

TURN CARD

WRITTEN & DIRECTED
BY SAM RIDER



TURN
CARD

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ILOGILINE

Two recently released ex-cons partner up to study poker strategy and hustle cards in the seedy, underground poker clubs of New York City.

SYNOPSIS

OUR STORY FIRST FINDS LOTTO IN THE SHADOWS OUTSIDE A RUB-AND-TUG MASSAGE PARLOR IN A DIRTY ALLEY OF NEW YORK CITY.

Lotto is a twenty-five years old, Jamaican and willing to hustle any way he can to take care of his mother and siblings. Tonight he is working a con where he records men coming out of a "happy endings" massage parlor, follows them back to their homes and bribes them with the video footage. It's usually good for a few hundred bucks per night. But it doesn't work on Polley, a forty-five year old white guy with no reason to fear a video of his whereabouts. Lotto finds out that Polley has also recently been released from prison and just landed in a halfway house near Lotto's home in the projects.



SYNOPSIS

POLLEY IS IN A DESPERATE SCRAMBLE TO PUT HIS LIFE BACK TOGETHER.

His prison sentence cost him his marriage and he's trying to rescue his family home from foreclosure. His career in the carpenter's union was also hijacked by the felony on his record, but he knows how to play cards and he's going all-in on that being enough to save his family's house and get his life back on track. Polley pays Lotto to get him into some underground poker clubs, and there Lotto watches Polley make big money at these games. Polley's statistical understanding of the game and steadfast commitment to his formula steamrolls less skillful players. Lotto wants in, he wants to learn from Polley. At first Polley is disinterested, but finally sees that Lotto can help him make the money he needs to rescue his home. Lotto was once a scholarship kid at an

elite Brooklyn Heights prep school before being locked up for being in the wrong place at the wrong time. He's a quick study and he learns the statistical strategy of the game quickly. His time in prison and on the street have made him a shrewd observer of his competition. It's a stark difference to Polley's game, which only ever weighs the statistical information provided by the cards on the table.

Polley's desperation to get out of the halfway house subsides and he starts to show signs of enjoying his success in the poker games he is winning. He develops a relationship with Elly, a friend of Lotto's and a hustler with her own cons. Their time together starts to ease the pain of Polley's divorce.

With Polley's guidance, Lotto develops into a judicious, knowledgeable poker player, a shark.

BUT JUST AS LOTTO'S BANKROLL IS GETTING TO A PLACE WHERE HE CAN GIVE UP ON HIS OTHER SIDE-HUSTLES A SERIES OF INCIDENTS STYMIE BOTH POLLEY AND LOTTO'S PLANS.

A card game they are in gets robbed, leaving them in the hole. Lotto's sister's public school discovers the family has been falsifying their address, and Lotto needs to find money to get her into a school worth her potential. Polley gets into some trouble that jeopardizes his parole, which may result in him going back to prison. Lotto and Polley formalize their partnership, and Elly provides enough money to help them put a plan into action. It will require a three week, caffeine-and-cigarettes-infused marathon of poker. Polley must be able to get over his trust issues, and Lotto needs to stay focused on their egoless, team-oriented game strategy. They hit every game in town, but in the end, it's not enough. They've got half of what they need. In a crucial plot twist, Polley and Lotto agree to play each other heads up for everything they've made together. It's a visibly painful decision for both. Lotto proves what we've seen developing; he is the better poker player. He wins, he will be able to take care of his sister and family. He sees a future in poker that was unknown to him before befriending Polley. Polley's inability to solve his problems and read the situation ends up with him going back to prison.

Lotto drives him to the jailhouse.



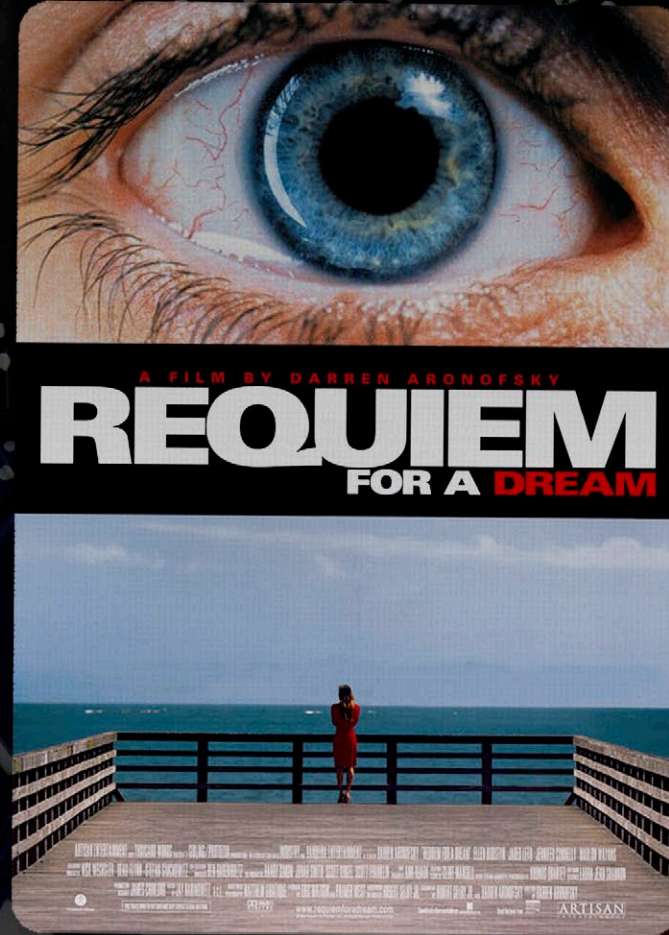
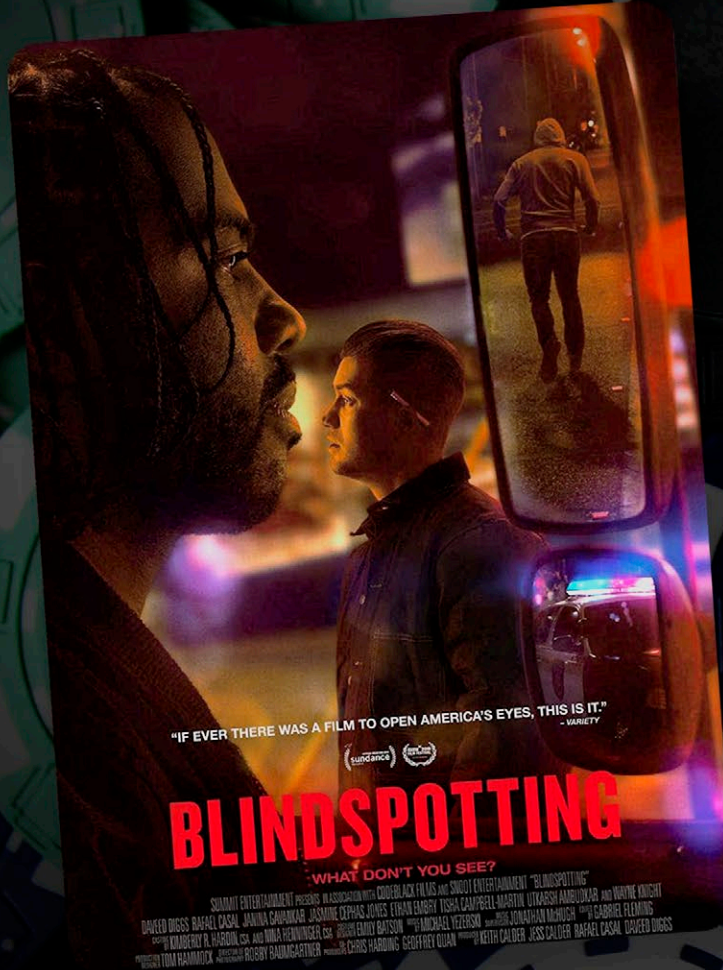
LOCATION

Our story takes place in the outer boroughs of New York. Our characters live in the projects and halfway houses of Brooklyn. It's dirty and raw, smeared with graffiti and locked up storefronts. The hardship of this existence is claustrophobic with constant reminders that as bad as it is, it can get always worse.

SHOOTING STYLE

Turn Card is painted in voyeuristic, wide tracking shots intercut with extreme-close up detail shots. This style is heavily inspired by the opening scenes of *Requiem for a Dream*. Our film will be shot in the shadows and darkness where our characters are forced to hunt for underground poker action. It will be a balanced mix of nighttime scenes in dark swaths of New York and inside poorly-lit, underground interiors.

COMPARABLE FILMS



2017 | Box office: \$5 Million 2000 | Box Office: \$7.4 Million 2002 | Box Office: \$242.9 Million

CHARACTERS

LOTTO IS A STREET HUSTLER WHO WORKS THE ANGLES TO TAKE CARE OF HIS JAMAICAN MOTHER AND TWO YOUNGER SIBLINGS.

Once this meant beating the system and navigating his way into a scholarship at an elite prep school. That path dried up when he got caught up with the wrong crowd at the wrong time and had to serve prison time. Now he uses his street smarts to find the financial gain in any situation. Until he meets Polley, this means small street hustles. He's thirsty for the big move that will lift him and his family out of their apartment in the projects.

When Lotto meets Polley and sees Polley's ability to make big money by hustling cards, Lotto wants in. He's got the analytic mind and work ethic to do the work to learn poker strategy. And ultimately we see that he has the rare gift of being able to scrutinize and judge his competition the way he's been reading the streets his whole life.

LOTTO

AGE: 25

CHARACTERS

POLLEY WAS A UNION CARPENTER WHO CLAWED HIS WAY OUT OF POVERTY BEFORE GOING AWAY TO PRISON.

Now he is out and starting over again in life. Our story starts with his release and his move into a Brooklyn halfway house. Instead of trying to work within the reentry system to rebuild his life with a felony on his record, he puts his time and energy into studying poker strategy and hustling cards at the low-skill, high-stakes games scattered throughout New York.

He has a very practical, calculating approach to his situation and his poker game. He's read all the poker books and he knows how to play by the probabilities of any hand. Polley thinks he can use this strategy to beat his situation alone. But we can see what he can not—he's not good enough to win big by playing the numbers alone. Ultimately he must decide to trust his partners if he wants to overcome his demons and win the money he needs to start a new life.

POLLEY

AGE: 45

CHARACTERS

She was thirteen when she left her family in a small farming community. Since then she has been all over the world and learned five languages. Her job title has changed many times: waitress, massage therapist, dancer, bartender. But the racket is always the same, do what you need to to get as much as you can out of lonely men and learn how to control the situation so that you don't get hurt.

She's used to being the alpha attraction wherever she works, but age is starting to take its toll and she's been looking for an exit strategy for a long time. Plenty of men have tried to seduce her with promises of security and comfort, but all future moves will be on her own terms.

Elly finds comfort in her easy relationship with Polley, and when she sees an opportunity to capitalize on the partnership between Polley and Lotto she seizes it. Her instincts have always worked in the past and this feels like a gamble that will work to her benefit one way or another. With a little luck she will be able to go back home, start a farm of her own and sink into an easy life reading her novels and practicing her photography.

ELLY
AGE: 31



**OVER THE LAST TEN YEARS, AMERICAN FILMS
HAVE STARTED TO TELL STORIES ABOUT
THE DISASTROUS EFFECTS THE PRISON
INDUSTRIAL COMPLEX HAS HAD ON AMERICAN
COMMUNITIES AND FAMILIES.**

There have not been enough stories made that focus on the hardships men and women feel when they are trying to start new lives after serving prison time. First and foremost, this film is a vehicle for showing how hard it is to start over after getting out of an American prison. I first got the itch to tell that story when I read Bruce Western's work on the American reentry system, "Homeward." With posts from Harvard and Columbia, he introduced me to people who shared their stories of reentry. This film wants to tell a story about the hardships people face when released from prison and the uphill battle that makes a successful re-entry back into society extremely difficult, a story of those in the shadows, in the projects, and in the halfway houses throughout the country.



AND OF COURSE, THIS IS A POKER MOVIE.

I learned poker playing for matchsticks on camping trips with my father, and I've been a casual player most of my life. Four years ago when my barber told me about his basement game in Brooklyn that had been robbed at gunpoint, I knew I wanted to find out more about that underground poker world in New York City. Since then I've been in these clubs playing, watching, and meeting characters who frequent the games. It's a world rife with drama, one that attracts characters from all different walks of life. I've seen a hedge fund executive fleece a cab driver for three months worth of driving wages, and I've seen a love affair develop between a down-on-his-luck-divorcee who rarely wins and a "massage girl" hired by the club to give "one-dollar-per-minute" massages to tables players. Every once in a while you meet a shark who's poker skill is so far advanced that he dominates the table. In a game where the best hand only wins twelve percent of the time, there are players who have studied the game so thoroughly that their training allows them to dominate any basement game. **TURN CARD** is the origin story of one of these players.

DIRECTOR STATEMENT

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