



# Shoplifters

**Director:** Hirokazu Kore-eda

**Country:** Japan

**Date:** 2017

*A review by Robbie Coltrane for The Daily Telegraph:*

The Japanese director Hirokazu Kore-eda is best known in Britain for his keenly observed tales of the consolations and heartbreaks of ordinary family life. *Shoplifters*, which screened in competition at Cannes this morning, initially appears to be more of the same – except it’s hard to fathom how its family members connect. The age and gender spread of the Shibatas is nothing suspicious: there is a man and a woman, a little boy, an older girl and a much older lady, all living in a rented bungalow tucked out of sight in the Tokyo suburbs.

Yet much like the state of their house itself, which is piled high with crumpled clothes and cartons, there is something unplaceably ramshackle about this group’s living arrangements. “We’re related here,” Osamu (Lily Franky) tells young Shota (Jyo Kairi), patting his heart, “but not here,” he adds, pointing to a lower body part. So what is going on?



That mystery ticks away like a watch in the breast pocket of this outstanding domestic drama, crafted by Kore-eda with crystalline insight and an unsparing emotional acuity, and shot in a way that finds breath-quickenning beauty in an untidy living room or a faded corner shop. The story begins with the loveably down-at-heel Shibatas discovering a five-year-old girl foraging for scraps on a fire escape. Her name is Yuri (Miyu Sasaki), and when Osamu and his partner Nobuyo (Sakura Ando) come across her on a late-night stroll, they take her in as another couple might a stray pet, filling her empty belly with hot croquettes and gluten cake.

Yet they don’t contact the authorities, not even when her disappearance becomes a national news story two months later. Instead they cut her hair and treat her as a daughter: Osamu even starts taking her on his father-son shoplifting trips with Shota, on which the pair glean the family’s meals of instant ramen pots and cobbled-together stews, which they devour en masse amid coils of steam and much appreciative slurping every night. (As in so many Kore-eda films, the food in *Shoplifters* quietly speaks volumes about the people preparing and eating it, and also makes you incredibly hungry.)

Otherwise, they barely scrape by on what should be more than enough: Nobuyo and Osamu’s earnings from their jobs at a laundry and building site, plus the pension payments chipped in by wily grandmother Hatsue (Kirin Kiki). The older girl Aki (Mayu Matsuoka) works at an odd red light district venue, stripping for clients who are only murkily visible on the other side of a two-way mirror, although she is permitted to keep her wages for herself.



By observing the Shibatas going about their strange, below-radar existence against the always pertinent backdrop of the changing seasons, Kore-eda returns to the questions of survival on society’s margins and the nature and durability of family bonds which he

previously examined in *Nobody Knows* (2004) and *Like Father, Like Son* (2013). But as more details of their curious circumstances come to light, these themes take some thrillingly unexpected turns.

Kore-eda may also more sensually engaged with his characters than ever before: in one sumptuously sexy sequence, Nobuyo and Osamu impulsively make love during a summer rain storm while they have the house to themselves. While the camera politely peels away for the deed itself, it comes back to soak up the afterglow, luxuriating in the lingering heat and sweat of the just-vanished moment. There are some sweetly faltering father-son conversations between Osamu and Shota about his growing awareness of the opposite sex, which are as subtly and touchingly played as everything else here. *Shoplifters* is compassionate, socially conscious filmmaking with a piercing intelligence that is pure Kore-eda. This is a film that steals in and snatches your heart.

*From: <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/films/0/shoplifters-review-a-thrilling-beautiful-tale-toykos-down-and/>*