

The
Echo Chamber

By
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1. EXT. FITZROY STREETS - DAY

1.

ELIZABETH hurries from the crowded bustle of Brunswick Street down a narrow sidestreet. In a pale trenchcoat, she is Greta Garbo in Jackie O sunglasses, over-coiffed and brittle, weaving through a maze of narrow streets at a panicky trot. An elegant black bag slaps awkwardly at her hip.

She rips a set of house keys from her pocket, jangling one free from the rest. She rounds a final corner...and stops.

Ahead, a row of renovated warehouse-apartments loom over a tiny backstreet where a MAN IN A HOODED TOP takes up the narrow pavement, lifting his foot up against the wall as he talks on a mobile phone.

Elizabeth freezes.

Hood-top kicks off from the wall and strolls onto the road. Casually, still talking on his phone, he inspects a couple of the flashier cars parked on the street.

Elizabeth inches along the wall, keeping cars, lamp-posts etc. between her and Hood-top.

As Hood-top bends to peer in the window of a shiny BMW, Elizabeth bolts, falling into a doorway alcove. A crow flaps out with a harsh cry. Startled, Elizabeth flattens against the wall. The man glances at the commotion but doesn't see Elizabeth pressed against the wall. She crams her key in the lock.

2. INT. ELIZABETH'S APARTMENT - DAY

2.

A security camera view of a stairway ascending from a door. The door opens, Elizabeth stumbles through from the street and slams it shut behind her.

The view is one of four, quartered on a computer screen, each showing different areas of the apartment entrance. As Elizabeth climbs the stairs, she disappears from one view and enters another. A message box on screen flashes a request for an security password.

The computer sits in an alcove of a modern studio apartment - spotless kitchen, dining area, living room, stairs spiralling to an upper floor. As Elizabeth steps out of camera-view on-screen, in-the-flesh Elizabeth appears in front of the computer and jabs her password in.

The black bag is dumped on a sleek dining table, a mobile phone visible in a side pocket.

Elizabeth sinks stiffly to a chair. Her hands are shaking. She grips her knees. Her sunglasses reflect the empty apartment. A tear trickles out from beneath one lens. A strange sound escapes her mouth, a long, quavering, sub-vocalised exhalation of tension.

A phone rings.

Elizabeth's head snaps around.

Phone rings and rings. She removes her sunglasses, revealing heavily made up eyes, dark sockets, rattled expression.

She wills herself into motion, crossing the expanse of open studio space dotted with designer furniture to a telephone table. She hesitates, then picks up the handset. The voice on the other end is SARAH, breathless and eager.

SARAH (OS)
Elizabeth?

ELIZABETH
Yes?

SARAH (OS)
It's Sarah. I've been trying to reach you.

ELIZABETH
(RELUCTANTLY)
Hello, Sarah.

Distractedly, Elizabeth bounces her palm on a paper spike by the phone.

SARAH (OS)
Your mobile just keeps ringing out.

Agitation of palm on spike increases.

SARAH (OS) (CONT)
I wanted to invite you...It's a bit late notice now, but it's no big thing, just a quiet dinner, Jess and Angie are coming, Paul and Megan, no twins so we should be able to have something resembling a conversation...

Elizabeth's attention is focussed on her hand and the spike. Abruptly, she stops the tense vibrato. She turns her hand over. Blood wells from a ragged gouge in the middle of her palm.

SARAH (OS) (CONT)
I suppose there's still no word?

Elizabeth spins to a wide picture window overlooking the street. Her hand holding the phone drops to her side. She sucks her palm. Out the window, Hood-top comes back up the street. She steps back out of sight.

Elizabeth discovers the phone in her hand as though she had forgotten it. She returns it to her ear. Sarah is still talking.

SARAH (OS) (CONT)
...but you know, everyone's keen
to see you, nobody wants to...
you know...look, it's just awful,
awful. None of us can possibly
imagine what you must be going
through. We just want you to-

ELIZABETH
I have to go.

She hangs up.

Sarah's voice continues to blether on.

Elizabeth stares at the phone as though it were a disobedient child. She picks up.

Sarah is gone. A dull bleeping emerges from the earpiece.

She hangs up, puzzled. Sarah's voice resumes. Experimentally, Elizabeth takes hold of the power cord and yanks it from the socket.

Sarah's voice is extinguished.

Elizabeth descends into an armchair, hand to her face as though repressing a headache. She pushes a few wisps of hair back into place, leaving a streak of blood on her cheek.

She watches the blood well on her palm and a drop descend to the shiny floor. Another drop gathers and falls.

3. INT. ELIZABETH'S APARTMENT (FANTASY) - DAY

3.

The drop plunks into an enormous pool of blood, in which Elizabeth's chair sits like a tiny island.

Horried, Elizabeth lurches up.

On her knees, Elizabeth wipes the immaculate floor with a paper towel. Her hand is neatly bandaged.

Phone rings.

Elizabeth looks to the phone, and the power cord lying out of its socket.

Phone rings again. She turns her gaze to the bag on the dining table. The screen on the mobile in the side pocket flashes in time with the ringing.

She watches it. The mobile rings and rings.

Eventually, she lurches up, wrenches the mobile from its pocket and jabs the talk button. The CALLER is a man, sharp-voiced and insistent.

CALLER (OS)
Rachel Weaver?

ELIZABETH
(SURPRISED)
What?

CALLER (OS)
Rachel Weaver.

ELIZABETH
No...

The caller hangs up. Elizabeth puts the mobile on the table by the bag. It rings again the moment her hand leaves it, startling her. With each ring it vibrates on the hard surface of the table.

She picks it up. The display screen reads 'UNKNOWN NUMBER'. She answers. It is the same caller.

CALLER (OS)
Rachel Weaver?

ELIZABETH
No...

CALLER (OS)
May I speak to Rachel Weaver?

ELIZABETH
No, you can't. This...

The caller hangs up.

Exasperated, Elizabeth throws the mobile back onto the table. It slides across the table surface and comes to rest against the bag.

Elizabeth stares.

Stencilled on the bag's leather, right next to the mobile, are the letters 'RW'.

5. EXT. BRUNSWICK STREET CAFÉ (FLASHBACK) - DAY 5.

The black bag with the initials 'RW' sits on the ground between outdoor café tables. Next to it, an identical bag leans against a chair where Elizabeth sits alone, insulated against the bash and clatter of the street by sunglasses, trenchcoat and coffee.

Next to Elizabeth, on the other side of the twin bags, a RED-HAIRED WOMAN sips a cup of tea, engrossed in a tattered copy of Jim Thompson's *A Hell of a Woman*.

6. INT. ELIZABETH'S APARTMENT - DAY 6.

Elizabeth picks up the bag.

7. EXT. BRUNSWICK STREET CAFÉ (FLASHBACK) - DAY 7.

Elizabeth holds her coffee poised a couple of inches above the saucer. She stares impassively, holding herself unnaturally still.

SFX: Noise of the street intensifies.

Elizabeth's hand quivers tensely.

SFX: Street noise escalates unbearably.

Elizabeth's lips are clamped into a tight fierce line.

SFX: Street noise crescendo.

Elizabeth's glass drops into the saucer, tipping over, spilling the coffee. In one motion, she gropes for her bag and lurches up and off.

The red-haired woman darts a look from her book. Between the tables, a single bag remains.

Elizabeth sits at the dining table with the bag on her lap. She unzips the bag and removes a yellow envelope. The front of the envelope is marked in black texta, RACHEL WEAVER, 143 GEORGE ST, FITZROY. Opening the envelope, she takes out the contents, a wad of photographs.

Elizabeth drops the photos as though they were electrified. She stares at them spilled across the table.

Each photo is a candid, secretive shot of Elizabeth - at the café, on the street, looking out of her apartment window...

Unseen, the mobile rings. One of the photos vibrates.

Elizabeth pushes the photo aside, revealing the mobile lying beneath, ringing insistently. The display screen reads 'UNKNOWN NUMBER'.

She picks up the mobile.

It rings in her hand.

She thumbs the answer key.

CALLER (OS)
Rachel Weaver?

Elizabeth opens her mouth but nothing emerges.

CALLER (OS) (CONT)
Rachel Weaver?

Elizabeth scans the photos, her eyes coming to rest on the envelope with RACHEL WEAVER written on the front.

ELIZABETH
This...(SWALLOWS NERVOUSLY)
This is Rachel Weaver.

She waits. Silence.

ELIZABETH (CONT)
Hello? Are you...?

CALLER (OS)
Yes. We've had trouble
reaching you. You received
the package?

ELIZABETH
...Yes.

CALLER (OS)
You've seen the subject?

She reaches over to the photos and begins flicking through them.

ELIZABETH
Yes.

CALLER (OS)
You've made contact?

Elizabeth flicks faster and faster.

ELIZABETH
(Hesitating)
Yes.

CALLER (OS)
And?

The woman in the photos jerks back in time, through her twenties to her teens. A man who seems to be Elizabeth's husband appears in many of the photos. The last photo is them both as teens, dressed for a date.

Elizabeth stares at it, aghast.

ELIZABETH
What...what do you want with
her?

The connection is terminated.

ELIZABETH (CONT)
Hello? Hello?

Elizabeth paces back and forth, uncertain what to do. She dials 000 on the mobile.

OPERATOR (OS)
Police, fire or ambulance?

Elizabeth hangs up. She throws the phone on the table. It lands on a photo of her standing at the apartment window, shot from the street below.

Elizabeth sidles to the window, scanning the street warily. The street appears empty. She steps right up to the glass. Suddenly, she sees a pair of sneakers poking out of the shadow of a doorway on the opposite side of the street. She peers into the shadow and realises it is Hood-top standing quiet and still, calmly staring up into her eyes.

Elizabeth fumbles for a cord at the side of the window, unable to break Hood-top's stare. She grabs it, yanks. A blind falls with a bang between them.

9. INT. ELIZABETH'S APARTMENT - DAY

9.

A tap pummels water into a sink.

Elizabeth straightens from the sink to view herself in a bathroom mirror. Her carefully coiffed hair is gone: in it's place, a ragged crew-cut. Her face is scrubbed clean of make-up.

ELIZABETH
(TO THE MIRROR)
Rachel Weaver? Rachel Weaver?
Yes, this is Rachel Weaver you
fuck.

She prods at her newly shorn hair, notices that her shirt-sleeves and bandaged hand are soaked. She unwinds the bandage and removes it. She stares at her hand in surprise. There is no sign of any injury.

Frowning at her unmarked palm, she pushes up her wet sleeves, revealing arms dotted with bandaids. She picks one off, and blinks at the unblemished skin beneath. She rips the rest of the bandaids off. There is not a mark anywhere. She pulls at her clothing, ripping bandaids from the rest of her body - stomach, legs, feet - all with not the slightest sign of injury. She chuckles.

Scooping up the mass of discarded bandaids and hair clippings from the vanity, she laughs out loud, dumps the lot into the toilet and flushes it away.

10. INT. ELIZABETH'S APARTMENT - DAY

10.

Elizabeth slams open a bedroom wardrobe.

Behind her, the ensuite bathroom door is ajar. Her wet clothes lie discarded on the bed. She rummages through neatly hung/folded/stacked clothing. It is all of a piece with the stuff she has taken off - elegant, feminine, expensive. She slides the door shut, slides the other side of the wardrobe open.

This side of the wardrobe is full of men's clothes. She picks through a row of suits, briefly lifts a QC's wig and tosses it back. She finds a pair of jeans in a bottom drawer and pulls them on. They are too big for her. She belts them tight.

She pauses, skims a wistful hand across the row of suits. Her face

twists. Her fingers grip fabric fiercely. In a sudden frenzy, she rips everything out of the wardrobe - clothes, drawers, coathangers.

She stares breathlessly at the empty wardrobe.

11. INT. ELIZABETH'S APARTMENT - DAY

11.

Dressed in her husband's clothes, Elizabeth strides around the apartment with purpose, opening every room and cupboard door.

In the hallway outside her bedroom, Elizabeth encounters a locked door. She tries the handle. She experiments with a number of keys - none fit. She puts her shoulder to it. The door doesn't budge.

12. INT. ELIZABETH'S APARTMENT - DAY

12.

The apartment is in complete chaos: cupboard doors hang open, shelves are emptied. Elizabeth sits cross-legged on the floor, the centre of a scattered maelstrom of paper, books, gutted boxes.

Beside her is a pile of photo albums. In front of her, one of the albums lies open: inside, pictures of Elizabeth and her husband whose face in every picture has been carefully blacked out by a felt pen.

Elizabeth has the mobile pressed to her ear and a red notebook on her lap.

ELIZABETH

...sleeps on the right hand side
of her bed, which is a queen-size
futon, cotton sheets, four pillows,
no prints. Clothing similar - no
prints, or very few anyway. Seven-
teen pairs of shoes, but there's
every indication she only wears
five or possibly six of those...
Did you know she had a husband?

CALLER (OS)

She has a husband?

ELIZABETH

Had. I don't think he's around
anymore.

CALLER (OS)

Why?

ELIZABETH
Just a feeling.

CALLER (OS)
Sex?

Elizabeth lowers her notebook.

ELIZABETH
What?

CALLER (OS)
Does she have a sexual partner?

ELIZABETH
I...I'm not sure.

CALLER (OS)
If you had to guess?

ELIZABETH
I'd guess no.

CALLER (OS)
Is she lonely?

ELIZABETH
I'm not sure I can tell that from
the number of shoes in her closet.

CALLER (OS)
No. But you're close aren't you?
Close enough to count her toiletries.
Read her mail. Measure her sleeping
breath on the back of your hand.
Are you there now? In her house?

ELIZABETH
Of course not.

CALLER (OS)
What will you do when she finds
you out?

ELIZABETH
I don't think she'll do that.

CALLER (OS)
(CHUCKLES)
You'll have to do something.

From downstairs comes a knocking on the front door.

Elizabeth freezes.

ELIZABETH

I have to go.

CALLER (OS)

You are there aren't you? Is she with you now? Is she listening, wondering who you're talking to?

ELIZABETH

I'm going.

CALLER (OS)

Say this. Say this to her...

'We're going to get you, bitch.'

There comes a peal of laughter that is cut off as Elizabeth hangs up.

She listens as the knocking comes again, more insistent.

She runs to the window, peeks down the side of the blind. The sliver of street visible to her is empty.

Knocking becomes a pounding.

Elizabeth darts to the computer in the corner and grabs the mouse. A starscape screensaver clicks off, revealing the security camera view down the interior stairs. She clicks the screen, searching for the correct camera.

Elizabeth clicks and gets a full-screen view of the front step. It is empty.

The knocking continues.

She stares at the empty porch on the screen.

She gets up and creeps to the spiral stairs leading to the upper floor. She looks up fearfully.

13. INT. ELIZABETH'S APARTMENT - DAY

13.

The door to the locked room vibrates in time to feverish pounding on the other side.

14. INT. ELIZABETH'S APARTMENT - DAY

14.

Elizabeth puts a foot on the first step.

The knocking abruptly ceases. Elizabeth strains, listening.

Phone rings. Loud. Elizabeth looks around in fright. It is the apartment landline. She looks to the wall where the cord had been pulled from the wall. The plug is in the socket.

Elizabeth picks her way across the detritus on the floor. She picks up the phone.

ELIZABETH

Hello?

SARAH (OS)

Elizabeth, you are there. Are you okay? I knocked and knocked.

ELIZABETH

Sarah...

SARAH (OS)

I was just checking everything's alright. Shall I come back? I'm just around the corner.

Elizabeth creeps to the window.

ELIZABETH

No. It's okay.

She turns from the window without looking.

SARAH (OS)

You're sure? I don't want to... you know, we'll talk about the weather or something. Open a fucking bottle.

ELIZABETH

I think someone's been in my house.

SARAH (OS)

What like an intruder? Are you sure?

ELIZABETH

(LOOKING AT THE WALL SOCKET)

No.

SARAH (OS)
Well, when do you think they got
in? Check your security. You don't
auto delete, do you?

ELIZABETH
No.

SARAH (OS)
I'll come back. We'll have a
look together.

ELIZABETH
No. Thanks Sarah. I'll...I'll see
you...sometime...when all this...

She hangs up.

15. INT. ELIZABETH'S APARTMENT - DAY

15.

SECURITY CAMERA FOOTAGE:

Hood-top climbs the stairs leading from the front door.

Another view from behind shows Hood-top entering the studio floor
of the apartment.

Another view shows the corner of the apartment where Elizabeth is
sitting at the computer. Hood-top comes up behind her.

END SECURITY CAMERA FOOTAGE.

Elizabeth spins from the computer screen to look behind her. She
is alone. She looks back at the screen.

On-screen Elizabeth turns to Hood-top. She stands up and kisses
him passionately. He pushes her away. She tries to take his hand.
He walks away.

In the chair before the screen, Elizabeth's hand mirrors her on-
screen counterpart. She clicks to another view that shows the
onscreen pair arguing on the stairs. Their argument takes them out
of shot. Elizabeth switches views but can't find them. She
switches again and again but just gets empty rooms.

She returns to a menu, clicks a box titled, LAST WEEK. She clicks
a view to full screen. It is a view of the main studio floor. In
the middle of the floor is an enormous puddle of blood. On-screen
Elizabeth kneels by the puddle of blood with a bucket and a cloth,
wiping it up.

Elizabeth zooms in.

Pixellated by the zoom, on-screen Elizabeth pauses, rocking back on her heels. She pushes back a wisp of hair, leaving a streak of blood on her cheek.

16. EXT. ELIZABETH'S APARTMENT, BALCONY - DAY **16.**

The balcony spans the bedroom and the room next to it (with the locked door). Curtains are drawn on floor-to-ceiling windows. Elizabeth emerges onto the balcony from the bedroom and tries to open the windows of the locked room.

One window opens enough to squeeze through. Elizabeth reacts to a bad smell emanating from inside, but sticks her head through.

17. INT. ELIZABETH'S APARTMENT, LOCKED ROOM - DAY **17.**

The curtains of the locked room bulge inward as Elizabeth falls through the window. In the gloom, she gags, holding her hand to her mouth. Slowly, she pulls the curtains open...

The broadening wedge of light reveals a pants leg, a hand, a hooded top, and the dead and decomposing face of a man.

Elizabeth panics. She throws open the curtains and hurls herself at the glass door leading to the balcony. She hurls herself again. The glass cracks. Again. The glass shatters. Blood spatters her face. Her hands scrabble at fragments of glass as she goes down.

18. INT. ELIZABETH'S APARTMENT, LOCKED ROOM - DAY **18.**

Distant sound of a mobile ringing.

Elizabeth wakes up on the floor of the locked room. She looks around. The body is gone. The glass door is unbroken and open to the balcony.

19. EXT. ELIZABETH'S APARTMENT, BALCONY - DAY **19.**

Elizabeth emerges from the locked room onto the balcony, dazed. She finds her way back inside through the bedroom.

19a. EXT. ELIZABETH'S APARTMENT, BALCONY - DAY **19a.**

In the bedroom, the wardrobe doors are open, revealing neatly stacked clothing, a row of hanging suits.

On the bed, two sets of clothing are laid out like sleeping

people: on one side, Elizabeth's discarded outfit, on the other, a pair of pants and a hooded top, with a kitchen knife plunged into its neck.

Blankly, Elizabeth pulls the knife out.

Elsewhere, the mobile is still ringing.

20. INT. ELIZABETH'S APARTMENT - DAY

20.

Elizabeth descends the stairs from the upper floor, knife in hand. On every step is arranged a line of photos, pictures of her and her husband, wedding photos, holiday snaps, portraits.

On the studio floor, the chaotic mess from before has been arranged into obsessive rows and patterns, a carpet of objects, photos, papers, books - every possession laid out in diagrammatic precision.

Elizabeth walks through it like a zombie, drawn on by the persistent ringing of the mobile. She leaves a trail through the objects like a wake.

The contents of the dining table are laid out with similar exactitude. The 'surveillance' photos of Elizabeth are laid out precisely around the black bag and the yellow envelope. The ringing mobile sits in the dead centre.

Elizabeth circles the table, and picks up the phone.

ELIZABETH

She's gone.

CALLER (OS)

Rachel Weaver?

ELIZABETH

Yes, yes, she's gone, the subject
is gone. I've lost her.

Elizabeth hurls the bag across the room. She freezes, staring at the space on the table where it stood.

CALLER (OS)

You're certain.

ELIZABETH

Yes. I'm certain. I must have
given it away.

CALLER (OS)

It was inevitable.

ELIZABETH
She left a message.

In the space where the bag was, a photo of Elizabeth sits neatly amongst the others. Across its face is written in felt pen: CATCH ME IF YOU CAN.

CALLER (OS)
You'd better catch her then.

ELIZABETH
What then?

CALLER (OS)
Your job.

ELIZABETH
Say it.

The caller chuckles, highly amused.

CALLER (OS)
I don't think so.

The connection is terminated.

ELIZABETH
(SIGHING)
Yes.

21. INT. ELIZABETH'S APARTMENT - DAY

21.

On her PC screen, Elizabeth types WEAVER R. into the search box of the White Pages online, then hits the enter key. The search produces a number of results but only one says RACHEL.

Elizabeth dials that number on her mobile.

ELIZABETH
Rachel Weaver? I have something
of yours.

22. EXT. RACHEL WEAVER'S HOUSE - DAY

22.

A leafy street of terraced houses. Birds twittering.

Elizabeth, wearing her sunglasses with the hoodie and oversized jeans, steps through a wooden gate, which creaks obligingly, and steps onto an ivy-hung porch. She rings a bell, ding dong.

The door is opened by RACHEL WEAVER, the red-haired woman from the café. She is smartly dressed in your Fitzroy-well-heeled-but-arty-alternative way. She gives Elizabeth a warm smile.

RACHEL

Hi. Do you have time to come in?

Elizabeth doesn't answer, but steps inside.

23. INT. RACHEL WEAVER'S HOUSE - DAY

23.

A peaceful living room. Elizabeth and Rachel sit opposite each other, the two identical bags side by side on the coffee table between them. Rachel sits with one leg beneath her, a gentle appraising look in her eyes.

Elizabeth, in contrast, is stiff and unyielding. Her sunglasses form an impenetrable mask.

RACHEL

I tried calling, even though I
knew the phone was switched off.
Funny how you do that, just in
case. Got my own voice mail, left
a message for myself.

She smiles.

RACHEL (CONT)

You didn't go back to the café?

Elizabeth shakes her head.

RACHEL (CONT)

I looked through your bag, of
course. I read this...

She reaches into one of the bags and lifts out a red notebook (same as the one Elizabeth was using earlier).

RACHEL (CONT)

It's private, I know. I was
looking for a name or address
but...well, I read it through.
I'm sorry.

Elizabeth is impassive.

RACHEL (CONT)

Your husband is gone.

Elizabeth looks down at the floor.

RACHEL (CONT)
I'm sorry, I shouldn't...

ELIZABETH
I looked in your bag too.

RACHEL
You don't go out much, I gather.
If you wanted to come here some-
times...have a cup of tea...well,
I don't go out much either.

She gets up, turning to a doorway leading to the kitchen.

RACHEL
(OVER HER SHOULDER)
Would you like a cup of tea?

Elizabeth looks up. For a moment her eyes are visible above the rim of her sunglasses, hollow and haunted, then she pushes the dark lenses firmly into place.

ELIZABETH
I'm not really a tea drinker.

She leans forward and reaches into Rachel's bag. She lifts out an object wrapped in a cloth napkin. She lays it on the table between the bags and unfolds the cloth. Inside is the kitchen knife she found earlier. Blood on the handle and blade stains the white napkin. She adjusts it so that it sits neatly.

She sits back and folds her hands in her lap.

END