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OZU



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X I FLUNKED BUT... (Rakudai wa shita keredo), 1930, silent, 65 minutes

Screenplay: Akira Fushimi. Photography and Editing: Hideo Shigehara.
Set Design: Yoneichi Wakita.

Cast: Tatsuo Saito (Takahashi), Kaoru Futaba (his landlady), Tomio Aoki (the landlady's son), Hiroo Wakabayashi and Ichiro Okuni (the professors), Kinuyo Tanaka (the shopkeeper's daughter), with Dekao Yokoo, Tokio Seki, Hiroshi Mikura, and Goro Yokoyama as the failing students and Ichiro Tsukita, Chishu Ryu, Fusao Yamada, and Kenji Satomi as the graduates.

A student preparing for an exam writes crib notes on his shirt, only to have his too-thoughtful landlady send it to the laundry on the day of the exam. At a loss, he flunks the test and fails to graduate, while one of his rooming house mates whom he has tutored for the test passes. His pals who pass and graduate can't find jobs, while he and several fellow flunkies are back for the next term, securely "employed" as cheerleaders.

I Flunked But... is a very free-and-easy film, full that rah-rah college spirit and some wonderfully done gags. Michigan and Ohio State pennants and a poster for the American film Charming Sinners adorn the rooming house walls. The more carefree students spend more time practicing their special college shuffle-step than they do studying, which means they have to put in a lot of effort at cheating on exams. And after our hero has failed to graduate, he wistfully asks his landlady's bespectacled son a question which reverberates sadly through all of Ozu's films: "What do you want to be when you grow up?" Says the lad, barely looking up from a book on American baseball, "I want to go to college and be a great man like you are. I'll flunk just like you did."