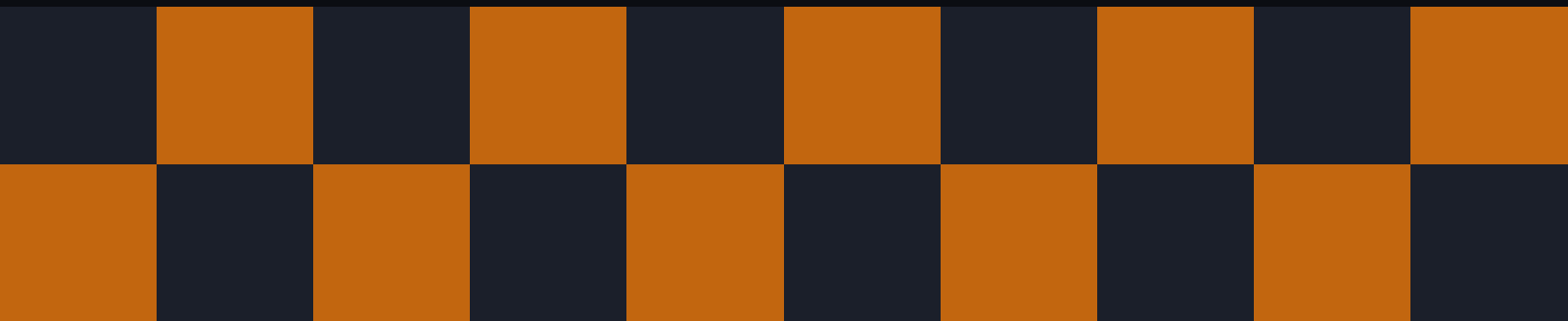


THE GODS OF MARS

after the novel by Edgar Rice Burroughs, 1913

P L A Y E R ' S M A N U A L

Tronsoft Games · version 1.0.1 · TIFE 3.0 runtime



WHAT THIS IS

Heaven has loopholes in it

Every Barsoomian who grows old, or tired, or heartsick takes a boat down the river Iss to the Valley Dor, at the south pole, where the Lost Sea of Korus lies under the Golden Cliffs. It is the one article of faith the whole planet shares, and nobody has ever come back from it to say what is there.

You are John Carter, ten years away from this world, and you have just arrived at the bottom of its afterlife. What you find is a walled meadow that eats the pilgrims, a mile of gold with a kitchen behind it, a buried ocean under that, and at the bottom of the whole arrangement an old woman on a chair whom nobody is permitted to look at.

This is a parser adventure: you type what John Carter should do and the story answers. It is adapted from a novel published in 1913 and now in the public domain. The characters and the places are Burroughs's. Every word of prose in the game is written for this adaptation.

THE SHAPE OF IT

Regions	5	Objectives	8 required, 1 optional
Rooms	20	Points	150
Ways between them	41	Keepsakes	4, worth 5 each
Things	69	Achievements	14
People	8	Journal entries	18
Story verbs	8	Hint ladders	23, covering every room

A complete game takes 73 moves and scores 150. Taking only the required objectives takes 55 moves and scores 120.

Playing

Open `index.html` in a current browser. There is no installer and no server: extract the folder, open the file, and the game runs. On the cover screen, **Enter the story** begins. **Enable audio** and **Enable narration** are separate buttons because browsers require a click before either can start; both are optional and neither is needed to finish the game.

Type into the command line at the foot of the story, or use the buttons beneath it. The buttons cover the everyday verbs and the eight this story adds of its own, so the whole game can be played without typing.

THE EVERYDAY VERBS

Command	What it does
LOOK	Describe where you are again.
EXAMINE <i>thing</i>	Look closely. Most of the story is hidden in here.
READ <i>thing</i>	Read what is written on it, which is not the same as examining it.
SEARCH <i>thing</i>	Turn it over, look under it, go through it.

Command	What it does
TAKE / DROP <i>thing</i>	Pick something up or put it down.
OPEN / CLOSE <i>thing</i>	For anything with a lid, a door, or a catch.
INVENTORY	What Tara is carrying. Abbreviates to I.
TALK TO <i>person</i>	Say the next thing. People have more than one thing to say.
ASK <i>person</i> ABOUT <i>topic</i>	Ask about anything you have seen or heard of.
WAIT	Let the moment happen. Sometimes this is the answer.
N NE E SE S SW W NW UP DOWN IN OUT	Go that way. EXITS lists what is open.

THE EIGHT THIS STORY ADDS

Verb	When you would want it
TELL	TELL - say what you have seen. It is the only weapon that works down here.
FEIGN	FEIGN - put on what you are carrying and be taken for something you are not.
CLIMB	CLIMB - go up something that was not meant to be gone up.
DIVE	DIVE - go into water, from a height, deliberately.
SWEAR	SWEAR - give your word, or take somebody else's.
FREE	FREE - get somebody out of somewhere.
CHALLENGE	CHALLENGE - say it to their face, in front of everybody.
SIGNAL	SIGNAL - make yourself understood at a distance.

These are on the buttons under the command line as well, so there is nothing to memorise. TELL is the one that matters: it is the whole argument of the book turned into a verb, and it only ever works on something you have seen for yourself.

HOUSEKEEPING

Command	What it does
SCORE	Points so far, and what is still unclaimed.
QUESTS	The objectives you have been given.
JOURNAL	What Tara has worked out, in her own words.
ACHIEVEMENTS	The 14 marks of a thorough game.
HINT	Three levels of help on wherever you are stuck. Free.
SAVE 1-3 / RESTORE 1-3	Three slots, kept in this browser on this machine.
RESTART	Begin again from the garden.
SETTINGS	Accessibility profile, text size, motion, captions, audio, narration.
TRANSCRIPT	Download everything that has happened as a text file.

Command	What it does
HELP	All of the above, in the game.



WHERE YOU GO

Five regions, twenty rooms

The story runs downward, which is the joke of the book: heaven is at the top and each thing you find underneath it turns out to own the thing above. You can walk about inside a region as much as you like, and nothing is ever locked behind you in a way that makes the game unwinnable.

I. The Valley Dor

- | | |
|---|-------------------------------|
| 1 | The Valley Dor |
| 2 | The Sorapus Wood |
| 3 | The Shore of the Lost Sea |
| 4 | The Foot of the Golden Cliffs |

II. The Golden Cliffs

- | | |
|---|-----------------------------|
| 1 | The Face of the Cliff |
| 2 | The Gallery of the Therns |
| 3 | The Pits Beneath the Cliffs |
| 4 | A Cell in the Cliff |

III. Omean, the Buried Sea

- | | |
|---|----------------------|
| 1 | The Black Shaft |
| 2 | The Sea of Omean |
| 3 | Aboard the Submarine |
| 4 | The After Cell |

IV. The Temple of Issus

- | | |
|---|-----------------------------|
| 1 | The Garden of Issus |
| 2 | The Forecourt of the Temple |
| 3 | The Hall of Issus |
| 4 | The Pens of the Household |
| 5 | The Prison Tier |

V. The Fleet and the Sun

- | | |
|---|--------------------------|
| 1 | The Temple Landing Stage |
| 2 | Above the Fleet |
| 3 | The Temple of the Sun |



Objectives

Eight objectives are required and are worth fifteen points each. One is optional and is worth ten. Four keepsakes are worth five each and are easy to walk straight past: they are the difference between finishing the story and finishing it properly.

	Objective	Points	What it asks
1	Out of the Valley	15	Find out what the Valley Dor is for, get a sword, and reach the cliffs alive.
2	The Wall of Heaven	15	Get up a mile of gold and in through a hole meant for a crossbow.
3	Pass for Holy	15	The gallery is full of therns and you are the wrong colour of nothing at all.
4	What the Therns Are	15	Somebody in these pits has been paying attention for fifteen years. Get her out.
5	The Cellar of Heaven	15	Something comes up that shaft once a month. Go down it.
6	The Broken Prince	15	A dator of the First Born has just found out his rank is somebody's opinion.
7	Look at Her	15	Two hundred princes have their faces on the floor. Do the one thing nobody does.
8	The Third Alcove	15	Ten years, one grating, and a lock that is better than the hinges holding it.
9	The Son You Never Met (optional)	10	There is a young red man in the pens with your jaw.

The four keepsakes

Keepsake	Points	Where
sorapus charm	5	region 1
gold circlet	5	region 2
black pearl	5	region 3
seal of Issus	5	region 4

MARKS OF A THOROUGH GAME

Achievements

None of these are needed to win, and none of them are hidden behind anything cruel. Most reward paying attention to somebody who is telling you something.

Achievement	Earned by
Somebody Ought to Keep It	Carry the sorapus charm out of the Valley Dor.
Holiness, Off a Peg	Take the circlet of a Holy Thern of the tenth cycle.
Nothing Like It Above	Find the black pearl on the landing stage of Omean.
Speaking for the Goddess	Take the seal of Issus out of its niche.
Evidence	Carry all four keepsakes at once.
Do Not Go West	Read what somebody scratched under the therns' welcome.
A Stock Book	Read the therns' record of what comes down the river.
Four Hundred and Thirteen	Read the marks Thuvia cut in the mortar.
On the Same List	Read the manifest and see the therns counted with the cattle.
Three Hundred and Eighty-Seven Days	Read what is cut over the door of the Temple of the Sun.
A Very Efficient Family	Meet Carthoris in the pens of the household.
The Word of a Dator	Take the parole of a prince of the First Born.
Look at Me, Worm	Look the Goddess of Death in the face.
The Whole of It	Finish the story with every point taken.

Dying

Four commands end the story in Tara's death. Every one of them is warned in the room text before you can type it, and none of them can be reached by accident while doing something sensible. RESTORE or RESTART always works afterwards, and the game never deletes a save.

Command	Where	Warned by
WEST	The Valley Dor	the room description, before you can reach it
DOWN	The Shore of the Lost Sea	the room description, before you can reach it
DIVE	The Black Shaft	the room description, before you can reach it
CHALLENGE	The Hall of Issus	the room description, before you can reach it

Hints

HINT costs nothing and is not counted against you. Ask once for a nudge, twice for a clear direction, three times for the exact command to type. There are 23 ladders and every room in the game has one, so the answer is always

there if you want it.



EVERYONE PLAYS

Accessibility

Accessibility is part of the runtime rather than an option bolted on top. Six profiles are available under Settings, and every switch inside them can be set independently. All settings persist between sessions.

Profile	What changes
Standard	Normal layout and motion.
Low vision	Larger text, stronger contrast, heavier controls and borders.
Blind / screen reader	Layout linearises, the board chart is dropped, narration turns on, and every turn is announced.
Hard of hearing	Every sound cue is captioned on screen as it plays.
Motor assistance	Larger targets throughout. Nothing in the game is timed.
Cognitive support	Simplified controls, more space between paragraphs, objectives always shown.

No puzzle in this game depends on colour, on sound, on reaction speed, or on a turn limit. Every control is reachable by keyboard and shows a visible focus ring; Escape returns you to the command line from anywhere; the up and down arrows walk back through what you have typed. Sound cues are synthesised rather than recorded, and each one names itself in text when captions are on.

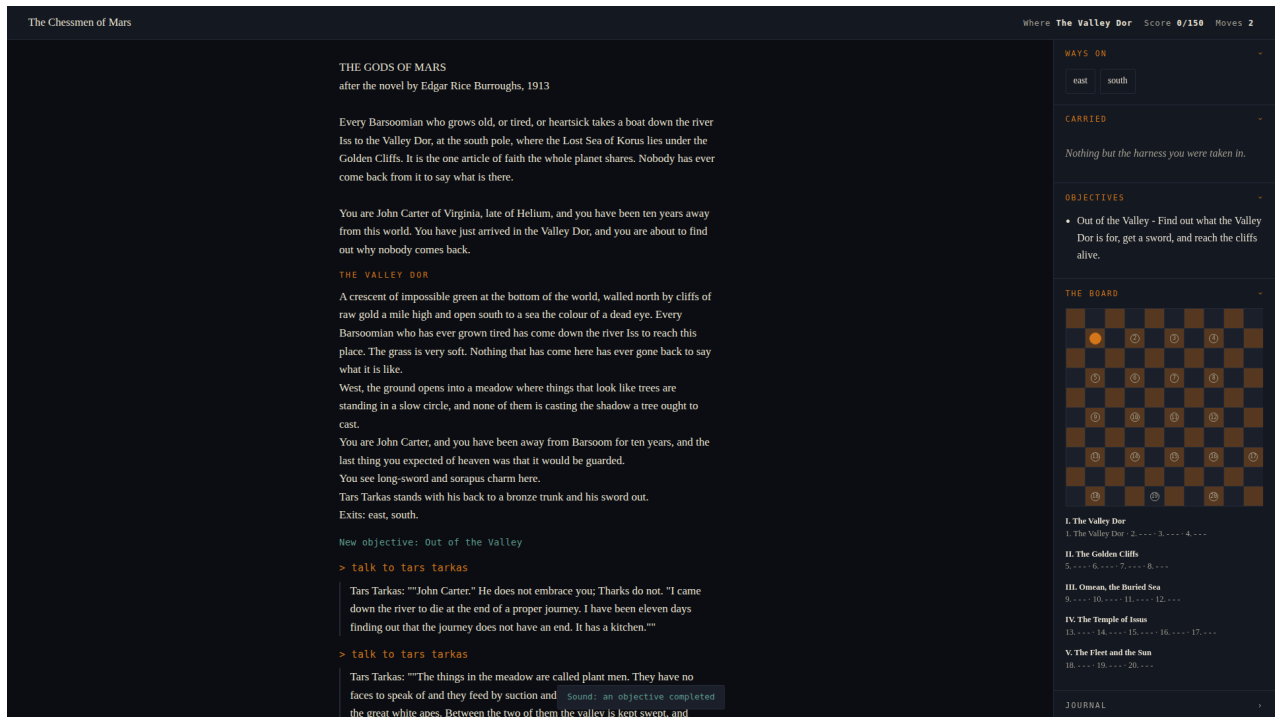
Saving

Three slots, stored by the browser on this machine only. Nothing is uploaded anywhere, because the game makes no network requests of any kind. A save records the state of the story and never contains executable code. If you clear your browser's site data, saves go with it.

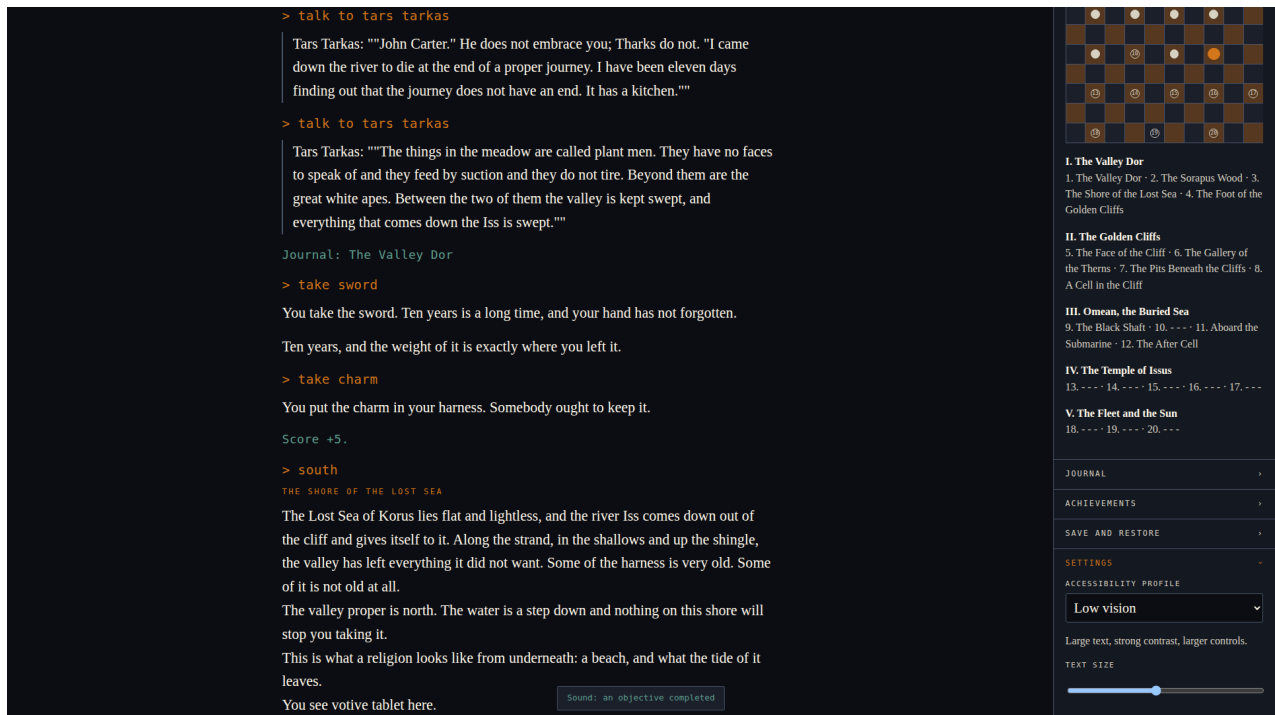


WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE

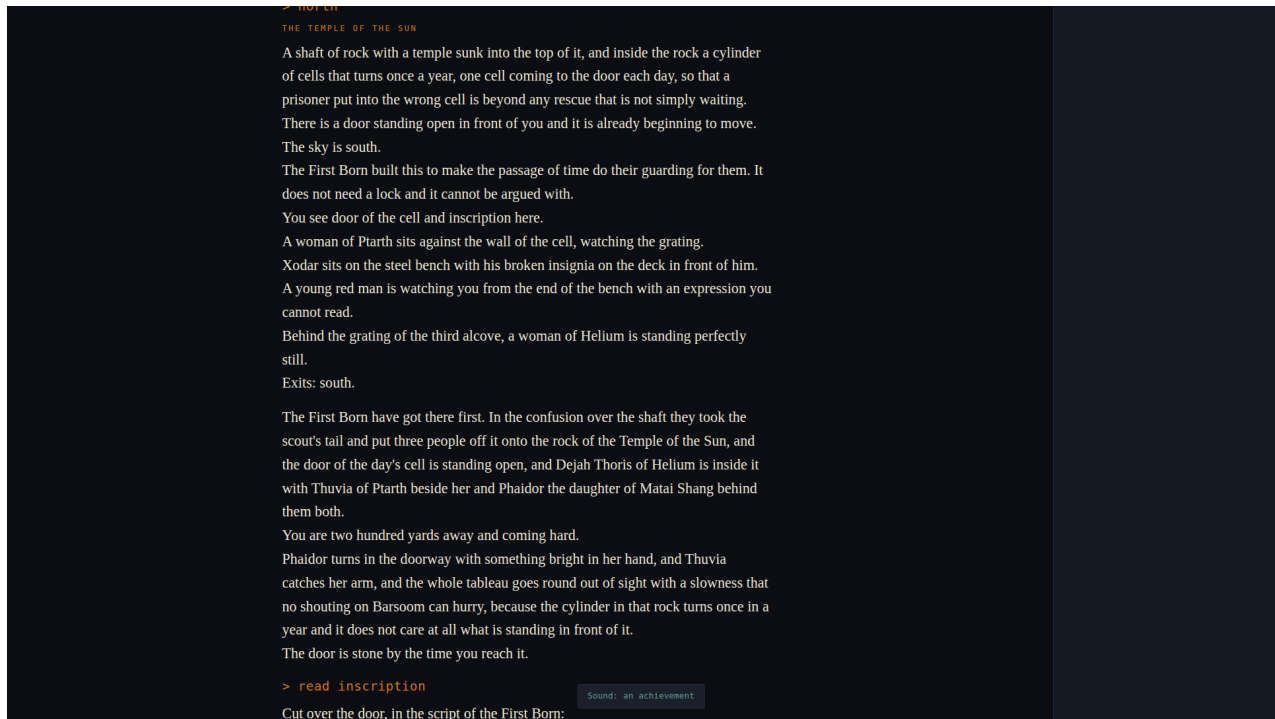
The interface



The Valley Dor, two moves in. The chart on the right fills in as you go; the objectives panel is always visible.



The after cell of the submarine under the low-vision profile, at the moment the signature verb is used on a prince of the First Born.



The Temple of the Sun. The door is not locked. It does not need to be.

COLOPHON

How this was made

The game is a package of JSON built to TIFE Developer Specification v3.0.1: the story is data, one file per room, object, character, conversation, objective and rule, and the runtime reads it. Section 15.1 of that specification does not permit executable files inside an ordinary game package, so the game archive contains no code at all: the TIFE Reference Runtime 3.0.0, which is MIT licensed and reusable, ships in the companion project archive instead.

Story files	20 rooms, 69 objects, 8 characters, 8 conversations
Rules	55, evaluated in priority order
Variables	34
Release gate	the full route, the short route, the four fatal probes, a resume from every fourth move, a save and restore round trip, and a live browser playthrough
Verified route	150/150 in 73 moves
Generated	2026-07-29

Every number in this manual was read out of the shipped story data and the recorded playthrough at the moment the manual was generated. The artwork is drawn programmatically. The package contains no third-party assets and makes no network requests.

“They are not gods. They eat.”

