

THE ESSENTIALS

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FADE IN:

INT. HOWARD'S APARTMENT - KITCHEN - NIGHT

HOWARD, late 40s, tired eyes and a scruff on his face, kisses his caring, pleasant-looking wife, DARLENE, who breast feeds an infant while sitting at the table.

DARLENE
You shouldn't have to go in.

As he slips into latex gloves...

HOWARD
Somebody's gotta run the joint.

DARLENE
Then call Lou. Or Joe.

HOWARD
Lou lives with his grandparents and
Joe has asthma. It's too risky.

DARLENE
Then just keep it closed.

He gives her another kiss on the forehead.

HOWARD
We need the money, Darlene.
Besides...

Howard slips into a Covid mask.

HOWARD (CONT'D)
... Our neighborhood needs us.
We're essential.

CUT TO BLACK:

OVER BLACK--

THE ESSENTIALS

FADE IN:

EXT. CORNER GROCERY - NIGHT

A quiet, urban neighborhood. The bodega's sign out front reads: GROCERIES, TOBACCO, LOTTERY & BEER.

INT. CORNER GROCERY - CONTINUOUS

A SHOPPING LIST - Written in black-ink: MILK. BREAD. EGGS.
Among other essentials.

CAMERON, late 20s, Covid mask covering his face, looks down
at the list. Then over a few display shelves.

He grabs a carton of eggs from a nearby display.

FRONT COUNTER

Seemingly the only one in the store, Cameron lifts a
transparent shower-curtain serving as a make-shift partition
between customer and cashier.

He sets his goods on the counter.

As the MASKED CASHIER bags the groceries...

MASKED CASHIER
Just give me seven, fif--

He freezes when he sees Cameron pointing a gun.

MASKED CASHIER (CONT'D)
Listen, I don't know how much cash
you think we carry here...

CAMERON
I don't want your money.

CHIT-CHAT from outside as MASKED PEDESTRIANS walk past the
store. Cameron keeps the gun low, waiting for them to walk
past completely.

CAMERON (CONT'D)
Just the food.

The Masked Cashier shrugs, finishes bagging the groceries.

MASKED CASHIER
I take it you're out of work
because of all this?

No response.

MASKED CASHIER (CONT'D)
We're all going through some rough
shit right now, you know...

CAMERON
That's why I'm letting you keep
your money.

The Masked Cashier slides over the grocery bag.

MASKED CASHIER

Well, I appreciate that. There should be more nice people like yourself. Supporting our local businesses and all.

Cameron catches his sarcasm while leaning forward to grab his grocery bag. But his eyes widen...

He sees Howard on the floor behind the counter, shot dead, blood trickling from his forehead.

Cameron points his gun firmly at the Masked Cashier, through the clear partition.

Then CLICK. Behind Cameron.

Another MASKED ROBBER presses a gun hard to the back of Cameron's head. But Cameron doesn't lower his firearm.

A tense stare-down between Cameron and the Masked Cashier.

CAMERON

I just wanna go home and feed my family. That's it.

MASKED CASHIER

Don't we all?

Another hush.

MASKED CASHIER (CONT'D)

How about you lower that gun?

CAMERON

Not until he lowers his.

The Masked Cashier studies Cameron's eyes.

MASKED CASHIER

If we let you go... you gonna say anything?

Cameron thinks about it. Then shakes his head.

The Masked Cashier looks to his partner in crime, motions for him to put his gun down - which he does.

MASKED CASHIER (CONT'D)

Okay. Go home to your family.

Cameron lowers his gun. The reaches in for his groceries, underneath the plastic partition...

But the Masked Cashier grabs Cameron's arm and draws a gun --

BOOM! He shoots Cameron in the head at close range, blood splatter dripping down the clear partition.

In a hurry, the Masked Cashier finishes dumping cash from the register into a bag.

Then hops over the counter, past Cameron's dead body, slumping to the floor.

And, in a flash, he and the other Masked Robber are gone.

EXT. CITY STREETS - MOMENTS LATER

The masked robbers casually walk along the sidewalk, guns concealed while easily blending in with the MASKED PEDESTRIANS strolling past them.

In the background, about a block behind them, there's a commotion in front of the store they just knocked off.

The Masked Cashier nudges his partner, motioning to an approaching taxi cab.

INT. TAXI CAB (MOVING) - MOMENTS LATER

The duo sits in the back, the Masked Cashier on the phone.

MASKED CASHIER

(into phone)

Hey, baby, I'll be home in a little bit. You want me to bring home a pizza or something?

(listens)

I got a little money.

(listens)

Cool, see you soon. Love you.

And he hangs up. Then looks around at his surroundings, a little confused.

The masked TAXI DRIVER eyes the duo through his mirror.

TAXI DRIVER

How you guys getting along through this Covid bullshit?

The duo trades a glance.

MASKED CASHIER
Ain't easy... but we're getting by.

TAXI DRIVER
I hear you. Shit, I can barely
afford gas. God damn news got
everyone shook. Nobody wants to
take a cab no more. Afraid they're
gonna catch something.

The middle-aged TAXI DRIVER shakes his head, frustrated.

TAXI DRIVER (CONT'D)
But we're essential, I guess.
Customers or no customers.

As he continues to drive, the Masked Cashier appears more and more confused.

MASKED CASHIER
Where are we going?

EXT. CITY STREETS - CONTINUOUS

The TAXI CAB pulls a sharp right, into an alley.

INT. TAXI CAB (PARKED) - CONTINUOUS

The Taxi Driver stops the car, the area shrouded in darkness.
He turns, points a gun into the backseat, at the pair.

TAXI DRIVER
I'll be taking your money, now.

Raising his eyebrow, the Masked Cashier looks to his counterpart. Signaling him with just a look.

Then turns back to the Taxi Driver.

TAXI DRIVER (CONT'D)
You boys should've took the subway.

As the Masked Cashier's counterpart moves for his piece --

POP! The Taxi Driver shoots him in the head, blood spatter dotting the Masked Cashier's face.

The Taxi Driver turns the gun on the wide-eyed Masked Cashier before he even gets a chance to reach for his waist.

A tense hush...

Horrified, the Masked Cashier looks to his friend, slumped in his seat. Dead. His face blown apart.

His scared eyes then look up at the Taxi Driver, who's masked face stares right back at him with evil intent.

TAXI DRIVER (CONT'D)

If I let you go... you promise not
to say anything?

The Masked Cashier just stares hopelessly at the gun-toting Taxi Driver. He knows this isn't going to end well.

CUT TO BLACK:

THE END