

BREAKING FESTIVAL

Campaign 2 · Session 1 · August 5th, 2025

Marsember, during the thaw and the Breaking Festival



The Blue Bloods reunite in Marsember, where the city breaks plates, burns ledgers, and forgets on purpose.

Six months after Westgate sealed itself behind Night Mask quarantine, the Blue Bloods arrived separately in Marsember, summoned by Jamal to a place with no name. The city was in the grip of the **Breaking Festival**: porcelain masks, burning ledgers, ghost-lit canals, and plates smashed with truths too heavy to carry into the thaw.

THE CITY BREAKS ITSELF

Westgate had not fallen with a roar. It had been sealed brick by brick, gate by gate, until the city became a memory suspended in amber. No letters, no trade, no harbor gossip. Outside the walls, the realm told stories anyway: **Lotus-burned sailors** babbling in dead languages, **purple-eyed children** appearing barefoot in strange towns, and copycat alchemists trying to bottle the old nightmare.

Marsember smelled of salt, rot, cinnamon, wet ash, and old money. Its towers sagged over canals. Its bridges wept rust. Once a year, at first thaw, the city made a ritual of damage. The Breaking Festival asked every citizen to name what held power over them, then break something in its honor.

The **nameless inn** waited near the drowned library, warm with myrrh, wet parchment, blood orange, and mildew. No bartender stood behind the counter. Instead, drinks had been poured in advance, each marked with a name. Jamal was not there yet, but he had been there. The rot, as his letter promised, had not slept.

The party came back together unevenly. Art arrived ragged, unshaven, and six months deeper into the thing killing him. Balbi found mushroom tea that tasted like home. Irofine swept in with warmth and certainty. Ferrick watched the room like a soldier trying to decide whether reunion counted as danger.

Outside, children threw firecrackers, nobles hurled wigs into flames, and a plate officiant invited the party to speak truths aloud. One truth broke cleanly and earned inspiration. One drew the attention of a **watching stranger**. Balbi's plate shattered into eight perfect pieces and took the memory of his truth with it. Art's truth would not break at all.

"Truth is heavy. You weren't ready."

The crowd boomed. Ash marked Art's face. The festival laughed and screamed around them, but the night had already started choosing what would be remembered and what would be taken away.



Death offers Art the mercy of forgetting. He refuses.

FIVE MONTHS

Art followed a masked figure into a fortune tent that vanished after the lesson was done. The old woman inside offered a die and something worth forgetting. Art rolled, and the festival fell away into a white expanse, hard as porcelain, with darkness climbing over the horizon in the shape of a woman.

Death was gentle with him, which made it worse. She told him he had six months to live, then corrected herself to **five** after his relapse. She offered to erase the knowledge. Art declined. If the clock was real, he wanted to keep it real too.

She confirmed that **Balbi** owes **two souls**, that **Big Poppy** is not ready for the afterlife, and that she would vote for him as a **new god** if gods worked that way. She also mentioned a garbled old connection, something like twenty missing years and another version of herself. Then she reached into Art's mind, rummaged around, and left him with **one extra point of Constitution**.

Art woke face-down at a table in the snow, the tent gone, the old woman gone, and the festival still happening around him as if cosmic mercy were just another booth between fire pits. A child hit him with a firework almost immediately. Marsember, at least, had no interest in reverence.



The Weeping Mercy dossier, the Warmest Regret sample, and the shape of the next war.

WARMEST REGRET

Jamal arrived with a soaked coat, exhausted eyes, and an elder **Night Mask** at his side. The mask came off: **Valen of the Veil**, archivist, witness, and the silver-masked letter-writer from **Alcove Six**. He had been writing about the party for months.

Valen did not call them heroes. He called them **prolongers of death**. Westgate had already been dying when they arrived, he said, and the party had given its people extra time to breathe, love, and forgive. Now the **Night Masks** were asking them to do it again, somewhere the walls were polished wood and the poison came in crystal glasses.

Chalaratha was dead, but her notes had been stolen. Someone was trying to take her place. Jamal placed the evidence on the table: a pinkish resin called **Warmest Regret**, also known as **Strain One**. It pulsed faintly, as if it remembered being alive. The **dark market** was already bidding for it.

The source was the **Weeping Mercy**, a pleasure barge and floating alchemy forge that never docks. It sails east-bound in the **Sea of Fallen Stars** and calls at **Tzir** every thirty days. The next cycle comes in **ten days**. Boarding is invitation only, but the **Night Masks** have a captain in **Tzir** who owes them.

The work was not **addiction**. It was **control**: grief installed, forgiveness sold, loyalty manufactured. Stronger than **Lady Bleth's wine**, and far more instant. Not a habit. A hand around the soul.



Jamal could not destroy the sample. Valen made sure the choice did not end in regret.

DO NOT LET THIS END IN REGRET

Jamal admitted the sample did not addict. It **owned**. He could not destroy it and was compelled to protect it. His request was simple and awful: burn it at any cost, even if the cost was him.

Art knocked Jamal's hand away and swept the table. Jamal stabbed him on instinct, driven by the thing he begged them to destroy. **Ferrick** hid the resin with illusion. **Irofine** commanded Jamal to halt. **Balbi** picked up the sample bare-handed, and the resin did not call to him the way it called to Jamal.

For a breath, the room held. Jamal stood frozen, furious and crying, trapped between his own will and the command wrapped around him. The **sample** lay hidden. Art bled. The party understood, too late and all at once, that Jamal had not brought them a mission. He had brought them a decision he could not survive.

When Jamal broke free screaming, **Valen** stepped behind him and ran him through. It was quick, practiced, and merciful by someone else's definition. The party did not use the **Staff of the Underworld**. Balbi already owed two souls, and Jamal had chosen this ending before they ever entered the room.

"Do not let this end in regret."



The letter-smoke spells one word: run.

JAMAL'S LEGACY

In Jamal's coat was a package addressed to the party by full name: **platinum bars**, impossible timing, and farewell letters. He told them to **burn the root**, not mourn the flower. He warned them not to listen if **the stars began whispering**, because they already knew their name.

Art's letter carried another wound: there is a **cure**, or something like one, but hope kills. It makes you drink when you should run. It makes better men rot from the inside while smiling, certain salvation is close. Time is short. Enjoy it. Owe the world a cleaner fire.

Balbi quietly kept a tiny vial of **Warmest Regret** before the rest burned. The smoke from Jamal's letter formed a single word, **RUN**, and the table, Jamal's body, and the entire nameless inn went up in supernatural flame. Outside, fireworks answered the blaze, and children cheered because the festival had given them one more beautiful disaster.

GOING FORWARD

- **Clock:** ten days to reach Tzir and find the Night Masks' indebted captain.
- **Mission:** board the Weeping Mercy and destroy the new alchemy forge.
- **Warnings:** Art has five months, the stars know their name, and Balbi may be resistant to the resin.
- **Secrets:** Balbi kept a sample vial, and the party may not all know it.

✧ NEXT SESSION: TOWARD THE
WEEPING MERCY ✧