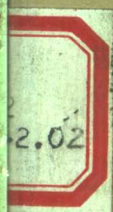




SUNRISE

TSAO YU



SUNRISE

TSAO YU

A Play in Four Acts

FOREIGN LANGUAGES PRESS
PEKING

PUBLISHER'S NOTE

Sunrise is a four-act play written by the famous contemporary Chinese playwright Tsao Yu in 1935. His first play, *Thunderstorm*, written in 1933, was published in English and French by our Press in 1958. *Sunrise*, the author's second play, describes the dark life of the Chinese people during the period from 1931 to 1935 under the reactionary rule of the Kuomintang. Through all these years the play has been widely acclaimed. It is regarded as one of the outstanding works of the new Chinese literature which came into being after the May 4th Movement in 1919. The present translation is based on the first edition published by the Chinese Drama Press in Peking in 1957.

Characters Offstage

A fat man and his friends.

An itinerant gramophone-player.

A paper-boy.

A fruit-seller and other hawkers of various other foodstuffs.

A crying infant.

A street-singer and a man who accompanies her on the two-stringed fiddle.

An attendant who announces the girls' names.

Two minstrel-beggars (singers of *shulapao*).

A wandering singer of Peking opera.

A watchman beating a wooden gong.

Men and women making merry.

A shortbread seller.

A customer singing "You Called Me Your Little Sweetheart" before the curtain falls.

A woman weeping softly.

TIME AND PLACE

ACT I Half past five one morning in early spring. The luxuriously-furnished sitting-room of a suite in X Hotel.

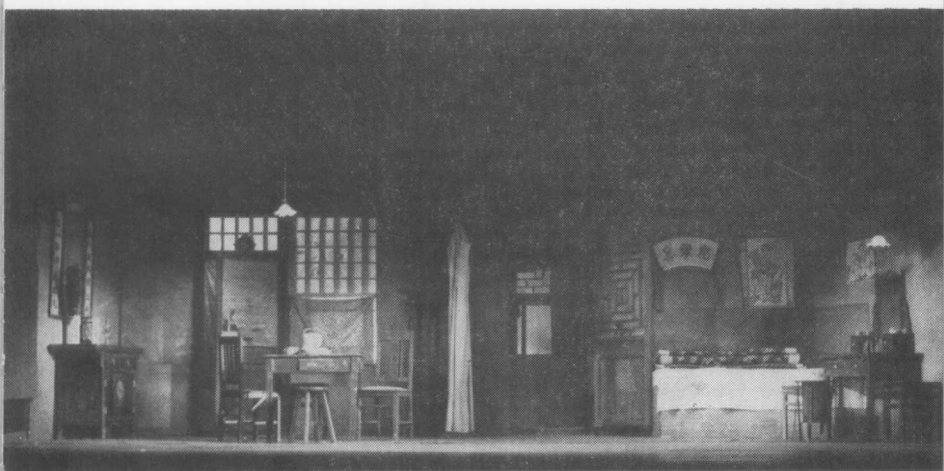
ACT II The same at five in the afternoon.

ACT III A third-class brothel, a week later at about twelve o'clock in the evening.

ACT IV The same as Act I, at about four o'clock the next morning.



Stage setting for Act I.

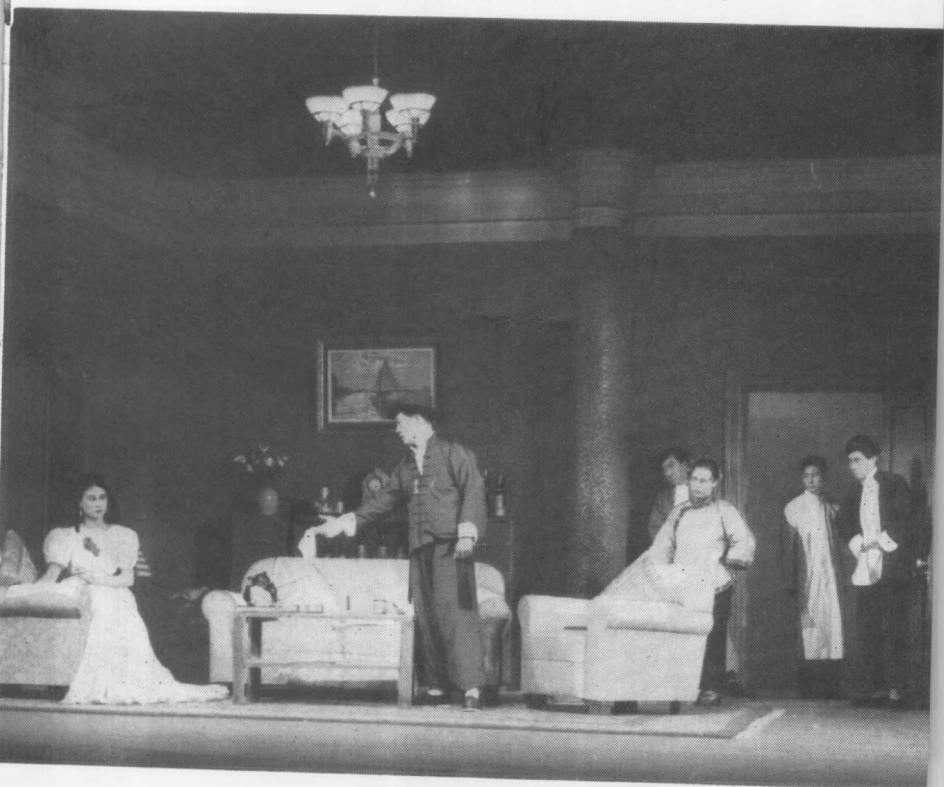


Stage setting for Act III.



Ta-sheng: If only you'd come with me you could be as happy and free as you ever were. (Act I)

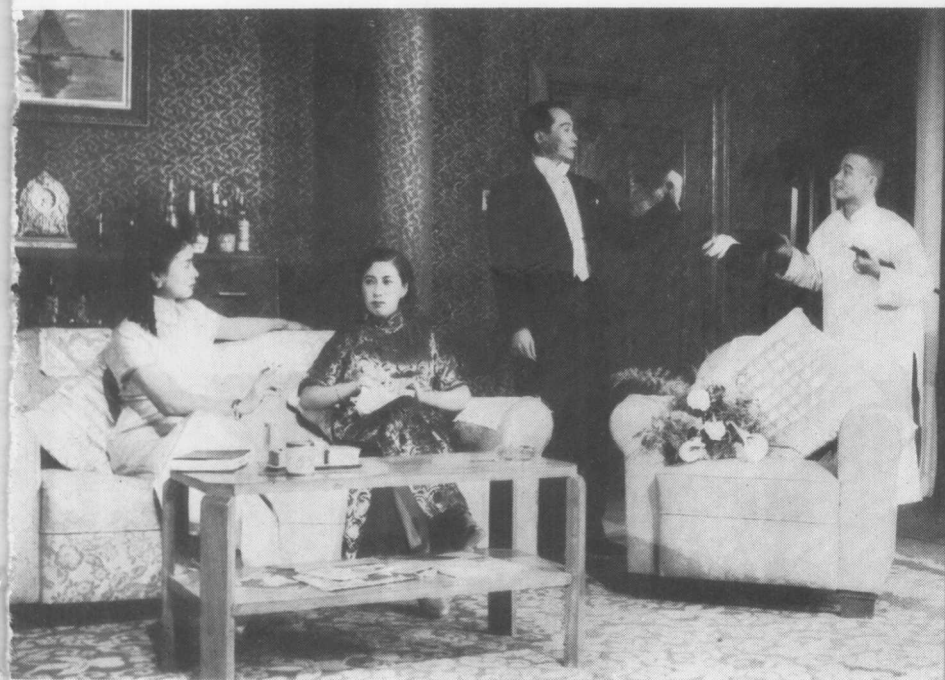
Black San: But look, we found a handkerchief
that she'd dropped outside your door. (Act I)

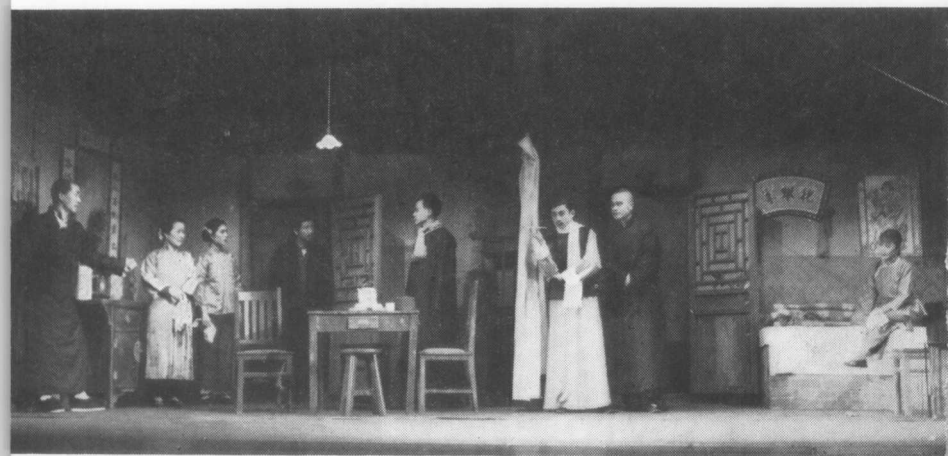




Pai-lu: . . . The sun is risen. . . . (Act I)

Georgy: Tell them in the next room that I
won't be joining them for mahjong. (Act II)





Black San: Here you are, sir, this
must be your girl-friend. (Act III)

Hu Sze: See this? I'm not short of money. (Act III)





Li: Then it appears, sir, that you're not prepared to keep your word to me. (Act IV)

ACT I

The luxuriously-furnished sitting-room of a suite in the X Hotel. In the centre a door opening on to a passage; on the right (i.e. actors' right, so audience' left) a door leading to the bedroom; on the left another leading to the reception-room. Let into the back wall, towards the right-hand corner, is a large oblong window with a rounded top. Tall buildings cluster tightly round the outside of the window, so that even in the daytime the room is overdark, despite the window's generous proportions. Except for a slight brightening of the room when the slanting rays of the sun find their way in in the morning, not a gleam of natural light is visible all day long.

The room is decorated and furnished throughout in a bizarre, modernistic style whose superficiality and forced effects arouse one's curiosity but give one absolutely no feeling of restfulness. In the centre stands a small table with ash-trays, cigarettes and so on, and strewn around it is an array of arm-chairs and stools of various shapes — square, round, cube-shaped, conical. Scattered over these are chaotically-coloured cushions. Along the wall under the cornerless window is a moire sofa. On the left are a wardrobe, a food cupboard and a small table on which are a number of women's cosmetics placed there for immediate use. On the walls are several garish nudes, a calendar and a copy of the hotel regulations. The floor is littered with newspapers, illustrated magazines, bottles and cigarette-ends. Various articles of feminine attire — hats, scarves, gloves and so on — lie about on the chairs and the top of the wardrobe. Among them is the occasional male garment. The top of the food cupboard is a welter of bottles, glasses, thermos flasks and teacups. In the right-hand corner stands a reading-lamp, and beside it is a small round table consisting of one glass shelf above another and

holding ash-trays and the kind of knick-knacks that women are fond of, among them a European doll and a Mickey Mouse.

In the centre of the back wall is a shining silver-coloured clock which is now at half past five, the time when darkness has almost left the sky. When the curtain rises the only illumination is a pool of light from the reading-lamp by the sofa. Yellow curtains are drawn over the window, so that the details of the arrangement of the room are not yet clearly discernible.

Leisurely footsteps approach along the passage. The centre door creaks half-open. Chen Pai-lu comes in and switches on the ceiling-light in the centre, filling the room with a sudden blaze of light. She is dressed in an extremely smart evening gown of gay colours; its many-pleated skirt and the two long pink ribbons attached to it trail behind her like a diaphanous cloud. She wears a red flower in her jet-black hair, which has been waved into two loose buns that resemble those of a little girl and fall over her ears. Her eyes are bright and attractive, her movements are dainty and alert, and a mocking smile is always on her lips. But her expression from time to time betrays weariness and distaste; this weariness of life is a characteristic of rootless women like her. She loves life, but she also detests it. She has come to realize that the ways of life she has become accustomed to are the cruelest of shackles and, however much she may long for freedom, these shackles will always prevent her from escaping from the net of her environment. She has tried several times to escape, but in the end, like the proverbial bird that has become so accustomed to its gilded cage that it has lost the ability and the desire to fly in freedom among the trees, she has each time returned to the sordid confines of the life she had left, though with the greatest of reluctance.

She now moves with weary, dragging steps to the centre of the stage. She yawns, covering her mouth with her right hand.

CHEN PAI-LU *(looking back towards the door after a few steps): Come on in! (She tosses her bag down and leans against the back of the sofa in the middle of the room. Frowning, she takes off her high-heeled silver shoes and*

gently massages her slender feet with evident relief. Now that she is home at long last there's nothing for it but to flop down on a soft sofa and relax. Suddenly, she realizes that the person behind her has not followed her in. Slipping on her shoes, she jumps up and turns round with one leg still kneeling on the sofa and smile towards the door.) I say, why don't you come in?

(Now, someone does come in — Fang Ta-sheng. He is about twenty-seven or eight years old, frowning disagreeably and dressed in a European overcoat which shows signs of wear. Looking in on the disordered state of the room, he stands in the doorway without uttering a word, though whether on account of tiredness or of distaste is not clear. But Pai-lu misinterprets his hesitation and as she stares intently at him she thinks she detects an expression of alarm and suspicion.)

PAI-LU: Come right in. What are you afraid of?

FANG TA-SHENG *(calmly)*: I'm not afraid of anything. *(Suddenly uneasy)* There's nobody in here, is there?

PAI-LU *(looking all round, teasing him)*: Who knows? *(Looking across at him)* No, probably not.

TA-SHENG *(with distaste)*: Sickening. Can't get away from people in this place.

PAI-LU *(trying to unsettle him, and also of course because his attitude annoys her)*: Anyway, what if there were anyone here? You can't very well fight shy of people while you're in this place!

TA-SHENG *(looking across at her, then looking around him)*: So this is where you've been living all these years.

PAI-LU *(challengingly)*: What do you mean, is there something wrong with it?

TA-SHENG *(slowly)*: Um — *(feeling that he has no alternative)* no, no, it's all right.

PAI-LU *(smiling at the nonplussed way he just stands and stares)*: Why don't you take your things off?

TA-SHENG *(suddenly taking a hold of himself)*: Oh, er, — my things? *(Unable to think of a suitable reply)* No, I haven't, I haven't taken them off.

PAI-LU (*amused at his manner*): I know you haven't. What I mean is, why are you being so formal that you won't even take your overcoat off without being asked?

TA-SHENG (*unable to find an explanation to offer, somewhat embarrassed*): Er — don't you find it a bit chilly in here?

PAI-LU: Chilly, you say? It seems very hot to me.

TA-SHENG (*seeking to distract her attention from himself*): Perhaps you didn't close the window properly, could that be it?

PAI-LU (*shaking her head*): Couldn't be. (*She goes over and pulls back the curtains to reveal the window with its stream-lind frame.*) Look, it's shut tight. (*With sudden delight as she looks out of the window*) I say, look! Come and look!

TA-SHENG (*going across hurriedly, not knowing what she means*): What is it?

PAI-LU (*drawing her finger across the glass*): Look, frost! Frost! It's odd, having frost when spring's already here.

TA-SHENG (*giving up*): Yes, very odd.

PAI-LU (*elatedly*): I love frost! Remember how I liked it when I was little? Isn't it beautiful, really lovely! (*Pointing suddenly, like a child*) Look, look at that, isn't that me?

TA-SHENG: Eh? (*Craning forward*) Who?

PAI-LU (*pointing excitedly at the window*): I mean the frost on the window, this bit. (*Annoyingly, he looks at the wrong place.*) No, this bit. Look, isn't that two eyes? This sticking out is a nose, and where it goes in there is a mouth, and this patch is the hair. (*Clapping her hands*) Look at the hair, isn't it me exactly?

TA-SHENG (*like a blind man*): I can't see that it's like you.

PAI-LU (*downcast*): Oh, you! You're still as pigheaded as ever. You're impossible.

TA-SHENG: Am I? (*With a sudden smile*) I've been looking at you all night but just now was the first time you've been like you used to be.

PAI-LU: What do you mean?

TA-SHENG (*an expression of happiness coming into his face*): You're still the little girl that you used to be.

PAI-LU (*her high spirits of a moment ago suddenly pass away like a breath of wind. She sighs and says as if broken by age*): Was there once a time when I was like that, Ta-sheng? Was I really a happy little girl once?

TA-SHENG (*understanding her state of mind, encouragingly*): If only you'd come with me you could be as happy and free as you ever were.

PAI-LU (*shaking her head, in the voice of one who has long experienced the hard knocks of life*): Humph, where is there any freedom?

TA-SHENG: You — (*He looks at her and thinks better of it. He walks up and down a few steps then stops and looks about him.*)

PAI-LU (*having now recovered her accustomed air of detachment*): What are you looking at now?

TA-SHENG (*with a brief smile*): This place you've got here, it's quite nice.

PAI-LU (*she realizes what is in his mind but does not think it worth making excuses. She casually picks up a cushion that is lying at her feet and drops it on the sofa, at the same time kicking under the sofa an empty wine-bottle that has been left lying on the floor. She says offhandedly*): Somewhere to live, it's good enough for that. (*She yawns involuntarily.*) Tired?

TA-SHENG: No, I'm all right. — I was sitting down all the time while you were dancing with those people.

PAI-LU: Why didn't you join in the fun?

TA-SHENG (*coolly*): I don't dance, and these friends of yours looked mad to me, every one of them.

PAI-LU (*with a slightly unnatural laugh*): Mad's the word! That's the sort of mad life I lead, day in, day out. (*The crowing of a cock is heard in the distance.*) There's a cock crowing already.

TA-SHENG: That's odd, hearing a cock crow in a place like this.

PAI-LU: There's a market quite near. (*Glancing at her watch and looking sharply up again*) Guess what the time is.