

A HORROR-COMEDY FEATURE

GHOST DORM!

Worst move-in ever!

Written by **Michael Rhine**

BOSTON · HALLOWEEN · 1983



LOGLINE

Animal House meets *The Shining*: a group of misfit freshmen discovers their Boston dorm is a ghostly trap, and the only way out is to throw the dead the ultimate Halloween blowout party.

GENRE

Horror-comedy · period · ensemble

TONE

Party comedy with real scares

SETTING

Boston, fall semester 1983

THE WORLD

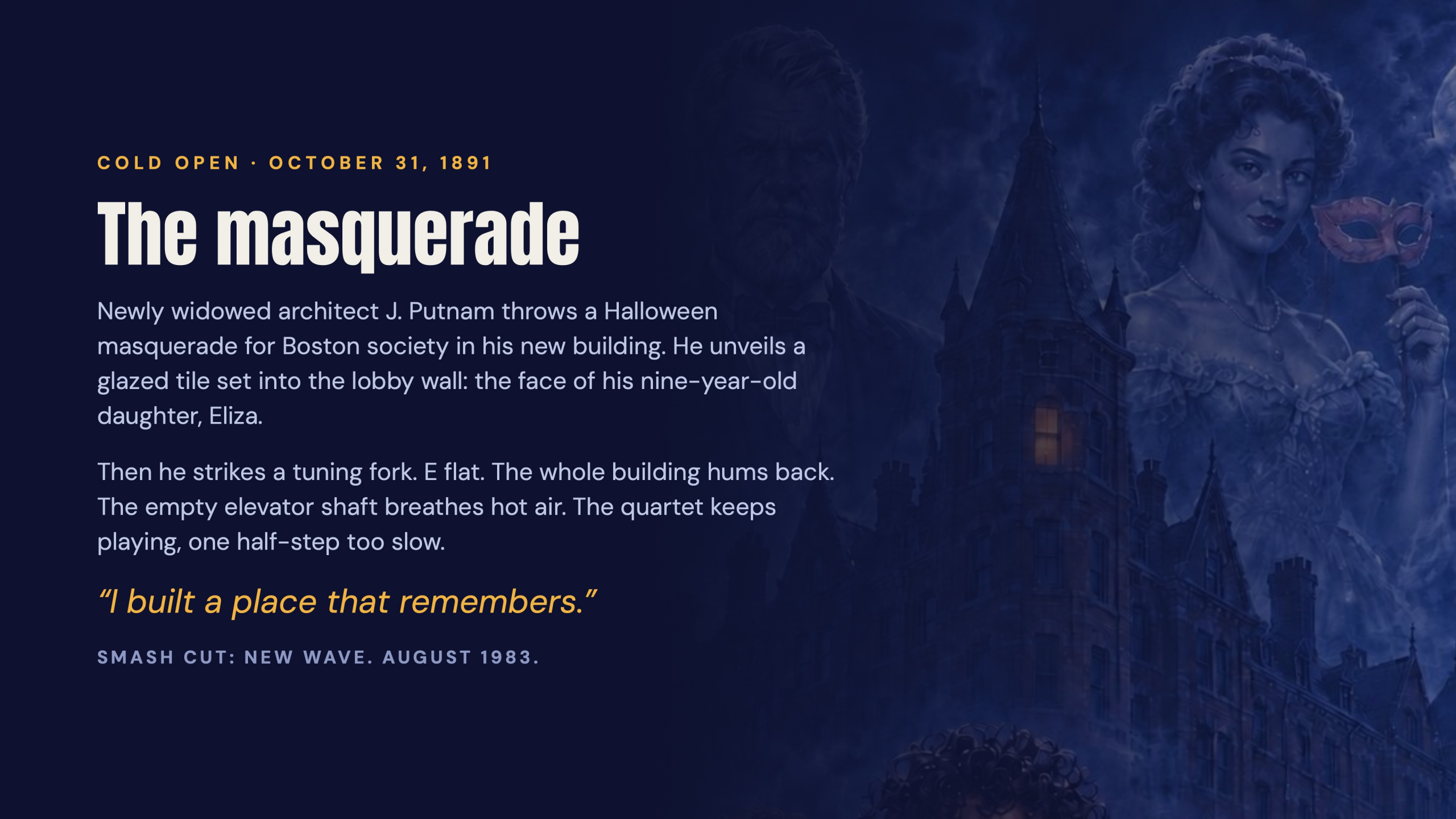
The Charlesgate

Back Bay, Boston. Red brick, limestone, a gargoyle over the door. Built in 1891 by architect J. Putnam, with a ballroom so tall the light gives up before it reaches the ceiling.

Sealed by the city in 1938. Bought in 1983 by Waldo College and filled with 400 art, theater and music freshmen.

The sixth floor stays chained shut. The elevator opens by itself every morning.





COLD OPEN • OCTOBER 31, 1891

The masquerade

Newly widowed architect J. Putnam throws a Halloween masquerade for Boston society in his new building. He unveils a glazed tile set into the lobby wall: the face of his nine-year-old daughter, Eliza.

Then he strikes a tuning fork. E flat. The whole building hums back. The empty elevator shaft breathes hot air. The quartet keeps playing, one half-step too slow.

"I built a place that remembers."

SMASH CUT: NEW WAVE. AUGUST 1983.

The story

ACT ONE

Move-in

Lonely journalism freshman Holly and a floor of misfits move into the Charlesgate. Night one, a figure walks through a wall and the ballroom mirror fills with an 1891 gala. A basement Ouija séance gives the building every one of their names.

ACT TWO

It knows their names

Ghosts in the shower, mobsters in the elevator, the architect at Holly's bedside. The building tempts each of them to stay. Quint opens the sealed sixth floor and films a room of faces in tiles, one of them Holly's. Holly finds the pattern: someone vanishes every Halloween.

ACT THREE

The Halloween ball

The plan: lure every ghost into the ballroom and break the building's E flat. Holly's exposé gets the party cancelled. They throw it anyway. Putnam nearly takes them all, until Eliza lets go of her father and the dead walk into the light.

The rules of the house

It's an instrument

Putnam held seventeen patents. The building's proportions resonate at exactly E flat, and that note holds the dead.

It learns your name

"Don't let it learn your name." The Ouija board takes every one of them, even the one nobody said.

It makes you comfortable

A warm room. Silk sheets. A father's voice through the wall: "You can stay, son."

It keeps you

Room 601: a wall of glazed tiles, each holding the face of someone the building kept.

It feeds on Halloween

1891. 1938. Every Halloween with residents in the building, somebody doesn't check out.

E natural breaks it

Half a step up. Played loud enough, everywhere at once, the building lets go.



The fifth floor

Six freshmen, one RA and four hundred roommates, give or take the dead.

The freshmen

Holly Kemp

The reporter

Farrah hair, gold cross, a prayer log of every sighting. Lonely from night one, and the one the architect wants most.

Dez Malone

Queen of the fifth floor

Glam, fearless, eyeliner. Arrived with a record player and a garbage bag his father packed. The building offers him a home.

Bex Marsh

The skeptic

Man's blazer, three jokes ahead, a notebook titled RATIONAL EXPLANATIONS. When those run out, she writes the plan.

Sam Park

The musician

Gentle and dreamy. Hears the building hum back in E flat, nearly plays its waltz forever, then finds the note that breaks it.

Charlie "Quint" Reese

The filmmaker

Super-8, *Jaws* quotes and a cookie tin of his brother's weed. Opens the sealed sixth floor and films what's inside.

Felix Reyes

The sweetheart

Agrees with everyone, including the dead. A 1930s ghost named Dorothy takes a liking to him in the shower.

The living and the kept

THE LIVING

Roxie Santos. The 20-year-old RA in a leather jacket. Holds the master keys, and the building has a room waiting for her.

Vince DeLuca. Campus security. Writes everything down. Has known since August.

Dean Margaret Pruitt. Waldo's housing dean. Her name is on the purchase, and she knows what she bought.

THE KEPT

J. Putnam. The architect. After his wife died, he built a building so nothing would be lost to him again.

Eliza Putnam. His nine-year-old daughter, set into the lobby wall as a tile. The anchor.

Dorothy Vane. A 1930s secretary from Worcester. Chanel No. 5. Missing since Halloween 1938.

Margo. Climbed in through the coal chute in 1976 and never climbed out. Warns them from day one.

Sal, Tommy and Vinnie. 1930s mobsters who ride the elevator. "Vinnie don't talk."

Set pieces

The mirror waltz

A boombox party in the abandoned ballroom. In the black mirror, the room fills with 1891, and Putnam lowers his mask.

The shower

Felix, a very forward ghost, frost on the tile, and every shower in the room turning on at once.

Room 601

Behind the chains: tiles from floor to ceiling, each holding a face. One blank tile is filling in. It's Holly.

The Ouija names

The planchette spells each of their names, then P-U-T-N-A-M. Horses scream behind the basement wall.

Going down

Quint rides the elevator with three dead mobsters. On playback, he's laughing alone in an empty car.

The Halloween ball

Four hundred costumed students and every ghost in the building in one room. E flat against E natural, live and loud.

SOUND

Music is the weapon

The building has one song: a waltz in E flat, one half-step too slow. The kids answer it with 1983.

David Bowie

Talking Heads

The Go-Go's

The Romantics

The Clash

Ramones

Sister Sledge

Survivor

Siouxsie and the Banshees

Duran Duran

The climax is a battle of the bands: a dead man's waltz against Sam's piano and Dez's Fender, holding E natural until the walls ripple.

Why this movie

Two genres, one engine

Animal House meets *The Shining*: every party scene is also a scare.

A contained world

One building, one semester, one night. The location is the villain.

A breakout ensemble

Six freshmen, a tough RA and a ghost from every era: roles young actors want to play.

A built-in release date

A Halloween movie with a 1983 soundtrack, costumes and key art that sell themselves.

Written from experience

The writer lived in Boston's real Charlesgate as a freshman in 1983. It was haunted.

THE WRITER

Michael Rhine

A television producer, writer and editor with more than 30 years in broadcast production and documentary filmmaking. A San Francisco native, he brings a documentarian's eye for real places and forgotten history to his fiction.

He lived in the Charlesgate as a freshman in 1983, and it was haunted. His slate also includes *The Sky's Edge*, a biographical feature about aviation pioneer Lincoln Beachey, and the original science fiction project *TERRA*.

HE LIVED IT

1983

Freshman year at the
Charlesgate, Boston

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Written by **Michael Rhine**

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