

A New Wind Over the Mountain Pass



Director: Suzuki Seijun

Script: Takahashi Niisan, Ikeda Ichiro, Morimoto Yoshihiko

Based on the novel by Himeda Yoshiro

Cinematography: Isayama Saburo

Editing: Suzuki Akira

Production Design: Chiba Kazuhiko

Music: Omori Seitaro

Producer: Yanagawa Takeo

Cast:

Funaki Shintaro: Wada Koji

Misako: Shimizu Mayumi

Megumi: Kariya Hideko

Imai Kinyo, their father: Morikawa Shin

Kinka, their mother: Hatsui Kotoe

Kurita: Sugi Kyoji

Ken: Kaneko Nobuo
Yamaguchi: Nihonyanagi Hiroshi
Akemi: Hoshi Naomi
Akita: Kondo Hiroshi

Synopsis:

Funaki Shintaro, a free-spirited student at Jonan University receives a heap of ladies underwear in place of a salary when the underwear factory he had been working at goes bankrupt. Not to pass up the opportunity, he decides to spend his summer vacation away from Tokyo, selling the underwear as one of the itinerant peddlers who travel from one local festival to the next, hawking their wares. Lacking the bus fare to reach the first festival, he hitches a ride with a magic troupe as they come up a mountain pass.

Arriving at their destination, Shintaro starts to set up shop in the middle of the outdoor fair but soon runs into trouble with the *tekiya*, the travelling merchants who preceded today's yakuza in Japan. They don't want anyone else selling on their turf. One boss however becomes charmed by Shintaro's youthful spirit and relents. Shintaro is a newbie and so as he haltingly commences to hawk his wares, he is soon joined by Ken, who proceeds to skillfully take his place and make a fair amount of money for Shintaro, that he then takes a commission on. The *tekiya* tell Shintaro that Ken is an *o-tebura* (literally "empty-handed"), a yakuza who travels around with no wares of his own, horning in on the business of others. Shintaro joins the *tekiya* in travelling by bus from town to town selling the underwear at festivals.

The magic troupe, lead by Kinyo, work hard at their skill of illusion, but the big audience draw is Akemi, a stripper. Presently she is promised bigger and better things by a white-suited yakuza with a limp named Akita, and she leaves the troupe, which includes her younger brother.

Kinyo's daughter Misako is the female star of the troupe, and she and Shintaro begin to take an interest in one another. Misako confesses to him that she feels she isn't made to be an artiste, and that she really just wants to go to Tokyo and live "the life of an ordinary girl."

Kinyo's wife Kinka is concerned about the leaving of Akemi but Kinyo asserts his confidence in his own skill as a magician being enough to keep them going. When they get to the next town however, the local theater is displeased that they lack a stripper, and there is talk of cancellation. Shintaro arrives by bus to the same town and spies Ken snooping around the troupe. He follows him to a secluded spot where he is preparing to murder Kurita, a clown member of the troupe, who apparently had formerly been a yakuza himself. Ken has been assigned the job of taking him out; it seems he is not an aimless *o-tebura*, but in fact a yakuza hit man with a very specific purpose in mind. Shintaro sneaks up on Ken from behind and cleverly keeps Kurita from being killed, at least this time.

The troupe is putting great hope in gaining support from Yamaguchi, an impresario in Aizuwakamatsu, Fukushima. When they meet him, he demands that they offer something as a stake in case the show fails, in exchange for his funding them. Kinyo, ever proud, wants to wager his career as a performer, but Yamaguchi insists Kinyo offer Misako's hand in marriage for Yamaguchi's mentally ill son. Misako on the other hand tells her father that if the show in fact succeeds, she plans to move to Tokyo afterwards. The implication is that she will move there with Shintaro. Kinyo begins earnestly practicing acts of escape for the big show, but when he has them tie him up in a box and lower it into the river, he is unable to escape in time and drowns.

Yamaguchi calls the bet off but this time Misako, wanting to put the show on just the same, re-offers herself as the prize if it fails. The troupe travels to Aizuwakamatsu, and Shintaro works hard at promoting it in local cafes. They've given it a more populist touch, adding jazz and reintroducing a strip act, into which Akemi unexpectedly reappears at the last minute. Akita too reappears, looking for Akemi, and his men and Shintaro (along with Ken and the *tekiya*) get into a big battle, with Akita and his men finally fleeing.

The show is a great success and Yamaguchi is delighted and offers them a good tour contract. Misako changes her mind about being an artiste, and decides to stay with the troupe. Ken goes to kill Kurita but when he shoots, he discovers that his gun is filled with blanks, placed there the day prior by Shintaro. Heretofore he has never "missed" when firing his gun, and after firing it once he feels it bad luck to do so again for the same hit, hence he considers the contract on Kurita done

and over with. Shintaro and Misako have an emotional parting, again on a mountain pass, where Shintaro gets off the troupe's truck to walk away alone, as the truck drives down in the other direction.

