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T O K Y O D R I F T E R

Directed by Seijun Suzuki

Tetsu is a young gangster who values loyalty to his boss and hates men who have no sense of duty or gratitude. He has a reputation for being "a hurricane" when pushed to anger, and he is spoken of as leading a charmed life.

At the beginning of the film Tetsu tells a foe to go ahead and kill him and get it over with. He is challenged to use his gun but refuses. Since his boss, Kurata, disbanded their group, he is following his leader's example. He is no longer a gangster.

The Otsuka group knows that Kurata borrowed funds from Yoshii in order to acquire a building and go straight. Otsuka plots a legal means of getting the property away from Kurata. As the Otsuka men sit in a car discussing these matters, they notice a woman passing, who is identified as Chiharu, a singer who is in love with Tetsu.

Yoshii reminds Kurata that the promissory notes expires in three days. Kurata's manager says that the most he can raise by then is ¥3,000,000. He offers to rough up Yoshii but Kurata does not want to take that alternative now that they are no longer gangsters. Kurata praises Tetsu for enduring the punishment he suffered at the hands of the Otsuka group.

Tetsu visits Yoshii and asks if Kurata can pay ¥3,000,000 in cash and the remainder in notes over a period of several months. Yoshii, touched by the fact that Tetsu has come of his own accord because he feels that Kurata is like a father to him, finally agrees.

At the Manhole Jazz Tea Room, a couple embrace against the wall: Mutsuko, Yoshii's secretary, and Tanaka, one of the Otsuka gang. Tanaka promises to marry her if their plot succeeds.

The Otsuka group tricks Yoshii by impersonating Tetsu in a phonecall. They inform Kurata that Yoshii has asked Otsuka to pay Kurata's debt. Tetsu realizes they have been tricked.

In the confrontation between Otsuka and Kurata, Tetsu intervenes and suggests that he and Tatsu (the Otsuka gunman) call it quits for the day; Otsuka can keep the deed to the property for the time being.

Both Kurata and Otsuka worry about whether the police will find out who committed the murders. "Viper" Tatsu agrees to eliminate Tetsu and pursues him from the Alulu Club (where Chiharu works) to an auto wrecking yard. Tetsu instructs Tatsu to tell Otsuka that he, Tetsu, killed Yoshii's secretary; if Kurata's name is mentioned, Tetsu will reveal that Otsuka murdered Yoshii.

Tetsu asks Kurata to let him go, saying that if he stays, there will be more trouble and Tamura (another boss) will get involved.

Tatsu and other Otsuka men follow Tetsu, but Detective Sakai manages to reach him first. The local South group saves Tetsu, and their boss asks Tetsu to help in the conflict with the North group, who is headed by a pal of Otsuka.

Tetsu's life is saved by "Shooting Star." An exchange between Tetsu and this man reveals that Ken was once a member of the Otsuka group. Tetsu marvels that circumstances have led to his life being saved by a former enemy. He reproaches Shooting Star for having lost his sense of duty. Ken warns him not to trust Kurata too much.

In Kyushu, Tetsu seeks out Umetani, a friend of Kurata who has a club in Sasebo. When he learns that Shooting Star is there, he says he will be moving on. He tells Umetani that he hates ungrateful men.

After the death of the Viper (Tatsu), Shooting Star tells Umetani that he wants to save Tetsu the pain of being betrayed. Umetani believes that Kurata can be trusted.

In Tokyo, Otsuka promises Kurata the deed to the building on three conditions: 1) Kill Tetsu; 2) Lend Otsuka the building for ¥20,000,000; and 3) Give Chiharu to Otsuka. At first Kurata resists, but finally agrees to all conditions.

In the presence of Shooting Star, Umetani receives a call from Kurata ordering that Tetsu be killed. Ken tries to warn Tetsu but Tetsu will hear none of it. When Shooting Star proves his point Tetsu says he will go back to Tokyo.

"I want to see the truth with my own eyes. My dreams are shattered..."

After the last shootout, Tetsu tells Kurata, "I'm not your man any longer." Tetsu and Chiharu embrace, but Tetsu renounces her, saying that a drifter doesn't need a woman by his side.

The theme song is a popular song with plaintive lyrics about a drifter from Tokyo, a loner who knows not where his grave will be; but if he is doomed to die, he will die like a man, and for the sake of duty he is willing even to pass love by.