

Always—Sunset on Third Street 2

ALWAYS zoku San-chome no yuhi (ALWAYS 続・三丁目の夕日)

Color / Vista / 2007 / 146 min / Always—Sunset on Third Street 2 Film Partners: NTV, Robot, Shogakukan, Vap, Toho, Dentsu, YTV, The Yomiuri Shimbun, Shirogumi, Imagica

Director: Yamazaki Takashi

Script: Yamazaki Takashi

Kosawa Ryota

Based on the manga by: Saigan Ryohei

Cinematography: Shibasaki Kozo

Production Design: Jojo Anri

VFX Director: Shibuya Kiyoko

Music: Sato Naoki

Executive Producers: Abe Shuji

Okuda Seiji

Producers: Ando Chikahiro

Yamagiwa Shinpei

Takahashi Nozomu

Kurata Takaya

Cast:

Hoshino Mutsuko: Horikita Maki

Suzuki Ippei: Koshimizu Kazuki

Suzuki Norifumi, his father: Tsutsumi Shinichi

Suzuki Tomoe, his mother: Yakushimaru Hiroko

Suzuki Mika, his cousin: Koike Ayame

Chagawa Ryunosuke: Yoshioka Hidetaka

Furuyuki Junnosuke: Suga Kenta

Kawabuchi Yasunari, his father: Kohinata Fumiyo

Ishizaki Hiromi (Betty): Koyuki

Nakayama Takeo, Mutsuko's friend: Asari Yosuke

Ota Kin: Motai Masako

Dr. Takuma Shiro: Miura Tomokazu

Setting: Tokyo, 1959

Synopsis:

As the film opens, a giant lizard is destroying a working-class neighborhood in Tokyo, upending streetcars and crushing local businesses and shops. But it is only another fantasy from the mind of Chagawa Ryunosuke, the pulp writer who has taken in Junnosuke, the once-abandoned son of a wealthy international businessman. Across the street, mechanic Suzuki Norifumi's wife, Tomoe, has news for their son, Ippei: Ippei's cousin Mika will be coming to stay with them while her father works through some financial difficulties. Ippei is not looking forward to having a girl in the house, and

especially not one raised in money who looks down on the entire family. Chagawa faces pressure on two fronts: Junnosuke's father is threatening to take him back, while the love of his life, Hiromi, has disappeared. Meanwhile, Suzuki's assistant mechanic, Mutsuko, has blossomed into a young woman, and is attracting attention from fellow displaced northerner Takeo, an apprentice chef. Suzuki nervously awaits his regimental reunion, wondering whatever happened to his friend Ushijima, while Chagawa is mocked at his college reunion as a hack writer. Suzuki is overjoyed to find that Ushijima is alive and well, and invites him back to his house for an evening of drinking, during which Ushitori tells him they don't need to mourn the dead forever. The next day, Suzuki discovers that he had come home alone, drunk. Chagawa finds out that Junnosuke has been using his lunch money to pay the household bills and finds out that Hiromi is working as a stripper under the alias Asaoka Betty; he determines that the way out of his troubles is to take one last shot at the Akutagawa Prize, Japan's most famous literary honor. Takeo is disturbed to see Mutsuko all dressed up for a "date," but as it turns out she is simply going out to a "Yujiro" film in Ginza with her friends; she hears from one of them, however, that Takeo has been fired for delinquency.

Tomoe runs into an old flame on Nihonbashi bridge, where they had promised to meet. She forgets him over home movies of Ippei as a baby, and with the sudden news that Chagawa has indeed been nominated for the Akutagawa! A man claiming to be from the prize committee visits Chagawa and tells him that a small donation will be necessary to grease the wheels; the entire neighborhood chips in, and the man tells Chagawa that the prize will surely be his. Hiromi visits while he is away to return the empty ring box he had given her as a promise before she gets on a train to start a new life in Osaka. Everyone else gathers to wait for the call announcing the prize, including Junnosuke's father, who is determined to take back his son if Chagawa loses, which he does. As the father grabs Junnosuke, the neighborhood rallies around Chagawa, admitting one by one that they had read his story, which is all about Hiromi. Hiromi has read it, too, and returns for good. Junnosuke's father, seeing this, leaves without saying a word. The Suzuki's finally go to the top of Tokyo Tower together.

Notes:

A sequel as good as the original, *Always 2* shows off the directorial and special-effects talents of Yamazaki Takashi. Viewers familiar with postwar Japanese cinema will see loving references to some of the great films of the era, including *Godzilla* (directed by Honda Ishiro, 1954), *Ugetsu* ("Ugetsu monogatari," directed by Mizoguchi Kenji, 1953), and separated-would-be-lovers films such as *What Is Your Name?* ("Kimi no na wa," directed by Oba Hideo, 1953-54). The film was nominated in almost every major category at the 2008 Japan Academy Awards, and Yoshioka Hidetaka picked up his second best-actor win for the role of Chagawa. Chagawa Ryunosuke and Furuyuki Junnosuke are plays on the names of famous writers Akutagawa Ryunosuke (after whom the prize is named) and Yoshiyuki Junnosuke.