

Vespere et Mane

("Evening and Morning" in Latin, in short VeM) is a game for 2 people to do on an evening, when you will tell the story of two exceptional people, intensely united in destiny and affection. In this game you look for a poetic tone and elegance.

Avoid excessively violent or overly comical scenes, or inappropriate imagery and situations. Imagine the scenes as if they were painted with a few strokes of ink and watercolor.

To play you will need:

- a white sheet A4 (empty on both sides), and a piece of paper to write
- sheet of cardboard, cork-board, or something like that on which you can nimbly fix two toothpicks or needles, big enough to make the base of the sheet
- two toothpicks, needles or the like
- a string of twine about 22 centimeters long
- a standard deck of playing cards, with the Jokers removed
- everything you want used to draw, color and scribble

Creating A Peaceful Land

Far away, there is a land kissed by the Sun and illuminated by infinite stars, where the fruits grow in abundance, and fairy animals and humans live together in harmony. In the center of their land, in the Palace of Souls, inhabit the Two Wardens. The Two Wardens are the personification of two opposing forces, always in balance.

1. **Choose a pair of concepts you want to play on, and assign a Warden and their theme to a player.** For example: Day and Night, Strength and Intellect, Technology and nature, etc.
2. **Write three sentences, called Virtues, where each describe your own skill, characteristic, way of doing or how you personify the various aspects of your Strength.** You can choose these traits by speaking freely, and develop "illustrative" phrases instead of direct or vague qualities ("Strong as a bull" or "Illuminate every Darkness" are better than "Muscular" or "Create Light"). Don't limit yourself. Look for the things that excite you... You are divine beings after all! Try to be specific and not to make traits "catch everything" that you could use in any situation whatever it is.
3. **Also choose what kind of relationship binds you:** are you lovers? Relatives or kin? Old friends? The important thing is that there is a strong affection between you, even if you have approaches, methods or beliefs in the opposite direction.
After that, the other player will assign you a Trait that represents as their Connection or Complement, also present within you.
4. **Finally, make a brief description of your Guardian,** what they look like and how they personify their various Strengths.
5. **Now one of you will illustrate the Palace of Souls** where you live and draw it in the 2 central bands of the Map, while **the other player will illustrate the scenery that you enjoy every morning** and will draw it in the same bands. **Take turns pulling out a card and illustrating the Landscape Feature of each Map Zone.** The nature of what you illustrate is based on the card you draw and what it denotes on the Tables of Nature and Landscape. Each Zone occupies about half the Band, you can choose any Band apart from the central one of the Palace or the two Bands at the edges of the page. These Bands at the edges are the Poles, and will be left snow-white. **Keep drawing Zones in turn until you have filled all available Bands** (two Zones within each Band).

6. **Place your Warden in an Area in the Band adjacent to those of the Palace closest to you.** This means that the Two Keepers will be separated with the Bands of the Palace of Souls in the middle.

At that moment, everything changes.

From the Depths of Hell

It came from distant lands. The Earth was split in half, swallowing the Palace of Souls and everything around it. Because of their overwhelming power, there is no hope of escaping the Jaws of Hell. Not even for you two. Like a plague bubbling with pus, so the Jaws vomit beasts, plagues such as to kill anyone who is reached. And their advance is unstoppable.

1. **Erase with a marker the Central Band of the Map, or the Palace of Souls and the surrounding land.** Everything that was once there is now dead.
2. Fortunately, the Two Keepers are alive, even if separated. **They know their task: survive the Journey to the Poles,** just as all the Wardens have done before them. But they also know that the wound of the Earth damaged the bond between their Souls, which is consumed at every step they take. This link is represented by the cord that unites the two Keepers. If you were to untie the knot that unites them, not only they but also all the Memory of the Earth that they themselves and previous generations have gathered will be lost in the Oblivion of Hell. **If they want to preserve this link, one Warden will have to sacrifice their body to the Jaws of Hell,** while the spirit will join the other Warden to complete their duty and preserve memories.

Long is the Way

Players will take turns altering themselves as their Warden or the World.

- **The Warden** will have the task of describing the actions of the character and their emotions, it will also have to decide whether to continue on the journey or whether to accept their own death.
- **The World** must represent the Earth, wounded and torn, and the horrors that have yet eluded the Jaws. Their task is to create obstacles that the Warden will have to overcome in order to be able to shine and show the tragedy of inevitable loss.

Each Year consists of two rounds, in each of which one of the two players will assume the role of the Warden. In a Year each player will play the role of the World and the Warden once each.

Each Round consists of the following Steps:

1. Crossroads. The Warden will have to decide whether to advance towards their Pole or whether to wait for the Jaws and eventual death. If they choose to advance, they will move their Warden (toothpick) to a Band Zone immediately out of the way than the one it currently occupies. If the knot should untie during their move (or, in the knot-less variant, if you must cut the rope to advance), skip the next steps and follow the rules of the dedicated paragraph.

2. Jaws Advance. The World will have to erase with the marker the inner band not yet devoured by the Jaws, moving in the direction of the Warden.

If the Warden had decided to wait for the Jaws and die - sacrificing themselves - they would separate the rope from the toothpicks and will put these aside as they describe how the Jaws take the life of the Warden.

Keep a poetic and clean tone, in consensus with the other player. You're describing a great loss for the Earth. Avoid excessively violent scenes, comedies or anything that would not do justice to the representation of the Warden wanted by the other player.

The Warden will then describe how their spirit joins the other Warden, and as he does so joins their head of the rope to the other Warden, bringing together the two ends of the cord.

Skip the Warden's Turn, choices, and actions for the current Warden from now on.

3. The Time of Proof. The World will draw a card to determine the Season in which the scene will take place and which type of threat the Warden will face, then draw a face-down number of cards to represent Threat: the power of the Jaws. The Threat grows as the Jaws devour the Earth. So 3 cards are drawn for the first Band, 4 for the second, and 5 for the third and last before the Poles. Do not reveal the cards of the Threat until the end of this stage.

The World will describe the Threat and above all how it endangers the Landscape Feature of the area, risking taking it forever to Oblivion. The Warden will describe how he will deal with the Threat to save the Landscape.

For every Virtue and Trait they consider relevant, the Warden will add a card for their hand. Be honest, and do not try to forcefully link Virtues or Traits that have nothing to do with the current Threat and do not force the description to include unrelated abilities. You have nothing to lose, since the Warden can't die at this stage.

If the other Warden has sacrificed himself and joined your Spirit, you can also use their hand of cards. If the bond has been untied or cut, you will not be able to use the cards given to you by the other Warden nor those you have accumulated as Memories. Discard them.

4. The Decisive Moment. Compare the hands of the Threat and the Warden, according to the poker's scale of value from highest to lowest: [insert poker hierarchy reference here]. In case of a tie remember that the order of winning suits is Hearts, Diamonds, Clubs and last Spades. Of course, to have useful sets of cards you will need to have at least 4 or 5 cards in hand, and you won't be able to get them right away.

If the Warden wins, he will tell how he will have saved at least temporarily the Landscape Feature of that area.

If the Threat wins, the World will describe how the Jaws manage to wrest from the hands of the Warden any hope of saving what they were protecting.

5. Treasures or Lessons. Looking for one last time behind him, the Warden records a memory of the Earth he is leaving behind.

In case he could save what he was protecting, the Warden will mark a Trait linked to the feature (a gift, a heartening moment, etc.). Otherwise, the Warden will mark a Trait related to the Threat that defeated him (a hard lesson learned, greater resolution, a ruined weapon despite everything, etc.)

Everything Has a Beginning

Remove the Wardens from the Map, then take it together and turn it the other way, unveiling the blank page, although perhaps you can see some signs left by the Previous World.

This is the new Beginning of Time. What will the new world look like? Will the two deities be in harmony, or will they be detached instead? What things of the Old World were preserved and perhaps renewed, and what were lost?

////

Vespere et Mane by Vetetio:

<https://vetetio.itch.io/vespere-et-mane>

Translated by: Stephen B. Thomas:
editor@let-off.com