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# KINOSHITA/1953

## A Japanese Tragedy

*Nihon no higeki*



Shochiku Films (Ofuna Studios), 1953  
Black-and-White, standard screen.  
116 minutes

**Director:** Keisuke Kinoshita

**Producers:** Takashi Koide and  
Ryotaro Kuwata

**Screenplay:** Keisuke Kinoshita

**Photography:** Hiroshi Kusuda

**Art direction:** Kimihiko Nakamura

**Music:** Chuji Kinoshita

**Assistant Director:** Yoshio Kawazu

### CAST:

**Haruko Inoue:** Yuko Mochizuki

**Utako, her daughter:** Yoko Katsuragi

**Seiichi, her son:** Masami Taura

**Tatsuya, street musician:** Keiji Sata

**Sato, a cook:** Taiji Takahashi

**Akazawa, an English teacher:**  
Ken Uehara

**Mrs. Akazawa:** Sanae Takasugi

**Yoko, the Akazawa's daughter:**  
Keiko Kahei

**Wakamaru, a geisha:** Keiko Awaji

Using innovative insertions of newspaper headlines and newsreel footage, Kinoshita fashions a melodrama that levels sharp criticism at the growing coldness of Japanese society in the postwar era. The form is that of the *haha-mono* ("mother drama"), the genre that pays tribute to the self-sacrifice of the long-suffering mother, but the breadth of the social commentary makes this film one of the finest of its kind.

Haruko Inoue, who lost her husband in the Pacific War, has worked at every kind of degrading occupation to provide for her two children. She is uneducated and trusting, and as a result loses possession of her land—her only asset—to her unscrupulous brother-in-law. He also takes custody of her children, promising to raise them in comfort but in reality allowing his wife to mistreat them and teach them to despise their mother for abandoning them in order to "have a good time in her flashy clothes." By the time they are young adults, the children have learned to believe only in money, while their mother continues to work long hours in the hot spring resort of Atami so that she can send them to school in Tokyo. Both children, Utako studying sewing and English and Seiichi studying medicine, use their education as an excuse to wheedle more money out of their mother while living out of her sight.

Utako was raped while quite young and hates men as a result. She takes her revenge by seducing her English teacher, Akazawa, and ruining his family life. Seiichi meanwhile decides to become the adopted son of a wealthy physician who lost his son during the war. When the distraught mother comes

to Tokyo because of Utako's problems, Seiichi is concerned only with getting the family registration records changed.

Completely rejected by her children, Haruko throws herself in front of an oncoming train. Only her two friends back in Atami, a street musician and the inn's cook, remain to speak well of her.

