

The Man with a Shotgun



Director: Suzuki Seijun

Script: Matsuura Kenro, Ishii Kiichi

Based on a story by: Suyama Satoshi

Cinematography: Mine Shigeyoshi

Production Design: Satani Akiyoshi

Editing: Suzuki Akira

Music: Ikeda Masayoshi

Producer: Iwai Kaneo

Cast:

Ryoji: Nitani Hideaki

Setsuko: Ashikawa Izumi

Harue: Minamida Yoko

Masa: Odaka Yuji

Okumura, Setsuko's brother: Takahara Toshio

Nishioka: Tanaka Akio

Kuronuma: Sano Asao

Synopsis:

A stranger named Ryoji arrives at a village on Mount Shurei. He carries a shotgun and claims to have come for the hunting. Ostensibly, the local big shot Nishioka is merely in charge of a lumber mill, but for some reason he has a trio of shady gangsters working for him as bodyguards. He wants them to leave however, since they have caused so much trouble in the mountain village that the residents have deputized a sheriff. Okumura, who took the job, had wanted it since his wife was raped and murdered, and he is intent on finding the killer.

When Ryoji checks his shotgun behind the counter of the local saloon, he discovers a necklace familiar to him that was left at some point in lieu of payment. It is the necklace he gave to his fiancée before she was murdered in the Japanese Alps. He is travelling around in search of her killer. Harue, who runs the saloon and is also Nishioka's girlfriend, leads him to believe that the person who brought the necklace was Masa, a trigger-happy guy with whom Ryoji has already developed an instant rivalry. When Okumura gets injured and is incapacitated, Ryoji and Masa compete to be the new sheriff, and Ryoji ends up with the job. Nishioka hires Masa as his personal bodyguard.

Okumura's deceased wife had a younger sister, named Setsuko, and even though her brother bad-mouths Ryoji, she believes him to be a decent person. She goes to the tavern to look for him and is suddenly grabbed on all sides by wild men, as Harue looks on dispassionately. Ryoji comes to save her, asserting his new authority and then buying drinks for everyone. The trio of gangsters outwardly welcome Masa, but they are actually worried about Nishioka letting them go for real. Nishioka tells Masa the reason he hired him was to get rid of the three troublemakers.

Masa challenges Ryoji to a duel on Mount Shurei. Setsuko, who is developing feelings for Ryoji, begs him not to go. He suspects Masa of having been involved in his fiancée's murder however, and is desperate for more information. When Ryoji goes off for the duel, still-recovering Okumura comes out on the mountain too, asserting that he is the only real sheriff. Setsuko asks Kuronuma, who runs the local general store, to use his phone so she can alert the police. He offers to call on her behalf, but only pretends to do so, with his back to her, and she spies the truth in a nearby mirror. She tries to run but is kidnapped. In fact Kuronuma

is in cahoots with Nishioka and his gang.

Meanwhile Ryoji and Okumura come across a field of poppies. Masa appears and he and Ryoji commence their duel. Next the trio of gangsters arrives and then a small army of men sent by Nishioka opens fire on all of them. The three gangsters escape and make it back to Nishioka's place. Nishioka has been growing the poppies and turning it into heroin, and Kuronuma has been delivering it for him. He had kept this secret from the three gangsters, but they managed to figure it out, and now they search his office. They discover a tied-up Setsuko, whom they release, and the drugs, which they keep. They kill Nishioka when he goes to sound the alarm, and then they drive off.

Nishioka had intended to sell the drugs to a foreigner named Kim. The three bandits, with Setsuko as their hostage, head to the meeting point with Ryoji and Masa in separate pursuit. Ryoji obtains information that the place they intend to go is actually a lie told by Kuronuma, who had planned to rob them. Ryoji catches up with them at night and offers the information in exchange for getting them to agree to give up Setsuko. While they think he is sleeping, he overhears them confess to the rape and murder of both his fiancée and Setsuko's sister.

They reach Kim's seaside home, and after they make their deal, Ryoji tells the three that he knows the truth about the murders. Kim suggests they go down to the beach and fight it out. Setsuko doesn't want Ryoji to kill the three in cold blood and confesses her love for him but he sets out to fight them anyway. There is a gun battle in which all four go down, although no one is killed. Masa, who turns out to be a cop, arrives and arrests Kim, and then goes down to the beach for the other three. Ryoji throws the necklace into the sea. Ryoji gets into a passing jeep on a dirt road, waves goodbye to Setsuko, and drives away.