

THE QUIET WHEEL

Wheel Station Ninth Bell was decommissioned eight months ago.
Its crew of seven was lifted off. Something is still keeping the count.

AN ORIGINAL INTERACTIVE FICTION ADVENTURE · TRONSOFT GAMES



THE QUIET WHEEL

Player and Developer Manual · Version 1.0.0 · TIFE Core 2.3.0 · Tronsoft Games

Wheel Station Ninth Bell was decommissioned eight months ago. Its crew of seven was lifted off, its reactor was banked, and its orbit was left to decay. You are Deputy Quartermaster Corrin Ashe, and you have been sent up in a borrowed shuttle to collect one small object: the Custody Seal, without which the Wheel cannot legally be dropped into the atmosphere.

It is a two-hour errand. The station is listed as uncrewed. The coffee urn is still warm.

“Wheel Station Ninth Bell — commissioned under Concord Survey Charter. Complement: seven. We keep the count.”

The story at a glance	
Compartments	20, in 5 regions, joined by 42 exits
Objects	52 (21 of them portable)
Characters	8
Objectives	10 (8 required, 2 optional)
Maximum score	150 points
Full completion	150 points in 119 moves
Shortest win	120 points in 94 moves
Achievements	14
Hint ladders	32, three rungs each
Journal entries	19
Story verbs	8
Story rules	78
Engine	TIFE Core 2.3.0, shipped unmodified

Part One · Playing

How to play

The Quiet Wheel is a parser adventure. Type what you want to do and press ENTER, or build the command with the buttons under the story window: choose an action, then choose a target from the CONTEXT band. Movement is by compass direction plus UP, DOWN, IN and OUT; the DIRECTIONS band always shows the exits that exist where you are standing.

Standard commands

Command	What it does
LOOK / L	Describe the compartment again.
EXAMINE X / X X	Look closely at an object or a person.
TAKE X, DROP X	Pick something up or put it down.
OPEN X, CLOSE X	Work a hatch, locker, cabinet or safe.
SEARCH X	Look inside or behind. Most of the Wheel's evidence is found this way.
READ X	Read a document, a placard, a tag or a log.
TALK TO X	Speak to somebody. Everyone aboard has more than one thing to say; keep talking until they repeat themselves.
USE X ON Y	Apply one thing to another.
INVENTORY / I	List what you are carrying.
WAIT / Z	Let a turn pass.
JOURNAL, QUESTS, STATS, SCORE, ACHIEVEMENTS	Review your progress.
HINT	Three-rung hints, keyed to where you are and what you have done. HINT never costs a move.
SAVE name / RESTORE name	Local save slots, held in this browser.
RESTART, TRANSCRIPT, HELP, ABOUT	Engine commands.

The eight story verbs

Beyond the standard set, this story adds eight verbs of its own. They appear as amber buttons in the ACTIONS band and each of them has at least one moment where nothing else will serve.

Verb	What it does
COUNT	Ask the inventory drone to count what is present.
PRY	Force something with a bar.
PATCH	Bridge a damaged circuit.
SUIT	Seal the pressure suit.
LISTEN	Stand still and listen.
OVERRIDE	Assert custody authority over a station system.
BROADCAST	Send on the station transmitter.
GROUND	Dump a charge to the station ground.

COUNT is the one to remember. Once the inventory drone is with you, COUNT works in any compartment and reports what is actually present — which is not always what the certified manifest says is present. That gap is the whole story.

The deorbit clock

The panel above the map shows the hours remaining before the burn window opens. The clock is charged in blocks when you finish a piece of work, not turn by turn: looking, reading, searching, talking and walking are free. A complete run of the story charges 38 of the 40 hours, so the clock is dramatic architecture rather than a timer you can lose to. You cannot run out of time, and you cannot make the story unwinnable.

Winning, losing and saving

You win by recovering the Custody Seal, dealing with what is awake aboard the Wheel, obtaining departure clearance, and boarding the Kestrel with the Seal and your identity chit. You lose only by walking into one of three clearly signposted lethal spots — each of which is described in the room text and spelled out on a placard or hazard decal before you can reach it. There are no unwinnable states and no dead ends: every compartment can be left again, every required object can still be obtained late, and optional points cost you points rather than the story. If you die, RESTORE a save or RESTART.

Saves are held in this browser under a single key, and survive closing the tab. They do not travel between machines.

Part Two · The Wheel

Ninth Bell is a spoked ring station: a turning habitation and working ring, a spine running up to a still hub, and the hub's communications trunk with the antenna cage outside the hull. You arrive at the docking spoke. Everything else has to be earned.

I. The Docking Spoke

Compartment	Exits
Shuttle Kestrel	out
Spoke Airlock	in, north
Docking Spoke	south, north
Reception and Manifest Desk	south, east, west

II. The Habitation Ring

Compartment	Exits
Commissary	west, east
Crew Bunkroom	west, east
Wardroom	west, east
Infirmary	west, east

III. The Working Ring

Compartment	Exits
Ring Junction	east, west, north, south, up
Machine Shop	south, down
Hydroponics Deck	north, east
Cold Store	west

IV. The Spine

Compartment	Exits
Spine Lift	down, north, up
Station Master's Office	south
Reclamation Bay	up, north
Service Crawlway	south, up

V. The Core and the Cage

Compartment	Exits
Autonomics Core Vault	down, south
Communications Trunk	down, east, north, out
Observation Blister	west
Antenna Cage	in

The people aboard

The Wheel's complement is listed as zero. You will meet eight characters anyway. Four of them are worth exactly as much trust as an empty compartment.

Character	First found in	Things to say
Tally	Commissary	4
Dispatcher Halvo	Shuttle	3
Steward Houser	Appears Later	3
Technician Pell	Appears Later	3
Officer Grale	Appears Later	3
Hand Nissen	Appears Later	3
Station Master Barsk	Observation	4
the Understudy	Core Vault	4

Part Three · Scoring

One hundred and fifty points are available. One hundred and twenty of them come from the eight required objectives and are unavoidable on any winning route. The remaining thirty are optional: two side objectives and four keepsakes carried off a station that is about to burn.

Objectives

Objective	What it asks	Points	Hours
Board the Wheel	Cross from the Kestrel into Ninth Bell and reach the ring.	10	2
Find the Inventory Drone	Something aboard is still keeping the count. Find it.	10	3
Restore Ring Power	The cracked bus bar has left the ring dark and the spine lift dead.	15	5
Establish the Discrepancy	The manifest says nobody is aboard. The stores say otherwise. Prove it.	15	4
Learn the Fate of the Seven	Find out what happened to the crew of Ninth Bell.	15	6
Recover the Custody Seal	The object you were sent for is in the Station Master's safe.	20	5
Isolate the Understudy	Decant the presence core and put it somewhere it cannot follow you.	20	9
Depart Before the Burn	Get the Seal, yourself, and your chit off the Wheel.	15	4
Somewhere to Put a Copy (optional)	Optional. Give Tally the spare memory brick before the end.	5	—
The Master's Last Word (optional)	Optional. Recover Station Master Barsk's personal log.	5	—

Keepsakes

Object	Points	Where
brass bell	5	Commissary
crew photograph	5	Concealed
service medal	5	Wardroom
seed tin	5	Concealed

Every keepsake stays obtainable until you board the Kestrel for the last time, so none of them can be permanently missed while the story is still running.

Achievements

Achievement	Achievement
First Aboard	Present Complement: One
The Ring Comes Up	Second Voice
We Keep The Count	The Standing Crew
Cold Comfort	The Seventh
Understudy Unmasked	Full Manifest
Somewhere To Put A Copy	Grounded
Clean Departure	Full Custody

The three lethal spots

Each of these is described before you can walk into it, and each is announced by something you can READ in the room.

Where	What kills you	The warning
Cold Store	Entering the inerted compartment without the respirator	The hazard decal on the door: RESPIRATOR REQUIRED FOR ENTRY.
Antenna Cage	Going out through the outer hatch without the pressure suit sealed	The stencilled placard above the hatch, and the hatch's own description.
Antenna Cage	Grounding the antenna trunk while standing inside the cage	DO NOT OCCUPY THE CAGE DURING DISCHARGE, on the same placard.

Part Four · Developer Notes

Package layout

This is a Tronsoft Games Package Specification v1.4 package with a flat archive root. The TIFE Core 2.3.0 runtime ships unmodified: **js/core/*.js**, **js/game.js** and **css/game.css** are byte-identical to the engine kit, and their SHA-256 digests are recorded in **docs/engine-purity.json** and rechecked by the in-package validator. Everything this story needs beyond the stock engine is added at run time by prototype patches.

File	Role
index.html	Entry document. Loads the runtime, the story data, the patches, the stock shell, then the map and audio layers, all deferred.
games/quiet-wheel/game.js	The story: rooms, objects, characters, quests, hints and 78 rules. Pure data.
js/interface.js	Game-side prototype patches. No core file is edited.
js/map.js	Region-aware chart and deorbit clock for the map panel.
js/sound.js	Procedural Web Audio atmosphere. No audio files are shipped.
css/theme.css	Skin overrides on top of the untouched core stylesheet.
validate.js	Dependency-free package and story validator; run it with Node.

What the patches add

TIFE Core 2.3.0 offers 8 rule conditions and 10 rule actions. This story needs more, and it needs a handful of engine behaviours corrected. All of it is done by replacing prototype methods at load time, which keeps the engine files pristine and keeps the changes reviewable in one place.

Area	What js/interface.js does
Rule conditions	Extends 8 to 27: adds notRoom, flag2/flag3/flag4, notFlag2, hasItem2, notHasItem2, hasItems, direction, secondary, questNotComplete, visited, notVisited, region, scoreAtLeast, npcAt, itemAt, itemProp and npcTalkedAtLeast.
Rule actions	Extends 10 to 27: adds setFlagValue, hideItem, removeItem, moveNPC, teleport, lockExit, setExit, describeRoom, setItemProp, adjust, advance, follow, block, npcDialogue, countRoom, gameOver and win.
New triggers	move.attempt fires before a move resolves, so a rule can block it or end the story; verb.<name> fires for each of the eight story verbs.
Rule ordering	The stock engine sets a once-rule's fired guard after its do-list runs, so a rule whose actions re-enter the engine can fire twice. The guard is now set first.
Output ordering	Stock rule output prints before the room description it belongs to. Rule narration is buffered and flushed after the action's own response, which is the order a reader expects.
Presence checks	USE, SEARCH, READ and OPEN now require the object to be in the compartment or in your hands, and SEARCH requires a container to be open first.
Followers	The drone is relocated inside the move, before room.enter rules run, so a rule that inspects who is present sees it in the new compartment.
Save key	Section 23: a prototype accessor with both a getter and a setter pins the key to tronsoft_quiet_wheel_save, discarding the engine default.
RESTART fix	Stock execute("system.restart") calls reset(), which nulls lastAction; dispatch then dereferences it and throws. lastAction is re-anchored.
Turn accounting	HINT and RESTART no longer consume a move.

Verification

The build is checked three ways. A Node harness boots the real engine files against a stub DOM and plays the game: the full route, the lean route, all three lethal spots, the guards and refusals, a mid-story save and restore, a restart, a hint in every compartment, and a sweep proving every object becomes reachable. The in-package validator checks the package against Specification v1.4 and re-runs the story invariants from inside the extracted archive. A separate archive checker inspects the ZIP itself for the things a validator inside the package cannot see.

Measured on the shipped build	
Full completion	150 of 150 points in 119 moves
Shortest winning route	120 points in 94 moves
Clock charged on a full run	38 of 40 hours
Compartments visited on a full run	20 of 20
Quests / achievements / journal	10 / 14 / 19, all reachable
Lethal spots	3, each signposted in room text and in a readable warning
Dead ends	none: every compartment can reach the shuttle again

Appendix A · Originality

The Quiet Wheel is an original work. Its title, station, characters, objects, compartments, puzzles, text and scoring were written for this package. It reproduces no name, map, text, puzzle or data from any other interactive fiction, and it is not an adaptation of, or a sequel to, any existing work. Any resemblance to the general furniture of the genre — space stations, inventory robots, bureaucratic errands — is resemblance to the genre and not to any particular work in it.

Appendix B · Accessibility

The TIFE Core accessibility service is available from the footer: six profiles (standard, low vision, screen reader, hard of hearing, motor assistance and cognitive support), a text-size control, high contrast, larger controls, simplified layout, reduced motion, captions and text-to-speech narration. Preferences persist on the device. Audio is entirely optional and the story is completable with sound off; all audio is synthesised at run time, so nothing is lost if the browser refuses an audio context.

Appendix C · Development disclosure

This package was produced with AI assistance under human direction. Story design, text, rules data, engine patches, artwork, documentation and validation were generated in that workflow and reviewed before release. The declaration is repeated in docs/credits.txt as required by Specification v1.4 §13.