A Princess of Mars by Edgar Rice Burroughs

**Summary**

The story starts with John Carter as a successful prospector in [Arizona](http://barsoom.wikia.com/wiki/Arizona?action=edit&redlink=1). One day in [1866](http://barsoom.wikia.com/wiki/1866), he sends his business partner [James K. Powell](http://barsoom.wikia.com/wiki/James_K._Powell) into town to pick up new equipment. As the day wears on, however, he begins to have a terrible feeling that Powell has met with some bad luck, and goes out to search for him. He finds Powell dead, having been killed by a hostile Indian tribe, who chase after Carter. He seeks out refuge and finds a cave, and shortly thereafter falls asleep. When he wakes up, he is unable to move, and painfully aware that he's not alone in the cave. He next finds himself suddenly without clothes, but is able to get up. Panicked, he runs outside and sees Mars in the night sky. He reaches out his arms to the distant planet, and suddenly feels himself pulled through space.

He ends up on Mars, called "[Barsoom](http://barsoom.wikia.com/wiki/Barsoom%22%20%5Co%20%22Barsoom)" by its inhabitants. Carter finds that he has great strength and superhuman agility in this new environment as a result of its lesser gravity. He soon falls in with a nomadic tribe of Green Martians, or Tharks, as the planet's warlike, six-limbed, green-skinned inhabitants are known. Thanks to his strength and martial prowess, Carter rises to a high position in the tribe and earns the respect and eventually the friendship of [Tars Tarkas](http://barsoom.wikia.com/wiki/Tars_Tarkas), one of the Thark chiefs.

The Tharks subsequently capture [Dejah Thoris](http://barsoom.wikia.com/wiki/Dejah_Thoris), Princess of Helium, a member of the humanoid red Martian race. The red Martians inhabit a loose network of city-states and control the desert planet's canals, along which its agriculture is concentrated. Carter rescues Dejah Thoris from the green men in a bid to return her to her people.

Subsequently Carter becomes embroiled in the political affairs of both the red and green Martians in his efforts to safeguard Dejah Thoris. During his adventures he is captures by the Warhoons, finds the [Atmosphere Factory](http://barsoom.wikia.com/wiki/Atmosphere_Factory), and eventually leads a horde of Tharks against the city-state of Zodanga, the historic enemy of Helium. Winning Dejah Thoris' hand, he becomes Prince of Helium, and the two live happily together for nine years. However, the sudden breakdown of the Atmosphere Factory that sustains the planet's waning air supply endangers all life on Barsoom. In a desperate attempt to save the planet's inhabitants, Carter uses a secret telepathic code that he learned during his previous visit to the factory to enter the factory, bringing an engineer along who can restore its functionality. Carter then succumbs to asphyxiation (inability to get oxygen to the brain), only to awaken back on [Earth](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Earth), left to wonder what has become of Barsoom and his beloved.

**Excerpt**

CHAPTER III: MY ADVENT ON MARS

I opened my eyes upon a strange and weird landscape. I

knew that I was on Mars; not once did I question either my

sanity or my wakefulness. I was not asleep, no need for pinching

here; my inner consciousness told me as plainly that I was upon Mars as your conscious mind tells you that you are upon Earth. You do not question the fact; neither did I.

I found myself lying prone upon a bed of yellowish,

mosslike vegetation which stretched around me in all directions for interminable miles. I seemed to be lying in a deep, circular basin, along the outer verge of which I could distinguish the irregularities of low hills.

It was midday, the sun was shining full upon me and the

heat of it was rather intense upon my naked body, yet no greater than would have been true under similar conditions on an Arizona desert. Here and there were slight outcroppings of quartz-bearing rock which glistened in the sunlight; and a little to my left, perhaps a hundred yards, appeared a low, walled enclosure about four feet in height. No water, and no other vegetation than the moss was in evidence, and as I was somewhat thirsty I determined to do a little exploring.

Springing to my feet I received my first Martian surprise, for the effort, which on Earth would have brought me standing upright, carried me into the Martian air to the height of about three yards. I alighted softly upon the ground, however, without appreciable shock or jar. Now commenced a series of evolutions which even then seemed ludicrous in the extreme.

I found that I must learn to walk all over again, as the muscular exertion which carried me easily and safely upon Earth played strange antics with me upon Mars.

*[John Carter encounters his first green Martians, equipped with spears, and riding humongous beasts, They move to attack him.)*

Behind this first charging demon trailed nineteen others, similar in all respects, but, as I learned later, bearing individual characteristics peculiar to themselves; precisely as no two of us are identical although we are all cast in a similar mold. This picture, or rather materialized nightmare, which I have described at length, made but one terrible and swift

impression on me as I turned to meet it.

Unarmed and naked as I was, the first law of nature manifested itself in the only possible solution of my immediate problem, and that was to get out of the vicinity of the point of the charging spear. Consequently I gave a very earthly and at the same time superhuman leap to reach the top of the Martian incubator, for such I had determined it must be.

My effort was crowned with a success which appalled me no less than it seemed to surprise the Martian warriors, for it carried me fully thirty feet into the air and landed me a hundred feet from my pursuers and on the opposite side of the enclosure.

I alighted upon the soft moss easily and without mishap,

and turning saw my enemies lined up along the further wall. Some were surveying me with expressions which I afterward discovered marked extreme astonishment, and the others were evidently satisfying themselves that I had not molested their young.

They were conversing together in low tones, and

gesticulating and pointing toward me. Their discovery that I had not harmed the little Martians, and that I was unarmed, must have caused them to look upon me with less ferocity; but, as I was to learn later, the thing which weighed most in my favor was my exhibition of hurdling.

While the Martians are immense, their bones are very large and they are muscled only in proportion to the gravitation which they must overcome. The result is that they are infinitely less agile and less powerful, in proportion to their weight, than an Earth man, and I doubt that were one of them suddenly to be trans-ported to Earth he could lift his own weight from the ground; in fact, I am convinced that he could not do so.

My feat then was as marvelous upon Mars as it would have been upon Earth, and from desiring to annihilate me they suddenly looked upon me as a wonderful discovery to be captured and exhibited among their fellows.