

= The Harbingers =

The Harbingers is an Australian video board game designed by Brett Clements and Phillip Tanner and published by Mattel as a major update to the Atmosfear series . The object of the game is to collect six different coloured " Keystones " , face player 's worst fear and thus beat the " Gatekeeper " . Each player adopts the persona of one of the " Harbingers " , otherwise must play as a " Soul Ranger " . The game is set in a place known as " The Other Side " . The Gatekeeper is to ensure the other characters do not " escape " from The Other Side . The game board is made up of a central hub and six two @-@ sided interchangeable " Provinces " which fit together , creating a hexagon . A videotape is included with the game , and acts as a game clock . The videotape stars Wenanty Nosul as The Gatekeeper .

= = Gameplay = =

= = = Game rules = = =

When they are ready , players roll the dice in turn , the one who rolls highest becoming the " Chosen One " who assembles the game board by connecting the Provinces to the central hub , creating a hexagon shape . The players write down their greatest fear on a slip of paper which is placed in the " well of fears " by the Chosen One . The Gatekeeper then starts the game , and the players , using their Numb Skulls , race to become a Harbinger by landing on the Harbinger 's headstone located in each province . If a player fails to make it to a headstone within ten minutes , they become Soul Rangers for the rest of the game . They must remain in the sewers until either they are released by the Gatekeeper , or collect the Keystone which allows them to release themselves .

Players who become Harbingers start collecting Keystones either by landing on them on the game board , or by taking them from other players by dueling . Soul Rangers cannot collect Keystones by landing on them ; instead , they chase down other players and steal their Keystones . Players must collect the six Keystones of different colours to win . Although players only need one keystone per colour , players can collect more than one which can prevent other players from completing the game . Each Keystone gives players different powers , depending on which Harbinger they are , the list of powers being described on the back of the character 's card . When players have collected the Keystones , they can win the game by returning home to the central hub . Then they must roll a six on the dice ; a fear is picked from the well of fears , and if it does not correspond to the player 's earlier expressed " greatest fear " , that player wins the game . Otherwise , players must return to their headstone and try again . If none of players is able to win the game within sixty minutes , the Gatekeeper is the winner .

= = = Characters = = =

The six Harbingers in the game are : Gevaudan the werewolf ; Hellin the poltergeist ; Khufu the mummy ; Baron Samedi the zombie ; Anne de Chantraine the witch , and Elizabeth Bathory the vampire . Each of the Harbingers is based on either a real person or a myth , except for Hellin . Hellin is the only Harbinger entirely created by Brett Clements .

Soul Rangers , players who have failed to become Harbingers , are described as miserable , skeletal scavengers , the scourge of The Other Side . Soul Rangers hunt down other players and steal their keystones . Soul Rangers were created during the game 's development . Brett Clements wanted to introduce characters that players did not want to become , but he later found that players enjoyed the anarchic role of the Soul Ranger . The final character in the game is the Gatekeeper , whose job is to make sure the other characters cannot escape from The Other Side to the real world . The Gatekeeper 's character is based on the old cemetery gatekeepers , whose job was to guard cemeteries from grave robbers .

== Layout ==

The game board is made up of the Central Hub and six two @-@ sided Provinces which fit together creating a hexagon . The Central Hub is made up of the Well of Fears , the home positions and the Ring Road . The Well of Fears is a cup with a lid that fits inside the hole in the middle of the Central Hub . Located around the Well of Fears are six numbered grooves , called " Home " ; players must start from and return to Home . The Home positions are connected to the Ring Road , a path that runs around the Central Hub . The Ring Road give players access to all the Provinces .

Each Province is a two @-@ sided interchangeable board , on one side of which is a Harbinger 's province while on the other are the sewers . The Provinces can be assembled in any order , which can allow different game experiences when the Provinces are changed . Each Province has its own headstone and is in the Harbinger 's colours . Both sides of the Province board have paths used by the players to move around the board . Located along the paths are the six Keystones for that colour Province , and three different game symbols : the black holes , the lighting bolts and the compasses .

The game includes six boomerang @-@ shaped slabs which allow players to store their character card , Numb Skull and collected Keystones . The character card has a photograph of the character on the front , and on the back a list of powers each keystone gives to the player . To move around the game board , players use their own character 's playing pieces : a vampire bat for Elizabeth Bathory , a cobra for Khufu , a top hat for Baron Samedi , an " H " building block for Hellin , a fang for Gevaudan , a cauldron for Anne de Chantraine and a Numb Skull for Soul Rangers . The Numb Skull is also used at the beginning of the game , before players become Harbingers .

== Videotape ==

A VHS videotape is included with The Harbingers which is played during the game . The videotape begins with The Gatekeeper ? played by Wenanty Nosul ? starting the game with " On your marks ... Get ready ... Get set ... Go ! " . As the game begins the game clock appears in the right @-@ hand corner of the screen , counting down from sixty minutes ; unless the game is won by a player within one hour the Gatekeeper is declared the winner . During the sixty minutes the Gatekeeper will appear on screen , to give players instructions or a choice between receiving a prize or imposing a penalty on an opponent . Players must carry out all instructions given by the Gatekeeper . When the Gatekeeper appears he demands that players stop and listen to him . He will not hold back from insulting players and is reluctant to reward or help players . During the game a computer @-@ generated storm can be seen in the background ; sometimes the storm partly covers the game clock . Along with the storm , spooky sounds and sometimes the Gatekeeper 's laughter can be heard .

During development there was a concern that the game might initially seem too complicated . At the end of the videotape there is a special fifteen @-@ minute presentation called the rules presentation in which a voice @-@ over along with the Gatekeeper explains the game , the characters and how to play . The rules presentation was created to help explain the game to new players . The videotape can be forwarded to the start of the instructions . During the rules presentation a game is played by actors who are dressed as three Harbingers ? Baron Samedi , Anne de Chantraine and Elizabeth Bathory ? and three Soul Rangers . The demonstration game is used throughout the rules presentation to help explain how to play the game .

== Development ==

With the feedback received from players after the release of Nightmare , Brett Clements and Phillip Tanner started work on the major update to the series . They struck a deal with J. W. Spear & Sons , to use publishing experience and market research with Nightmare to help create the new game . The deal allowed J. W. Spear & Sons to have input into how the game was developed , which was not the case with Nightmare . Village Roadshow was also involved with the game 's development

and with its release in the United States . The development ended six years after it started , with about six million dollars invested in the development of the game .

= = Reception = =

The Harbingers sold above the industry 's sales predictions in Australia and became one of the top ten best selling games in the United States and the United Kingdom , within months of its release . On the game 's release , Mattel launched a marketing campaign with a spot on MTV , cross @-@ promotions with soft drinks and a website for the game .

= = Expansions = =

= = = Booster tapes = = =

Two booster tapes were released following the success of The Harbingers . The tapes provide a challenging experience to The Harbingers for experienced players . The booster tapes run for forty @-@ five minutes instead of the sixty minutes of the original , and come with a new rule to limit the number of Keystones added to each province based on the number of players . Other than this limit the normal rules apply .

= = = The Soul Rangers = = =

A year later , an add @-@ on called The Soul Rangers was released . The add @-@ on allows players to play only as The Soul Rangers and is hosted by a Soul Ranger calling himself Dr. Mastiff . The add @-@ on was released because the creators found out that players enjoy causing damage as The Soul Rangers .