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NOTES ON THE FILMS

1931

FLUNKY, WORK HARD

(KOSHIBEN GAMBARE), 1931,
28 min., b/w., silent; a.k.a., *Little Man, Do Your Best*.

Production: Shochiku Company (Kamata Studios) **Screenplay:** Mikio Naruse
Cinematography: Mitsuo Miura

Cast: Isamu Yamaguchi, Tomoko Naniwa, Seiichi Kato, Hideo Sugawara, Tokio Seki et al.

A father (Yamaguchi) wants to buy his son (Kato) the toy airplane he begs for, but in order to provide anything for his family at all he will have to make a life-insurance sale to a rich woman with five children. While he bows, flatters, cajoles and competes with another salesman to persuade the lady to insure her children, his own uninsured boy is hit by a train. Desperately regretting having scolded his son, the father buys the toy airplane to give to him in his hospital bed. At last the boy seems to revive.

A little melodrama that reveals many of the themes Naruse would develop in his later work. The affectionate look at the lower-middle classes that this film provides, and its touches of slapstick interspersed with a serious drama of economic class differences, compare very favorably with the films of Yasujiro Ozu of

the same era. In this first extant Naruse film, the director sketches out one of the types that will recur throughout his films: the domineering, complaining wife, as opposed to the submissive women in Ozu's films.

-- Audie Bock