
THE SHAFT

For the Amstrad CPC 6128 (128K)

REVIVE8BIT SOFTWARE

2026

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THE STORY SO FAR

Nobody alive has seen the sky.

Your grandmother swore her grandmother had, but she also swore the pumps could talk, so nobody listened. What everyone knows — what the Broadcast repeats every shift change — is this: the surface is dead. Burned. Poison for a thousand years. The Shaft is all there is, and the Shaft is generous, and you should be grateful for your bunk.

You are a mechanic. You work the machine decks at the bottom, where the great pumps hammer day and night and the air tastes of hot grease. Last week, clearing a flooded service crawl, you found a locked steel box. In it: photographs. Green hills. A sun. And a maintenance log, dated one hundred and forty years after the surface was supposed to have died, signed by an inspector who had walked out of the top airlock and come back.

You have told nobody. There is nothing to tell them yet.

There are fifty-nine levels between you and that airlock. The machine decks, then the agricultural terraces that feed everyone, then the light-flooded administrative floors where the elite live and the Broadcast is written. Every one of them is locked, patrolled and watched.

You have a cable whip, a strong back, and one piece of evidence.

The truth is above. Climb.

LOADING

1. Switch on your CPC 6128 and insert the disc, label side up. 2. Type **RUN"SHAFT** and press **ENTER**. 3. The REVIVE8BIT title screen appears. Press **SPACE** to continue at once, or wait ten seconds and the game loads itself. 4. At the title screen, press **SPACE** to begin the climb.

The game uses all 128K of your machine. The three lower banks hold the fifty-nine levels of the Shaft; they are pulled in as you climb, so there is no disc access once you are underway.

CONTROLS

Key	Joystick	Action
← →	Left / Right	Walk. You always face the way you are pushed
↑ ↓	Up / Down	Climb a ladder. Also rides the elevator
SPACE	Fire 1	Jump — a true ballistic arc, steerable in flight
Z	Fire 2	Crack the whip
↓	Down	Duck. Debris and crowbars pass over your head

↓ + ←/→ Down + direction Slide — one fast low burst per press

Joystick 0 is read alongside the keyboard; use either at any time.

Mounting ladders is forgiving: stand anywhere near the rails and press up or down, and you will be snapped onto them. You can leap off a ladder with **SPACE** at any height, and you can catch a passing ladder in mid-fall by holding up or down as you go by.

THE CLIMB

The Shaft is one screen per level, fifty-nine levels tall, in three zones:

Zone	Levels	Character
Mechanical	1-19	Rust, sodium light, hammering pumps
Agricultural	20-39	Green growth under warm grow-lamps
Administrative	40-59	Cold blue glass and elite purple

Climb off the top of a screen and you arrive at the bottom of the next. The ladders line up between levels, so the climb is **fully bidirectional** — climb down off the bottom floor and you descend to the level below. From level 3 upward, the first ladder pierces the deck itself: you can see the rungs continue down through the floor, and one press of ↓ takes you through.

You will need to go back down. Often.

Gaps

Walkways are not continuous. Some have gaps you must jump. You may also **drop through a gap deliberately** as a shortcut to the floor below — that is a fall of exactly one floor and it costs you nothing. A fall of **more than** one floor stings: the border flashes red and you lose an energy point.

Ducts

Every four to seven levels a ventilation duct hangs across a walkway at head height. You cannot walk through it and you cannot jump it. Duck or slide, and crawl under. While you are beneath it you cannot stand up — keep crawling until you are clear.

Guards will not follow you under a duct.

KEYCARDS AND DOORS

Security doors fill the corridor from deck to ceiling. They are armoured, colourless steel — **you read a door's colour from the indicator light in its lintel**, at the top. There are five colours:

GREEN • CYAN • YELLOW • WHITE • RED

A door opens only to a card of its own colour, and consumes it. Once open, a door **stays open for the rest of the game**, even if you leave the level and come back.

You may carry up to **nine cards of each colour**. Cards you have picked up never reappear.

Not every card belongs to a door on the same level. As you climb, more and more of the cards you find are for locks further up — and more and more of the doors you meet have no card anywhere near

them. **Pocket everything.** A card you walked past on level 21 is a door you cannot open on level 34.

VAULTS AND SWITCHES

Every red keycard in the Shaft is inside a vault, and red cards exist nowhere else.

A vault is a sealed safe standing on the deck. It will not open for you. Somewhere on **another level** there is a wall switch wired to it. Throw the switch and the vault opens; the safe stays where it is and its red card sits on top, waiting for you to walk back and collect it.

The switch may be **above** the vault — or, about half the time, one to three levels **below** it. To help you, the Shaft's own maintenance system still works:

- Stand on a **sealed vault** and a blinking arrow appears over your head, pointing the way to its switch — up or down.
- Stand on a **switch** and the arrow points the way to its vault.

Switches are never unguarded. Expect a patrol, a dripping pipe or a steam vent between you and the lever — sometimes all three.

Thrown switches stay thrown for the whole game.

HAZARDS

Lubricant leaks. Old ceiling pipes drip. A pipe with a **red** stain drips hot lubricant and costs you an energy point. A **white** one is oily water and is harmless. Learn to read the stain before you walk under it — the difference is one colour and one energy point.

Steam vents. Nozzles set into the deck that blast a lethal column upward on their own clock. They do not care where you are. Watch the rhythm, then walk.

Falling debris. Thrown from above (see below). Duck, or move.

THE OPPOSITION

You cannot kill anyone with your bare hands. You have a whip, and it is enough. Crack it (**Z**) and it uncoils from behind your shoulder, arcs over your head, and snaps out in front of you at full stretch — that is when it lands. Anyone caught in the crack goes down.

The whip can also be aimed: hold **↑** as you crack for a strike straight overhead, or **↑** and a direction for a rising diagonal. Debris cannot be whipped out of the air.

	Who	Behaviour
RIOT GUARD	Company security, visored, shielded	Patrols his walkway. Slow — he moves one step in four. You can outrun him, and outrunning him is often cheaper than fighting

COAT MAN	Long coat, dark glasses, crowbar	Patrols twice as fast as a guard. Duck his swing and answer with the whip
THROWER	Perched above the walkway	Drops rubble on the deck below on a timer. He will not come down. Duck the rock, or cross when his arms are empty

Any contact with a person, or with falling debris, costs one energy point.

ENERGY, LIVES AND MEDICAL CRATES

You begin with **three lives** and a tank of **five energy points**.

Every blow — a guard, a crowbar, a rock, a red drip, a steam blast, a bad fall — costs **one energy point** and grants you **three seconds of immunity**, during which your sprite flickers and nothing can touch you. Use those three seconds; they are the most valuable thing you own.

When the tank empties, you lose a life and the tank refills.

Medical crates — white, with a red cross — appear from level 20 upward, every few levels. Each is worth **1 to 4 energy points**, and you will not know which until you take it. Points beyond a full tank of five are not wasted: they bank an **extra life**. You may hold up to nine lives.

A crate you have taken never comes back. Leave a crate you do not need; it will still be there when you do.

ELEVATORS

Levels **1, 10, 20, 30, 40 and 50** have an elevator door on the bottom floor. Stand at the door and press ↑ or ↓ to ride.

The elevator will only take you to stops **you have already reached on foot**. It is a shortcut back through the Shaft, not a way to skip it. Once you have climbed to level 40 the hard way, the lift will carry you back down to level 10 to fetch that yellow card you left behind.

THE PANEL

Along the top of the screen:

Reading	Meaning
Key icon + five digits	Cards held, in colour order: green, cyan, yellow, white, red
Two digits	The level you are on, 1 to 59
Four digits	Your score
Bolt + digit	Energy remaining, out of five
Heart + digit	Lives remaining

SCORE

Deed	Points
An enemy put down with the whip	1
A keycard pocketed	2
A door opened	3

The score is shown on the panel as you play and again on the final screen when you reach the airlock. It stops at 9999.

There are only so many cards and doors in the Shaft. Guards, on the other hand, are back at their posts every time you revisit a level — so if a high score is what you are after, the Shaft will happily supply you with an unlimited number of people to fall over.

NOTES FROM THE MECHANICS' MESS

- **Take the card you do not need.** It is nine levels early, not useless.
- **The arrow is not decoration.** If you are standing on a vault and it points down, its switch really is below you, and no amount of climbing will help.
- **Outrun, do not fight.** A riot guard is worth one point. An energy point is worth far more than that.
- **Count the steam.** Vents are on a fixed clock. Two cycles of watching costs you nothing; one bad guess costs you an energy point.
- **Learn the ducts.** A slide carries you further than a duck, and its

momentum will take you off an edge if you are careless.

- **When you are lost, go down.** Doors you opened are still open, cards you took are still gone, switches you threw are still thrown. The Shaft remembers everything you have done to it.
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ON COPYING THIS DISC

Copying is permitted. Copying is encouraged. Copying is the point.

Software of this vintage survives for one reason only: people copied it. The titles that were guarded hardest are the titles that are lost. The ones that got duplicated at lunchtime, passed around in blazer pockets and posted to strangers are the ones still running today.

So: lend this disc. Copy it for your friends. Put it on a compilation with a hand-written label. Upload it. Send it to somebody who has never touched a CPC and tell them the keys are in the manual.

A story locked away where nobody can read it is the only piracy in this building — and you have spent the last fifty-nine levels climbing out of a place that thought otherwise.

CREDITS

THE SHAFT — REVIVE8BIT Software, 2026

Written in Z80 assembly for the Amstrad CPC 6128. Fifty-nine levels, compiled sprites, hardware double buffering, AY sound. 100% machine code.

Design, code and graphics: **VASPER**

The truth is above.