

1974

FADE IN:

INT. ABANDONED HOUSE - DAY

Light seeps through wood slats nailed across tall windows.

A piano lies beneath fallen plaster. The lid sags. The keys are cracked and fused together.

Above it, a chandelier hangs low, yellowed crystals catch what little light leaks through the slats.

A curved staircase climbs into darkness.

Everything is still. Frozen in time.

A shadow drifts across the room.

A hand reaches down, enormous against tiny furniture.

It sets a miniature table and three chairs in place.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

JIM (70s) hunches over a dollhouse, thin, stooped, skin the color of dust.

Behind him, on a wall: gold and platinum records, magazine covers, tour posters —

— and a yellowed newspaper clipping: "THREE WOMEN VANISH."
Dated 1974.

Jim turns a Polaroid in his hands, three young women in a studio booth. A microphone between them.

He opens a small box. Inside: a braid of hair tied with ribbon.

He touches it like a talisman, then sets it beside the dollhouse.

On the worktable: acrylic paints, fine brushes, glue, scalpels. Tools aligned with surgical care.

He positions three tiny porcelain women in the dollhouse parlor, each dyed and stitched, wearing '70s style dresses.

He lifts one figurine. Its eyes stare back at him, hateful knowing.

A brush dips in black paint.

Tiny stitch marks appear across the figure's lids.

INT. DOLLHOUSE PARLOR - NIGHT

JENNIFER, LAURA, and MARY, late teens, in '70s bell-bottoms and long straight hair, sit where their figurines were, calm and watchful.

A small Ouija board waits on the table.

A candle burns low. Wax beads along its rim.

The planchette trembles.

INT. LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Jim paints a hairline crack across the miniature piano lid.

He pauses. Listens.

A faint breath.

He leans closer.

INT. DOLLHOUSE PARLOR - CONTINUOUS

Beneath the girls' fingertips, the planchette inches to J, jerks to I, scrapes to M, stops.

The candle flame tilts as if blown, though the air in the room is still.

INT. LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Jim adjusts his chair. His hand shakes. Paint streaks his knuckles.

The miniature chandelier sways. Above him, the real chandelier sways too.

He turns, uneasy.

INT. DOLLHOUSE PARLOR - NIGHT

The candle burns higher. Wax pools.

Laura lifts a hand to her nose. A freckle of blood marks her fingertip.

The planchette moves beneath their fingers in a circle, then lands on -- WHY?

FLASHBACK - RECORDING STUDIO - 1974 - NIGHT

Cigarette smoke. Velvet and vinyl.

YOUNG JIM at a grand piano. Shirt open.

A red RECORDING sign lit.

In a corner, a small altar: beads, bones, a cracked jar of dirt.

A wax charm of twine hangs from a mic stand.

The three young women stand before a single microphone.

Naked. Terrified. Bodies shaking.

Young Jim strikes a chord. Bright. Sharp. Cruel.

He plays louder. Faster.

Tape reels turn. Needles twitch. Then the music is swallowed by screams --

-- screams that bend and rise until they fuse with the melody.

Meters slam red.

Blood pools.

Then silence.

BACK TO SCENE:

INT. DOLLHOUSE PARLOR - NIGHT

The candle flares white-hot. Wax runs like tears.

The planchette snaps off the board and clatters to the floor.

On the tiny table sits a new miniature: a dollhouse within the dollhouse.

Inside it, a recording studio. An even smaller porcelain likeness of Jim at a tiny piano.

The three women look down at it.

The miniature piano keys sound on their own. The same warped melody from 1974 spills out and loops.

They reach for the air as if grasping a rope only they can see.

INT. LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

A piano note answers from the full-size instrument. One key. Then another, the same warped melody rises into the room.

Jim looks to his upright piano across the room, uneasy now.

He flips his work light off.

Only the dollhouse glows. Its tiny front door now open.

Jim steadies himself against the table.

Inside the dollhouse, the planchette moves again beneath their fingertips. Firm. Certain.

C O M E U P.

INT. STAIRCASE - CONTINUOUS

Jim climbs. One step, then another. At the top: a faded door. Brass knob dulled by years.

He grips it.

INT. FULL-SIZE PARLOR - CONTINUOUS

Candlelight burns where no candles exist.

The piano plays itself. His old ballad. Warped. Off-key.

The chandelier swings.

Jim takes a slow step toward the table. Three chairs wait. Empty.

A pale hand settles on a chair back before he reaches it.

Jennifer stands there. Eyelids stitched shut.

Laura steps from shadow, dried blood beneath one nostril.

Mary follows, the tiny planchette cupped in her palm like a coin.

Jim's chest lifts and falls. No sound.

Mary places the planchette on a full-size Ouija board that was not there a breath ago.

The three women place their fingertips on the planchette. It moves -- S I T.

Jim's knees fold. He falls into the fourth chair.

The piano changes tempo. Faster. Impatient.

The planchette slams letter to letter in a violent rush, no pauses, no breath --

M U R D E R

The chandelier swings harder. Crystals ping across the piano.

Walls lean inward.

A thin black thread runs from the planchette to Jim's chest. It shines beneath his skin. He claws at it. It holds.

Laura points toward the staircase.

Mary lifts the planchette.

Jennifer turns her stitched face toward the door.

They pull.

Jim stumbles. With each step he shrinks. Furniture towers.

The women's faces smooth toward porcelain.

He gasps one last time and vanishes.

INT. LIVING ROOM - LATER

The dollhouse door stands open.

Inside, the miniature chandelier hangs. Three chairs.

A fourth chair now holds a tiny man with paint-flecked hands.

Jim's glass eyes stare. Mouth fixed mid-plea.

The three women rest fingertips on the planchette.

The tiny piano begins the haunting ballad again. Soft. Endless.

INT. DOLLHOUSE PARLOR - CONTINUOUS

The candle's flame wavers. Wax overflows and strings along the table's edge.

A bead of fire drops onto a tiny scrap of curtain. It darkens, then kindles.

Smoke threads upward, delicate as hair.

On the tiny altar in the corner: dust shifts. A cracked jar of dirt breathes a pinch of ash.

The women do not move. Fingertips still. Eyes fixed.

INT. LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

A piano string snaps, crystals rain off the chandelier, pinging across the piano lid.

INT. DOLLHOUSE PARLOR - CONTINUOUS

Flame lifts the miniature wallpaper at one corner.

The tiny piano keeps playing. Keys sinking while the finish blisters.

The planchette sits between the women's hands. It does not move.

INT. FULL-SIZE PARLOR - CONTINUOUS

The matching corner of wallpaper lifts the same way.

A slow lick of fire crawls up the wall.

On the worktable, the ribboned braid smolders. Hair curls, then blackens.

The Polaroid twists. Silvered faces warp.

Gold records on the wall haze and bow. Labels bubble. Ink runs.

INT. DOLLHOUSE PARLOR - CONTINUOUS

Heat fissures the porcelain on the tiny man's cheek. A hairline vein.

His glass eyes craze with fine cracks.

The three women remain composed, their faces smoothing toward the dolls they replaced.

The miniature chandelier drops a bead of molten metal onto the table. The Ouija board chars in a ring.

INT. FULL-SIZE PARLOR - CONTINUOUS

The chandelier's chain glows. Crystals fall, striking keys that still press themselves down.

The upright surrenders. Soundboard groans. Another string gives.

Smoke coils up the curved staircase.

INT. LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

The dollhouse becomes a kiln.

Inside its windows: orange, then white.

Tiny Jim sits in the miniature studio within the miniature parlor, fixed at the piano.

Keys melt around his small hands.

INT. FULL-SIZE PARLOR - CONTINUOUS

Fire rips across the room.

Records melt. Posters curl. The braid burns into ash.

Outside the windows, the world remains pale and indifferent. Inside, the light grows absolute.

INT. DOLLHOUSE PARLOR - CONTINUOUS

The women finally lift their hands from the planchette.

They do not look at the fire.

They look to the empty chair where Jim sat, glass eyes unblinking.

INT. FULL-SIZE PARLOR - CONTINUOUS

The ceiling gives. A slow fall. The chandelier drops and vanishes into coals.

The upright coughs smoke through its cracked lid. Keys buckle into a white grin.

The worktable blazes. Paints pop. Scalpels turn black.

CLOSE — DOLLHOUSE WINDOW

The tiny recording studio glows inside the glowing parlor inside the burning room.

Porcelain softens. The miniature piano slouches.

Tiny Jim sits locked in place, mouth fixed mid-plea. His eyes follow the ring of fire.

For one last lucid moment, a flash of understanding.

Then, a sudden tortured scream, it climbs inside the porcelain, pitch sharpening as if trying to claw its way out.

In the dollhouse parlor, the three women rest their fingertips on the planchette again.

Around them, all pianos burn, the full-size and miniatures, yet keep playing.

Jim's scream rises to meet them, harmonizing with the warped, high pitched melody from 1974.

FADE OUT