

A Princess of Mars

After the novel by Edgar Rice Burroughs, 1912

Player and developer manual - version 1.0.0

The game

March 1866. A prospector named John Carter takes shelter from Apache rifles in a cave in the Arizona hills, and wakes on the bottom of a dead sea forty-eight million miles away, where his Earth-born muscles make him the strongest thing on a dying world.

This is a parser adventure adapted from the 1912 novel by Edgar Rice Burroughs, which is in the public domain in the United States. No text of the novel is reproduced here; every line of prose was written for this adaptation.

Rooms	20, in five regions
Objects	67, of which 13 can be carried and 4 are scored
People	8
Quests	9 - 8 required, 1 optional
Rules	92, on 19 triggers
Achievements	14
Hint ladders	32, three rungs each, covering every room
Exits	35, of which 2 are opened by the story
Maximum score	150 points
Par	74 moves
Engine	TIFE Core 2.3.0
Save key	tronsoft_tife_a_princess_of_mars_save

How to play

Type what you want to do. GO NORTH, TAKE THE WATCH and NORTH all work, and so does N. You never have to type at all: every action is a button, and the game can be finished from the keyboard alone.

Command	What it does
LOOK	Describe where you are again.
EXAMINE <thing>	Look closely. Most things here reward it.
SEARCH <thing>	Look under and inside. Three of the four treasures are found this way.
TAKE / DROP <thing>	Pick up, put down.
WEAR <thing>	Put it on. On Barsoom this matters more than you would think.
TALK TO <person>	Start or continue a conversation. Keep going.
ASK <person> ABOUT <x>	The subject can be anything they might know.
WAIT	Let a turn pass. Sometimes that is the whole answer.
HINT	One rung of the ladder for where you are. Costs nothing.
MAP	Every place found, and the ways between them.

Command	What it does
SCORE / QUESTS / JOURNAL	Where you stand.
SAVE / RESTORE <name>	Named saves, kept in this browser.

The eight Barsoomian verbs

Verb	What it does
LEAP	Throw yourself with Earth-born muscles. Clears walls, gaps and city defences.
TAME	Approach an animal of Barsoom with an empty hand, which nobody here has ever done.
RIDE	Put yourself, or somebody else, up on a thoat.
DUEL	Answer a challenge by the law of Thark, which has exactly one clause.
FLY	Take the controls of a Barsoomian flier.
SIGNAL	Send word to somebody who is not in the room.
THINK	Open your mind at something. Barsoomians cannot close theirs, and cannot read yours.
FREE	Cut somebody loose. Requires an edge.

THINK

Barsoomians are telepathic. They cannot close their minds to one another, they have never needed to learn, and they have no defence at all against a mind that came from somewhere else. This is the one advantage John Carter has that his strength does not explain.

THINK reads whatever is in front of you. It is also how you cross between worlds in the first act, which is how the game teaches the verb long before it matters. Nine minds can be read in the course of the game, and reading all nine is worth an optional quest.

The ninth is not optional. The last door in the game opens to nine thought waves in a fixed order, and the only man alive who knows them is dying on the threshold in front of it. A player who has ignored THINK for four acts will not finish the fifth.

The nine minds

Mind	Where
Sola	Korad, and the road to it. The first mind worth reading.
Tars Tarkas	Wherever he is. The only Thark who suspects you can.
Lorquas Ptomel	The plaza of Korad, from the dais.
Woola	Anywhere he follows you, which is everywhere.
Dejah Thoris	The prisoner court, and after it all the way north.
Zad	The arena, before the duel. Reading him first is how you win it.
Kantos Kan	The pits of Warhoon.
Than Kosis	The palace of Zodanga, during the ceremony.
the keeper	The threshold of the atmosphere plant. The ninth, and the last door.

Scoring

Source	Each	Total
Required quests (8)	15	120
Optional quest (nine minds)	10	10
Treasures (4)	5	20
Maximum		150

Par is 74 moves. Finishing at all is an achievement; finishing at 150 points is a different one.

Treasures

Thing	Where it is
hunting-case watch	Under the fold of the saddle blanket at the prospect camp. SEARCH it.
shell shard	On the floor of the incubator, among four hundred broken eggs.

Thing	Where it is
jewelled brooch	In the fallen wall of the prisoner court. SEARCH the rubble.
Warhoon sigil	In the gallery above the pits of Warhoon. SEARCH it after the ape.

The world

I. The Arizona Hills

Room	Exits
The Prospect Camp	north to Arroyo
The Arroyo Trail	south to Camp, north to Cave, east to Arroyo
The Cave of the Sighing Woman	south to Arroyo, up to Sea Bottom (opens later)

II. The Dead Sea Bottom

Room	Exits
The Bottom of a Dead Sea	north to Incubator, west to Moss Flats
The Incubator	south to Sea Bottom
The Moss Flats	east to Sea Bottom, west to Highway
The Ancient Highway	east to Moss Flats, west to Korad Gate
The Gate of Korad	east to Highway, west to Plaza

III. Korad

Room	Exits
The Plaza of Korad	east to Korad Gate, north to Quarters, south to Court, west to Arena, up to Terraces
The Quarters of Sola	south to Plaza
The Court of the Prisoner	north to Plaza
The Arena of Games	east to Plaza
The Upper Terraces	down to Plaza

IV. The Flight North

Room	Exits
The Crossing	north to Hills
The Barren Hills	south to Crossing, down to Pits, north to Highway
The Pits of Warhoon	up to Hills
The Great Highway	south to Hills, north to Wall

V. Zodanga

Room	Exits
The Wall of Zodanga	south to Highway

Room	Exits
The Palace of Than Kosis	south to Wall, west to Plant (opens later)
The Atmosphere Plant	east to Palace

People

Who	What they are
James Powell	Your partner in the claim: a Kentuckian, a fair hand with a rifle, and the only man in the Territory you...
Tars Tarkas	A jed of Thark: fifteen feet, four arms, tusks curving to the cheekbone, and an unreadable face.
Sola	A young Thark woman set to answer for you, and the one green person in this city who has ever done a kindness...
Woola	A calot: ten short legs, a head that is mostly mouth, and hide like a boot sole.
Lorquas Ptomel	Jeddak of the Tharks of Korad: older than the rest, scarred to the bone, and entirely without cruelty or...
Dejah Thoris	Dejah Thoris, Princess of Helium, granddaughter of its jeddak, taken out of a wrecked survey flier by the...
Kantos Kan	A padwar of the navy of Helium, taken while searching the southern dead sea for a missing princess, and...
the keeper	One of the two men alive who can open the plant, face down on the threshold with a Zodangan assassin's work...

Quests

Quest	Points	What it asks
Out of Arizona	15	Powell is dead on the trail and the ledges are still firing. Get off this hillside.
The Tongue of Barsoom	15	You cannot bargain with a horde you cannot talk to. Somebody in it has to be willing to teach you.
A Thing Nobody Has Tried	15	Every animal on Barsoom is handled with the goad. Handle two of them some other way.
A Chieftain's Metal	15	You are wearing rank you did not win, and on Barsoom that is an invitation somebody always accepts.
The Prisoner of Korad	15	The horde marches north within the week and it is taking her with it.
The Pits of Warhoon	15	There is a man of Helium in a cage down here, and tomorrow they put him in with the ape.
The Wedding at Zodanga	15	When the words are said, Helium's fleet belongs to Zodanga by treaty and nothing can undo it.
The Air of a World	15	The pumps are running down, the keeper is dying, and the door has no keyhole.
Nine Open Minds	10	No Barsoomian can close a mind to another Barsoomian, and none of them has ever met a mind from Earth. Read all nine.

Achievements

Award	For
Nothing to Be Done	Stop for Powell on the trail, knowing it helps nobody.
Come Home	Carry Powell's watch off the Arizona hills.
Forty-Eight Million Miles	Make the crossing to Barsoom.
Earth Muscles	Discover what your legs are worth on a smaller world.
First Thing Held	Pick up a shard of Thark eggshell.
Half of It Is the Mind	Learn the tongue of Barsoom from Sola.
Never With the Goad	Bring a thoat to your hand with an empty one.
Ten Legs and No Precedent	Turn a jailer into a dog.
Taken, Not Given	Take a chieftain's metal in the arena of Korad.
The Old Sea People	Find what fell in the court of Korad and was never picked up.
The Thing on the Chain	Kill the great white ape in the pits of Warhoon.
Horde Mark	Carry the sigil of Warhoon out of the pits.
Nine Open Minds	Read every readable mind on Barsoom.
Prince of Helium	Reach the last door of the game with every point in it scored.

Three ways to die

Barsoom is not forgiving, but this game does not kill you without telling you first. Each of the three is warned in the room description and again by somebody who likes you, and each takes a deliberate command after both warnings.

Where	What kills you
The arroyo, Arizona	Walking east, into the rifles you have already been told about.
Anywhere with a thout	Handling one with the iron goad, or riding one you have not tamed.
The pits of Warhoon	Fighting the white ape bare-handed. There is a spare long-sword on the gallery rail.

TIFE Core has no UNDO. The game says so in its opening text and asks you to save early; SAVE and RESTORE take a name, so you can keep as many games as you like.

If you get stuck

Type HINT. There are 32 ladders and they cover every room in the game, three rungs each: a nudge, a direction, then the answer in plain words. Hints cost nothing and are not counted against you.

Accessibility

Six profiles ship with the engine: Standard, Low Vision, Blind / Screen Reader, Hard of Hearing, Motor Assistance and Cognitive Support, reachable from the ACCESSIBILITY button at any time. Audio is off until you turn it on and is never required; all five region ambiences are generated in the browser rather than shipped as files, and each is captioned. No puzzle depends on colour, sound, timing or reaction speed.

For developers

This package carries TIFE Core 2.3.0. The engine files ship byte-identical to the Tronsoft native engine package and their SHA-256 digests are recorded in docs/engine-purity.json, which the in-package validator rechecks on every run. Nothing in js/core, js/game.js or css/game.css has been edited.

Everything this story adds is game-side. js/story.js is generated data; js/interface.js patches prototypes at load time; js/map.js and js/sound.js add the chart and the ambience; css/theme.css restyles without touching the engine stylesheet.

What js/interface.js adds

Area	What it does
Rule conditions	Widens Core's eight to thirteen, including notRoom, notVisited, scoreAtLeast, varAtLeast, npcTalked and talkCount, with numbered repeats so no condition key is ever written twice in one literal.
Rule actions	Adds teleport, moveNPC, setExit, lockExit, describeRoom, setItemProp, clearInventory, adjust, block, caption, questStart and gameOver to Core's ten.
Triggers	Adds move.attempt, which resolves before movement so a warned-about step can be refused or fatal, and verb.<type> for every verb.
Reading order	Rule narration is buffered for the whole dispatch and flushed after, so the order is always command, action text, consequences, then the new room.
Once-guards	Written before the do-list, so a rule that teleports or ends the game cannot re-enter itself.
Presence	USE, SEARCH, READ and OPEN check that the thing is actually here.
Verbs	WEAR and ASK ABOUT, which Core does not implement, plus the eight Barsoomian verbs dispatched so the parser never refuses them.
Followers	Relocated inside WorldService.move, so companions arrive before any room.enter rule looks for them.
Fixes	The Core RESTART crash; HINT and RESTART no longer consume a move; the save key comes from the package slug through an accessor with both a getter and a setter; the shell's hardcoded cover narration is replaced.

Triggers in use

game.start, inventory.changed, move.attempt, npc.talked, quest.completed, room.enter, turn.completed, verb.duel, verb.examine, verb.fly, verb.free, verb.leap, verb.open, verb.ride, verb.search, verb.signal, verb.tame, verb.think, verb.wear

Credits

Published by Tronsoft Games.

Adapted from *A Princess of Mars* by Edgar Rice Burroughs, 1912, public domain in the United States. Artwork is generated procedurally from original code; the region ambiences are generated in the browser. No third-party image, font or audio file is embedded in this package.

This package was adapted, designed and built with AI assistance (Claude, Anthropic) working under human direction. All design decisions, testing, review and release approval are Tronsoft Games'.