.] Oh right... Boobs. Forgot I uh... had those. [Pause.] Hm. I always thought it would feel more... different, I guess. Like, more noticeable. Though, I am wearing some kind of undergarment under all this. Probably irremovable too, or I'd have seen at least one streaker by now.

[A longer pause, as he continues walking down the road.]

Jesse: Or it could be because my character's are super small. Ugh. I couldn't have just been someone my actual age, could I? Then I could get away with having a huge pair of knockers and at least enjoy the weirdness of my situation.

[A *really* long, *really* reflective pause.]

Jesse: Man, I am really sleepy.

Jess: Oh, and I bought an umbrella! I completely forgot about that.

[Jesse opens up the umbrella.]

Jesse: There, now leave the poor girl's chest alone and get back to civilization already.

[The scene fades away to later, with Jesse having reached the entrance to Soi Fen at the bottom of the northern lift.]

Jesse: Well, there's Soi Fen. No sign of the dark elf trio, so I guess they called it quits for the night.

[He sighs in relief and walks to the lift.]

Jesse: Thank goodness. Looks like just a bunch of high elves at the lift. Oh, and one draken. He's got blue scales instead of Proto's yellow-green. Interesting.

Draken: Whoa!

Jesse: Whoops. Not he. [Pause.] Probably.

Draken: Where'd you get that rice paper umbrella? And that dress? That's an awesome look!

Jesse: D-Dress? I thought it was a robe...

High elf 1: Aww, she's so cute!

High elf 2: What level are you?

Jess: Um... Twelve.

[The group gasps.]

High elf 3: This little girl could kick all our asses.

Jesse: Really? I mean, I don't know about that...

Jess: The robe was from the bazaar, up there in the city. I don't know if they'll have others. The umbrella I found in a city far to the south, but they should have them here as well.

Draken: Cool, thanks! I actually haven't been in this city yet--do you think you could give me directions?

[The lift reaches the bottom with a loud thud. Its gate opens.]

Jess: Sure! I'll tell you on the way up.

[The scene fades to Jesse and the draken on a street in Soi Fen. It being late at night, the streets are quieter than during the day. The rain is gone too, with Soi Fen being so high in altitude.]

Jess: I'm going this way, so I'm stopping here, but you should be able to find your way there.

Draken: I just go down this street and then take a left at the forested hill, right?

Jess: Yep. If you hit the other lake, you've gone too far.

Draken: Awesome, thanks a bunch!

Jess: No problem.

[The draken heads off.]

Jesse: All right then... Let's see if this house is as fancy as that guy said it was. What was his name again? Lion... something? Ah, whatever.

[The scene fades once again, to Jesse now inside the instanced house given to him by the Inquisition. It is quiet, with a small brook flowing gently through its garden.]

Jesse: Oh wow. This is really picturesque! Cobblestone walkway, bamboo shoots everywhere, even got the rice paper doors leading inside. Very aesthetic. [Pause.] Why are the doors already open though? Is someone inside?

[From inside, someone speaks. Jesse walks towards them.]

Nimára: Ah! I was wondering when you would arrive! Busy day? And night, I suppose.

Jess: Y-Yes... Who are you?

Nimára: Did the Grand Inquisitor not let you know? I'm to make sure you're kept nice and safe.

Jesse: Oh yeah. I do remember him saying something to that effect.

Nimára: The name's Nimára. So don't you worry, Survivor--no one'll pluck a hair off your head while I'm on the job. Your room's upstairs. Top floor.

Jess: Uh, sure. Thank you.

Nimára: Anytime.

[Jesse walks up a flight of stairs to his room, and stops for a moment upon entering.]

Jesse: Oh my God... That bed...

Jess: Is... so... big!

[He hurries over to it, then to the next item, then the next, obviously excited.]

Jesse: Oh! And there's a kotatsu too! I'd always wanted one of those! A shame it's summer right now. Ooh, and is that a balcony?

[He opens a sliding door and steps out onto the balcony. The far noise of the nighttime city can be heard in the distance.]

Jesse: Wow... What a view. The city just stretches on and on, doesn't it? Way bigger than any other MMOs, that's for sure. [His excitement slowly fading.] Heh, look. They have some mindless NPCs walking the street to make it seem like I'm not in my own instance.

[The thought drains the last of the enamor in him. He sighs, and leans on the balcony railing.]

Jesse: There you go again, Jess. Deconstructing the game. Why can't you just sit back and enjoy it? When was the last time you actually did that? When you were a kid they were all amazing and you loved every game you could get your hands on. You'd spend hours playing them for no reason other than because you could, and you never tired of it. It never grew dull or stale. [Pause.] So what happened? Why'd you start picking the games apart, like a scientist dissecting a cadaver? You started noticing the repetitions, the tropes, the gameplay mechanics used over and over. You grew picky with what you liked and what you didn't like. And then you made that streaming channel, and made it all a business. The games were no longer about fun, but procedure. Choose the game to play, play it, beat it, repeat.

Jess: [Thinking back] 'I play in search of dreams'.

Jesse: Just pretty words for a pretty game, I guess. That's all it is-- seeing how long you can keep pretty appearances pulled over the player's eyes before they realize what's behind them.

[He sighs again, the sound quickly lost in the cool wind.]

Jesse: And speaking of pretty appearances...

[Jesse returns inside, closing the door and all the windows.]

Jesse: Doors and windows closed and locked. So uh... let's take a second look at that 'dress' I'm wearing.

[He steps in front of a full-length mirror.]

Jesse: Huh... Wow. It uh... really is cute on her, isn't it? Not entirely what I thought I was buying. I was expecting something like a priest's robe, but that's almost like a Manchurian dress. [Pause.] Strange. I've never really thought of myself as good-looking or handsome. Certainly never pretty. So seeing this which is undoubtedly pretty, it's hard for my mind to accept what I'm looking at.

Jess: It's not me, but... I chose those clothes, didn't I? I'm responsible for that much, right?

Jesse: It should be uplifting to be able to look in a mirror to such a positive response, so why isn't it? Why do I feel so awkward? Uncomfortable even? Even my voice is making me uncomfortable, and I thought I'd gotten used to that by now. [Pause.] I bet if Juan could see me right now he'd be laughing his ass off. Ethan, please don't invite my brother to our apartment before I get out of here. [Pause] Maybe it's just these clothes. This dress. I should take it off and see if it helps any. Gloves first though, juuuuust to see if the glyphs have returned.

[He removes the gloves.]

Jesse: Meh. Same old, same old. Figured as much. Boots next.

[He removes the boots too.]

Jesse: Nope. Still feeling weird. So... I guess it's the dress now? [Super hesitant] Yep... Here goes...

[The heavenly choir from episode 5 returns as the angel on his shoulder appears once again.]

Jesse (angel): Jess! What are you doing?

[Right on cue, the cackle of imps and wailing on a guitar signals the devil is there too.]

Jesse (devil): He's just taking his clothes off. What? What's wrong with that?

Jesse (angel): I thought we went over this...

Jesse (devil): That was different! That was out in the open. There were those sirens who might've seen, but this is private. He even locked all the windows! Who's going to see now?

Jesse (angel): You know exactly who.

Jesse (devil): Oh, what? Ethan? Please. So what if he does? It's a flipping bedroom! That's what you do in bedrooms! Let the man chill for once in his life!

Jess: Devil wins this round. Sorry, angel. Aaaand off it goes!

[He removes the dress, and is silent upon the sight. A tiny ringing, distant and almost inaudible, arises.]

Jesse: Oh... That's actually not helping. That's uh... wow, yeah. Well, you were right about the irremovable sports bra, Jess. Just um... hmm...

[Another pause. A distorted sound, like radio interference, or a hum of bees, gradually increases. His voice too distorts, nearly incomprehensible by the end.]

Jesse: This... this feeling, I don't know, it's like... It's like a wave. Like a wave of something I can't feel, something with no substance or mass but it's definitely there. Not like there's a malfunction with the mindlink, but... I don't know... something deeper. Something itching my mind. How do I get rid of it? Do I move? Maybe move into a different-- No, it's the reflection, right? The reflection is the cause. Or is the catalyst? Where is this all coming from? From me? From this body? From the world outside?

[All the sounds reaches its crescendo. Jesse does his best to shake the feeling away, and the sounds slowly, eventually, subside.]

Jesse: I don't know, I don't know, I don't know. Just... shove it aside for now, Jess. You've still got one more piece of clothing left. [Pause.] Ugh, but that's the big one. Whatever could be behind pants number one? Let's find out, contestant.

[Bracing for the worse, he removes the pants.]

Jess: [Blurting out in surprise] Boyshorts?

Jesse: I mean I guess that's better than a pair of... some of those other things woman wear. [Pause] But still...

Jess: [About to sob] There's nothing there... It's totally gone...

Jesse (devil): Go on, man. Touch it.

Jess: NO! [Pause.] Screw this, I'm going to bed!

[Jesse tears away from the mirror and leaps onto the bed. landing with a pleasant poof.]

Jesse: Yes, bed. Where I can sleep and maybe have nice dreams and... and... Wow... This is even softer than I thought... I wonder if Ethan has a bed like this back at his parents' mansion. [Getting sleepier and sleepier] Ethan, Ethan, Ethan... Why do my thoughts keep drifting back to him today? Is he even still playing? Is he even still helping me? [Pause.] Was he ever?

[Only seconds later, Jesse drifts off into sleep. The game's "resting at an inn" jingle plays. The scene fades back in to the next morning, with Jesse still in bed.]

[Robin speaks, in guildchat.]

Robin: Good moooooorning, everyone!

[Jesse jolts awake, grumbling and groaning. Guildchat beeps on.]

Jess: [Groggy] Robin, do you mind? I was asleep.

Robin: Asleep? Like... in the game?

Jesse: Crap. I shouldn't have told him that. Uh... play it off, Jess.

Jess: Yeah, what?

Robin: I was unaware such a thing was possible! Why would you want to?

Jess: [Yawns] If you saw the bed they gave me you'd know why.

Robin: You have your own place already?

Jesse: 'Already'?

Jess: I guess? I don't actually own it--I just get to use it. Well, me and all the other priests here.

Robin: Sounds crowded.

Jess: It's an instanced area, so I'm alone. [Pause.] The game hasn't done anything like that for you?

Robin: It has not. I have no place with which to rest my weary bones. Lunar hasn't said anything about a house either.

Jess: Lunar... he's...?

Robin: She.

Jesse: Gah. Again I mess that up. Bad Jess!

Robin: She's a... friend of mine. I know her from... school.

Jesse: Those were two very pronounced pauses, man.

Jess: I still haven't heard from her. Where's she been?

Robin: Not sure.

Jess: You two don't live in the same area?

Robin: Well, sort of. We live on opposite ends of Houston, and Houston is very big. I haven't seen her online either though.

Jesse: Suspicious.

Jess: You ought to make sure she's all right.

Robin: Aww! Such a thoughtful soul! But fear not, I'm sure she's fine.

Jess: If you say so.

[Jesse opens the balcony door and steps out into the daylight. He leans his arms on the railing and lies his head down on top.]

Jesse: Ahh, that sun feels nice on my skin. And the breeze too...

Jess: [Mumbling into his arms] I don't wanna go anywhere... I don't wanna talk to Sal... I just wanna stay here and sleep...

Robin: Very well! It's settled.

Jess: [Grumbling] What, Robin? What's settled?

Robin: I shall away to Han To!

[Jesse sighs, then pushes himself up to a stand. Guildchat beeps on.]

Jess: Do you know the way?

Robin: Uhh, west, right?

Jess: I don't know. Which way did Proto go after inviting you two?

Robin: Beats me. But I'm pretty sure it's west! Hey! Maybe if I'm lucky I'll get there by tonight!

Jess: Well, good luck. I'm going to get off for a while. If Sal comes looking for me, tell her I'll be on later.

Robin: Okaaaaay!

[Guildchat beeps off. He goes back inside from the balcony and notices the mirror.]

Jesse: If only I actually was getting off. Then I could be the real me. Then I could see myself in the mirror instead of... of that. [Disgusted sigh.] 'A huge pair of knockers.' What the hell was I thinking? That would only make this feel worse, not better.

[Ashamed and tired, he puts his clothes back on and leaves to go downstairs, where Nimára is waiting.]

Nimára: Will you be leaving the city, Survivor?

[Jesse stops, looking Nimára over.]

Jesse: Homeboy's wearing armor this time. Is he worried something's going to happen to me?

Jess: Maybe.

Jesse: Wait. He's an NPC. He might not understand 'maybe'.

Nimára: Nine times out of ten 'maybe' means 'yes', so I'm coming with you.

Jesse: Oh. Good answer.

Nimára: And don't try to argue--Grand Inquisitor's orders. I'm to make sure you're safe, remember?

Jess: That's fine. Let's go then.

[Fade out into Jesse and Nimára walking the streets of Soi Fen.]

Jesse: Funny, I thought I'd get some weird looks from people walking around with a bodyguard. Maybe they just think we're both NPCs, like friends or something. Or maybe siblings--the guy's hair is almost the same color as--

[Suddenly, similar to in the Upper Forest, a bell chimes. Jesse stops dead in his tracks.]

Jess: Wait a second. I should go to the First Temple again before I leave.

[He stands still and quiet for a moment.]

Jesse: Why did I just say that? Did I forget something? Like, something they told me the last time I was there? [Pause.] I guess I should go back. My mind's trying to tell me that I'm an idiot. Thank you, mind.

Nimára: That's fine. Just stay where I can keep an eye on you, please.

Jesse: [Super sarcastically] Thanks, big broooo.

[Scene change to outside the First Temple of Bao. It is unchanged; it even has the same guard outside.]

First Temple Guard: Greetings once again, priestess.

Jesse: Hiya.

Nimára: I'll be out here when you're done.

Jess: You're not coming in?

Nimára: I have a spot of a history here. Besides... [To the guard, seductively] Have we met before?

First Temple Guard: [Clueless] I don't think so, no.

Nimára: Oh, I think I'd remember someone as gorgeous as you.

First Temple Guard: Uhh...

Jesse: Aaaand the NPCs are flirting. Just walk inside, Jess, just walk inside.

[He briskly walks inside, which is also the same as it was last time, right down to the old man who greets Jesse as soon as he comes in, literally reusing the exact same line.]

Old Elven Man: Welcome. Have you come to hold service or just to pray?

Jesse: The exact same thing he said last time.

Jess: [Growling in faux toughness] I've come for my money. Don't play games with me, old man. Where is it?

[Jess cuts in halfway through the old man's response.]

Old Elven Man: Of course. I'm sure you'll be a most welcome sight here. Mother Ven is in the common room if you wish to see her.

Jess: No! I said 'play', not 'pray'! I-- Ugh.

Jesse: The dumb A.I. are no fun.

[He leaves the old man behind, walking to the common room where Mother Ven is.]

Mother Ven: [Noticing him] My greetings, priestess. How fare you on this bright, blessed day?

Jesse: You know, I'm curious how everyone knows instantly that I'm a priestess-- priest. I know there's got to be a way to hide that.

Jesse: I'm fine. Are you Mother Ven?

Mother Ven: I am. And you are the Survivor of Yai Wen, are you not?

Jesse: That too! How's she know that!?

Mother Ven: A shame the other is no longer with us. Ren was such a sweet boy.

Jesse: Oh right. I forgot, the dark elves got him. That sucks.

Jesse: My condolences.

Mother Ven: We have yet to hold the proper rites for him. Perhaps, as one of his countrymen, you would like to invoke the All-Seeing Eye to begin the ceremony?

Jesse: What the what?

Jess: Um... sorry, I don't think I know how to do that?

Mother Ven: [Surprised] Oh, but you must. All priestesses of Bao know the All-Seeing Eye. Have you forgotten?

Jess: Uh... yes? Could you um... teach me?

Mother Ven: Of course. [Pause.] Here. Move your hands like so.

Jesse: Okay... like this? Or no, she's got her thumbs like that... There we go.

Mother Ven: Good. Close your eyes...

Jesse: As long as you don't try to touch me, lady.

Mother Ven: ...and now open them.

[There is an outpouring of energy, a whispering magic as Jesse opens his eyes. All looks the same save for Mother Ven, who now glows violet.]

Jess: What the...

Mother Ven: What do you see?

Jess: You're... glowing.

Mother Ven: Violet, I hope.

Jess: Y-Yes. Violet.

[Jesse blinks, and the magic disappears.]

Jesse: And now she's back to normal. So it only lasts until I blink? But what was that?

Mother Ven: You still look confused. Did they truly never teach you in Yai Wen?

Jess: (murmuring) ...Sorry.

Mother Ven: It's fine, it's fine. [Pause.] You probably want for an explanation. Plainly put, Bao is order. Yes, He is good, and yes, He is light, but above all else, He is order. The All-Seeing Eye is His gift to His faithful, a lens to dispel the chaos around us, and allow us to see order, to see the truth of a soul. Those who follow this order, who follow Bao and cherish the light, are bright violet under the All-Seeing Eye. Those on the opposite end of the spectrum, agents of chaos who thrive in the darkness, will glow red.

Jesse: Huh. So it's basically a Know Alignment spell. I wonder if it works on players. Didn't cost any mana either. Super nifty little spell to have.

Jess: Thank you. [Pause.] Mother Ven?

Jesse: She probably won't know what I'm saying, but...

Mother Ven: Yes, Survivor?

Jess: If Bao is a god of light, is there also a god of darkness?

[Mother Ven gasps.]

Jesse: Oh crap, was I supposed to know that one too? Am I blowing the masquerade?

Mother Ven: [Grave] Yes... there is. But we do not speak of Her, nor do we ever say Her name. To do so gives Her power, you see.

Jesse: That's fair.

Jess: Of course. I understand. [Pause.] Well, good day, Mother Ven. Bao watch over you.

Mother Ven: And you as well, Survivor.

[Jesse leaves the First Temple of Bao, where Nimára is nowhere to be seen. The guard is gone too.]

Jesse: Where the hell did my guy go? [Pause.] That other guard's gone too. Great. Looks like a lunch date is more important than following orders. Oh well. I'll just train by myself.

[Sal pops in, in guildchat]

Sal: Oi, Racist. You on?

Jesse: Nope.

Robin: She said she was getting off for a bit.

Sal: For the love of... I asked her to meet me today.

Robin: Did you say when?

Jesse: She sure didn't. Better get out of the city quick before she might have the chance to spot me.

Sal: Don't suppose you have a way to contact her outside the game, do you? You seem to like stalking pretty girls.

Robin: I what now?

Sal: Nothing, nothing. I didn't say a thing. No idea what you're talking about, mate.

[Scene fades to later in the day, as Jesse is returning to Soi Fen.]

Jesse: Well, that was a productive afternoon! Made it all the way to the Spear Mountains and back, and I got to see harpies! A lot of harpies actually, and they were really not happy to see me. But I lived, so it's all okay! A shame I didn't have the chance to loot the one I managed to take down before its friends came to avenge it. I really wanted the bracers it was wearing. [Pause.] I guess I should "log on" now. I'm surprised Sal's not waiting here at the gate for me with a furious look trying to escape her masked face. Or my bodyguard buddy for that matter--the guy has been doing a terrible job so far. 2 out of 5 stars at best, man, you're getting a bad review.

[Jesse clears his throat, and guildchat beeps on.]

Jess: Hello, everyone.

[Sal immediately responds, in guildchat]

Sal: There you are! I've been waiting for hours! I asked you to meet me today, didn't I?

Jess: You didn't say when. [Pause.] I spent the night in the game, so I was hoping to take a break today.

Sal: Spent the night? You mean you slept in-game? You can do that?

Robin: That's what I said.

Sal: I might have to try that... My bed's a rock.

Jess: It's not bad. They gave me a nice balcony view and everything. [Pause.] So, the portal, right?

Sal: Yes. I'll be there in a bit.

[Scene fades out to the town center

Jesse: [Like a safari guide] And here we have the elusive dark elf knight, enjoying the cool breeze by a fountain. Little does she know that a predator has his sights on her. The predator sneaks up behind, his presence completely erased, and...

[Jesse sneaks behind her and sends a splash of fountain water over her. Sal shrieks in surprise, and Jess breaks into laughter.]

Sal: What the hell, girl!?

Jess: [Still cackling] You were right--that is fun.

[Sal growls in response.]

Jess: You've got to be hot in all those heavy clothes. And now they're all soaked. Why don't you just take them off? I'm sure no one in this city will mind seeing what you really look like.

Sal: [Sarcastic] Ha ha. Very funny. Maybe I won't help you after all.

Jess: I don't even know what this 'help' is.

Sal: Just follow me. I'll show you what I'm talking about.

Jess: [Standing his ground] No. Not unless you tell me what this is.

Sal: What? What does it matter? I'm helping you, so--

Jess: I'm not about to just follow you wherever you want me to go. I still don't trust you after what you tried to do in the cave.

Sal: What, slap you? You had that com--

Jess: Other cave.

Sal: Oh. [Pause.] Wait, you still think I was trying to PK you?

Jess: You drew your sword, flicked my weapon aside and disbanded the party! What else were you going to do?

Sal: I... [Annoyed groan] I was angry.

Jess: Still are.

Sal: Yes. Still am.

[A long silence passes between them before Sal answers.]

Sal: We're going to a bounty office.

Jess: A bounty office? What for?

Sal: Because we're looking for someone, and we don't know where he's hiding. So we pay these guys to sniff him out.

Jesse: Hmm... Sounds easy enough, but...

Jess: How do you know it'll work?

Sal: I've used it before. It might take a little bit, but they'll find him. They're good, these lads. Look, I'll explain on the way there. Just c'mon.

Jess: Let me guess. That's how you found me that other time, right?

Sal: [Blows a raspberry] Please. I found you because your huge, pink curls stick out like a sore thumb. [Pause.] You still think it's all about you, don't you?

Jess: No, I don't. And you'd better not be about to call me Racist.

Sal: Wasn't planning on it this time. Though I can if you'd like.

Jesse: Please don't.

Jess: So where is this place?

Sal: Few blocks past the hill with the Druids' Guild. Surprised you lot have druids.

Jess: [Mimicking her accent] Surprised you lot have knights. [Pause.] So I guess these bounty hunter guys only track quest NPCs?

Sal: They can track anyone you want them to. NPC, player, doesn't matter.

Jess: How do they find players?

Sal: I don't know--they just do. I mean, even though we're real and they're not, to the game PCs and NPCs are both just a big bunch of numbers, right? The only difference really is who's behind the wheel.

Jess: Yeah, I guess that makes sense. Maybe I should have them find someone else then. Ethan perhaps? Oh, or the hooded boy! Yes! [Pause.] Ah, but wait. I don't have his name. Blech.

The bounty office is hidden in the cellar beneath a bakery.

[Scene fades to a backstreet in Soi Fen. Sal knocks on an unassuming door, then a moment later a slot in the door OPENS up.

reveal a pair of eyes peering out.

Bounty Office Guard: Who's there?

Sal: Justice. [Whispering down to Jesse] Password.

[The eye slot closes, then the door opens. Sal walks in.]

Sal: Get in, before they close the door on you.

Jesse: Yeah, yeah, I'm coming.

[They both walk in, entering an instance. Inside, a bounty office clerk with an oddly cheerful voice greets them.]

Bounty Office Clerk: Hello! Ah, we meet again. This city is not safe for a Binésan woman, especially now with all this talk of war. You really ought to leave. [Pause.] So who will it be this time?

[Gremmy, a gremlin, belches.]

Gremmy: TIME!

Bounty Office Clerk: Yes, Gremmy! Time!

[Sal shoves Jesse forward.]

Jesse: [Startled] Hey! Don't push me, Sal!

Bounty Office Clerk: Hello! Oh, we don't see many priestesses here. You'll keep this place a secret, yes? We wouldn't want anything unfortunate to happen, would we?

Jesse: If you're trying to intimidate me, you've got to lose the goofy attitude, man.

Jesse: I want someone found.

Bounty Office Clerk: Well, that's what we're here for. Do you have a name?

Gremmy: NAME!

[A sci-fi chime plays.]

Jesse: Oh good. A keyboard. I don't have to say it out loud. Hopefully Sal can't see this. All right... E-T-H-A-N. Aaaaand enter.

[The keyboard disappears with a similar chime.]

Bounty Office Clerk: All right, anything to help us find this person?

[Another chime to signal another array of menus.]

Jesse: [Looking through the list] Let's see... 'male', 'high elf', 'summoner', 'pale', 'blonde', 'medium-length hair', 'skinny', and 'player'. That should be enough I hope.

[Jesse hits enter, and the array disappears.]

Bounty Office Clerk: Very good, very good. If he is in Han Tol, we shall find him. And what shall it be for this poor high elf? Dead or alive?

Sal: High elf!?

[She grabs Jesse by the shoulders, who tears himself away from the touch.]

Jesse: Agh! Let go of me!

Sal: [Ignoring that] What the hell did you put high elf for? Are you colorblind? The bloke was a dark elf!

Jesse: I... I have someone else I need to find first. [Mumbling, to the NPC] Alive.

Bounty Office Clerk: Very well. There's just the matter of payment now. Two gold, up front.

Gremmy: FRONT!

Jesse: Two gold!? I mean, I have that much, but I'm trying to save my money, not blow it all away.

[Jesse sighs, and forks over the money with a "cha-ching"!]

Jesse: This had better work as well as Sal says it does.

Bounty Office Clerk: A pleasure doing business with you. We'll send a bird when he is found. Until then, I ask that you not return here.

Jess: Can I put a second bounty out?

Sal: No. You can't. So now I have to pay for it.

Jess: Well, it is your quest too.

Sal: It is. [Pause.] I suppose I thought the girl with the 'nice balcony view and everything' would show a little philanthropy with her wealth. Silly me.

Jess: Just because the game gave me a house doesn't mean I'm rich, you know.

Sal: Oh? Could've fooled me, what with that fancy dress and all. How much did that set you back? Six gold? Seven?

Jess: Twelve silver.

Sal: [Shocked] Really?

Jess: It's only a level ten item. It's not going to be expensive.

[A pause as Sal finishes putting out her bounty.]

Bounty Office Clerk: Another Sonésan, is it? My, you've some kind of vendetta, miss. But we shall find him, do not worry. You know the rules, however. Please do not return here until we send you word.

Gremmy: WORD!

Credits, read by Sena Bryer: This was episode 12 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 Sal was played by Ta'Neal Chandler. The role of Robin was played by Tarek Esaw. The role of Nimára was played by Jazzy Oliver. The role of Layo III was played by Sarah Griffin. The role of Mother Ven was played by Shelly Marquart Reid. The impressed draken was played by Elissa Park. The adoring high elves were played by Ashe Thurman, Stacey Cotham, and Shakyra Dunn. The First Temple guard was played by Dallis MacKenzie. The bounty office guard was played by Marnie Warner. The notifications voice, the old man at the temple, the bounty office guard, and Gremmy the Gremlin were played by Sena Bryer.

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

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And as always, stay safe everyone, and we'll see you in the game.