

# BRIGHT SKIES

*Tsao Yu*

FOREIGN LANGUAGES PRESS  
PEKING 1960

## EDITOR'S NOTE

*Bright Skies* is a three-act play written in 1954 by Tsao Yu, China's leading contemporary playwright. It describes how after liberation the doctors and professors of a medical college, originally founded by American imperialists in Peking, through the exposure of certain facts and with the help of the Party, gradually shook off their old ideology of subservience to the U.S. and began to recognize the cultural aggression of the American imperialists for what it really was. Inspired and educated by the Party they finally drew a line between the enemy and their own people and embarked on the new road of service to the people.

This translation is made from the first printing of the first edition of the Chinese text published by the People's Literature Publishing House in 1956. The photographic illustrations are taken from the staging of the play by the Peking People's Art Theatre.

## Characters in the Play

LING SHIH-HSIANG, a specialist in bacteriology, aged over fifty.

LING MU-LAN, his daughter, an eye specialist aged over twenty.

HO CHANG-CHUAN, a lecturer in bacteriology and assistant to Ling Shih-hsiang, aged about thirty.

CHIANG TAO-TSUNG, Dean of Yen Jen Medical College, aged about fifty.

HSU MU-MEI, his wife who is director of the sick-nursing department, aged forty.

YUAN JEN-HUI, a nurse, the Chiangs' adopted daughter, aged thirty.

CHEN HUNG-YU, head of the eye department and concurrently head of the medical service department, aged over forty.

TUNG KUAN-SHAN, post-liberation superintendent of Yen Jen Hospital, aged over forty.

SUN YUNG, a physician in his thirties.

YU HSIAO-FENG, an eye specialist in his thirties.

SUNG CHIEH-FANG, a surgeon aged about fifty.

CHAO SHU-TEH, an old worker aged over fifty.

WANG HSIU-CHEN, his wife, suffering from rickets, aged over forty.

CHAO TIEH-SHENG, his son, a worker, aged nineteen.

COMMISSAR CHUANG, political commissar of a regiment of the Chinese People's Volunteers, aged over thirty.

LIU MA-LI, secretary to Jackson, an American physician, aged over forty.

LI TING, a Young Pioneer.

HO CHIN, a Young Pioneer.

LAO CHANG, a janitor, of middle age.

ADJUTANT MA, adjutant to a Kuomintang army commander,  
aged about forty.

A WOMAN TYPIST.

A WOMAN TECHNICIAN.

A NURSE.

SEVERAL STUDENTS.

SPECIAL AGENT A, head of the special agents.

SPECIAL AGENT B, tall in stature.

SPECIAL AGENT C, short in stature.

SPECIAL AGENT D.

OLD YANG, a patient.

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## ACT ONE

### SCENE 1

Place: The anteroom leading to the office of Jackson, an  
American physician in Yen Jen Hospital.

Time: The end of 1948.

### SCENE 2

Place: The same, now used as Superintendent Tung's office.

Time: One Sunday after National Day in 1949.

## ACT TWO

### SCENE 1

Place: Ling Shih-hsiang's sitting room.

Time: July 1952.

### SCENE 2

Place: Chiang Tao-tsung's drawing room.

Time: Three days later.

## ACT THREE

### SCENE 1

Place: Commissar Chuang's hospital ward.

Time: The next day.

### SCENE 2

Place: Ling Shih-hsiang's sitting room.

Time: Two weeks later.

# Act One

## SCENE 1

*It is December 1948, during the period of the Third Revolutionary Civil War.*

*After the end of the people's War of Resistance to Japanese Aggression, the American imperialists continued to work hand in glove with the Kuomintang in an attempt to turn China into their colony. The Kuomintang reactionaries decided to launch an anti-Communist civil war. Disregarding the people's desire for peace and democracy, they violated their agreement to defend peace at home and launched an all-out attack on the liberated areas upon which the people throughout the country had fastened their greatest hope. During the Revolutionary Civil War, the people all over the country became increasingly aware that it was impossible for them to obtain peace, democracy and independence from the U.S.-controlled Chiang Kai-shek regime. It was not until the Chinese Communist Party had, with the greatest efforts and patience, opened the eyes of the people to this fact that they began to thoroughly understand that, if they wanted to exist, they must overthrow Chiang Kai-shek, chase away U.S. imperialism and rely completely on the Chinese Communist Party which had persistently striven for peace.*

*It became evident which side was winning popular support. Justice was on the side of the Chinese People's Liberation Army. The Kuomintang, backed by U.S. aid, unleashed the war in 1945. But by 1947, the Chinese People's Liberation Army took the offensive. They*

started large-scale offensives first in the Shansi-Hopei-Shantung-Honan sector and later in the Northeast and other war areas. The nature of the Revolutionary Civil War underwent a change.

This play begins in December 1948 when the Revolutionary Civil War was at its height. The whole of North-east China had been liberated following the victory of the battle of Shenyang in Liaoning Province. Down in the south the large-scale Huai-Hai battle was raging in the neighbourhood of Hsuehchow. Almost simultaneously, the Chinese People's Liberation Army in the north was engaged in a battle to liberate Tientsin and was laying siege to the city of Peking.

The people in this besieged city, living in terror under extremely reactionary rule and groaning in dire poverty, were anxiously awaiting the end of their suffering and tension. Railway communication had been cut off. The droning of aeroplanes was heard incessantly overhead. Skymasters<sup>1</sup> were operating around the clock, carrying reactionary officials, officers and special agents together with their families and valuables to places like Shanghai, Hongkong, Taiwan and the U.S.A. Commodity prices jumped many times each day. From morning till night pathetic poverty-stricken crowds lined up in the streets scrambling to buy whatever food they could get. Disbanded soldiers were looting everywhere. Inhabitants were pressganged to dig trenches and construct aerodromes. Armoured cars and bands of soldiers armed to the teeth were prowling about on the streets. Special agents were out to have their own way and, seeing themselves doomed to failure, they became even more savage and cruel. The people were indignant, anxiously looking forward to their liberation. In the midst of terrific darkness, they did not lose heart, but courageously made all sorts of preparations to greet the coming dawn. How-

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<sup>1</sup> Huge U.S.-made transport planes.

ever, some acted quite differently. Years of American cultural aggression had long differentiated them from the real Chinese people. Hidden away in the dark recess of their minds were evil, mean and selfish ideas. Some were so thick-skinned that they did not have an inkling of the new society at hand. Among these, however, some were specialists and higher intellectuals — people whom China needed for national construction in the days to come. This play reveals how Chinese intellectuals remoulded their own ideology in this period of radical change, and how, after gradually shaking off the fetters of their old ideology, they eventually found the way to become intellectuals of a new type.

The place is the anteroom to the office of Jackson, an American doctor at Yen Jen Medical College, which is part of the American organization for cultural aggression against China.

It is around 4 o'clock on a winter afternoon. Outside it is snowing hard. It is evident that previously everything in the office must have been kept in perfect order. Now, however, some corners of the room are occupied by piles of suitcases of different sizes which present an incongruous sight in Dr. Jackson's office. The suitcases still bear coloured labels pasted all over them by hotels in various European and American cities. The room looks warm, with radiators on both the right- and left-hand walls turned on. In the middle of the far wall is a window and a door leading outside to a corridor where patients walk to and fro. Through the steel-framed windows of the corridor the bare twigs of poplars can be seen swaying against the gloomy sky. The north wind is hurling snowflakes thick and fast against the windows. A long, clumsy wooden bench stands against the wall to the left of the door. A young woman typist is typing away at a small desk to the right of the centre door. The place where she sits is dim even in the daytime so that the desk lamp with a tin lampshade has to be turned

on all the time. Anyone who enters the room will immediately be attracted by the lamplight and catch sight of a dark green filing cabinet standing beside her desk and a large-sized photograph of Jackson, looking very amiable, hanging on the wall. A door on the left-hand wall leads to Jackson's office. Near the door stands a heavy-looking, well made writing desk and an easy-chair with multi-coloured cushions on it. This is where Liu Ma-li, Jackson's secretary, works. On the right-hand wall, a door near the front part of the stage also leads to a corridor, on the other side of which are the office of Dr. Ling, head of the bacteriological department and his laboratory. Beside the door is a wash-basin with taps for hot and cold running water. Hanging beside the door are several white overalls. In front of the door is a leather-cased sofa, an armchair and a small tea-table, all being fine and delicate furniture which does not take up much space.

Although a scene of constant bustle, the room lacks human warmth. Those who enter it cannot but be instantly struck with an ominous and impelling chill as if it were impossible for them to talk of anything but disease and death in such an environment. Meanwhile, the booming of the besieging artillery, the droning of aeroplanes in the sky and an indescribable sense of fear all merge into such a crushing weight upon the mind that, even though sheltered behind the high wall of the hospital, there is a feeling of panic.

When the curtain rises, people of all description are seen hurrying along the corridor—doctors, patients making inquiries about clinics that they want to attend, students of the Medical College chatting together, nurses carrying instruments, janitors delivering messages and mopping the floor and so on and so forth.

Liu Ma-li, Jackson's secretary, emerges from his office. She has been to the United States and enjoys Jackson's confidence. Being a very capable woman, she can draft



letters and handle things for him. She can solve problems for him which otherwise would be most difficult for him to do in person. She is not a stenographer in the ordinary sense of the word, although she occasionally also does some typing. She is thin and looks shrivelled, her face is powdered and rouged and she wears her hair bobbed. She is a chain smoker and always uses a short cigarette holder. She now enters with a sheaf of papers in her hand.

LIU (to the woman typist): Jenny,<sup>1</sup> get this material typed out right away. It will be wanted this afternoon.

TYPIST (taking over the paper): O.K.!

LIU (intends to make a telephone call, but, seeing the woman typist in the way, takes out an envelope, scribbles a few characters on it and hands it to the typist): Jenny, you go and deliver this letter first. I'll get Nancy to type it for you.

TYPIST: O.K.! (Takes the letter and goes out.)

LIU (to the phone): Hello, is this the American Consulate? This is Dr. Jackson's office at Yen Jen Hospital. . . . Yes, it's me speaking. How are you? . . . Me? What a bad time I had! The guns kept me awake all night. Doomsday is coming! . . . We're having an emergency conference. Dr. Jackson wants you to tell Colonel James that he hasn't received the news release for a couple of days. Do send them over quickly, the old man is getting mad. All right, good-bye. (A nurse knocks at the door.)

LIU: Come in!

(The nurse enters. Liu, glancing over the file the nurse has brought in, puts her own signature on it. Exit the nurse.)

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<sup>1</sup> All italicized words and expressions in the dialogue of this play have been taken direct from the Chinese original where they appear in English.

LIU (*makes another phone call*): I want the kitchen. This is Dr. Jackson's office. Send over nine teas, right now. Dr. Jackson wants a glass of milk.

(*Dr. Yu Hsiao-feng comes in through the door from the corridor. He is about thirty-three. He is a young visiting doctor at the eye department and one of the right-hand men under Chen Hung-yu, who is the head of the department. He is smart and tactful and is fond of making nasty jokes. He is, however, quite proficient in his work and had been a very successful practising doctor before he came to the hospital. He managed to get into the hospital for the sake of still brighter "prospects." He hoped to worm his way into Dr. Jackson's favour so that some day he might be sent to the United States to obtain further "qualifications." But, not being an "orthodox" graduate of the Medical College, he is discriminated against by the so-called "orthodox" doctors who are even more in Dr. Jackson's favour.*

*He is short in stature. His fair complexion and clear skin shines with health. He wears a small, black moustache under his nose and were it not for the American style suit he wears he could easily pass for a Japanese. He wears a pair of spectacles befitting a scholar, but they cannot alter the impression which he always gives of being a vulgar and comical chap. He is always cheerful and talkative because he thinks himself more clever and entertaining than others. Always ready to do "favours" for others and poke his nose into their affairs, he is busy all the time and so some people find him attractive and like him quite well.*

*He enters hurriedly with a flurried look and puts his overcoat on the long bench.)*

YU (*intimately*): Hello, Mary!

LIU (*nonchalantly*): Hello, Dr. Yu.

YU: I've just come back from outside the hospital. Are there any news inside here? Shall we continue to run the hospital?

LIU: I've no idea!

YU: Listen, the artillery is getting nearer and nearer. Things look pretty bad and the hospital is practically empty. As soon as payday comes, people rush out to buy things. The whole market is in a mess. People buy up whatever is obtainable. The prices of gold and silver are both rising! (*Brandishing a roll of U.S. notes.*) Greenbacks! Do you want to buy some? I can do you a favour.

LIU: I'm different from you. I'm paid in greenbacks. (*Enter Hsu Mu-mei. She is the wife of Chiang Tao-tsung, Dean of Yen Jen Medical College, and heads the sick-nursing department. A woman in her early forties, she is well filled out yet still graceful. Under a purple cloak she wears the snow-white uniform of a senior nurse and looks quite dignified. She comes from a comprador's family and has been educated at an American missionary middle school and university. Her original plan was to study medicine, but she finally decided upon the study of sick-nursing at Yen Jen Medical College, a choice which she thought would be a shortcut to personal success and quick promotion to a leading position in the field of sick-nursing. She often looks down upon the ordinary doctors, thinking herself better informed, while inwardly she despises her own profession. She is quite foolish, but always thinks herself wise and is fond of showing off her own "ability" and "cleverness." Nevertheless, she is often slighted by her own husband whom she really adores. As a matter of fact, she owes her position at the hospital to the pull of Dr. Jackson and her husband.*)

HSU (*the moment she appears*): Listen! The aeroplanes are circling overhead again.

LIU: They are from Nanking.

YU (*trying to be fussy*): Airdropping! They're airdropping either rice or flour.

LIU: Director Hsu, are you looking for Dr. Jackson? He's at the meeting.

HSU: Look here, you people! (*She ostentatiously hands Liu a book in an elegant binding which she has been carrying under one arm.*) Isn't it nice?

LIU (*takes the book and feasts her eyes upon it*): Beautiful!

YU: Excellent!

HSU: I designed it.

LIU (*reading*): "Dr. J—ja—ck—son". . . . (*Unable to go ahead. She points her finger at the book.*) What the hell is this? (*Smiles.*) I know so very little Chinese.

YU (*hastens to read*): "A Collection of Dr. Jackson's Essays," "In Commemoration of the Twenty-fifth Anniversary of Dr. Jackson's Founding of the American Medical College in China."

LIU (*understands*): Oh, that's it! The cover is in Chinese, he's sure to like it. (*Opening the book.*) And his photograph too! Oh, this is the one they used.

(*All three of them approach the wall and stand admiring Jackson's photograph.*)

LIU: What a nice appearance and bearing!

HSU (*delighted*): He likes this one best himself.

LIU (*beating about the bush*): Of course you know the old man best.

(*Yu chuckles.*)

HSU (*scowling at Yu, she turns to Liu*): It's a pity that the commemoration meeting has been called off.

YU: Who expected the Communists would be here so soon. The city is besieged.

LIU: What does it matter? They can take the city of Peiping all right, but I doubt if they can take a hospital run by the Americans.

YU: So long. I've some patients to take care of. *Mary*, when there's any news, please let me know.

*(Yu approaches the door and is about to open it when he is anticipated by Yuan Jen-hui from outside. Yu goes out with an easy assurance.)*

*Yuan is the adopted daughter of Chiang Tao-tsung and Hsu Mu-mei. The Chiangs took her from an American missionary orphanage when she was twenty. Since then, she has lived with the Chiang family doing odd chores and has been subjected to all kinds of ill-treatment. Later, Chiang let her study at a sick-nursing school for two years. She is now a nurse of the lowest rank in the Yen Jen Hospital. She is just over thirty. Her face is square and a bit freckled, with a sallow complexion and she has a snub nose. She is good-natured, prudent and quiet. Unlike all the other regularly trained senior nurses of the hospital, she is far from being pretentious.)*

YUAN *(comes into the room carrying a fully packed basket. To Hsu)*: Mummy,<sup>1</sup> so you're here! I've bought all that you need.

HSU *(knits her eyebrows. Impatiently)*: Who sent you here?

*(Yuan is tongue-tied.)*

HSU: And you didn't even change your overall!

*(Yuan hangs her head.)*

LIU *(reading Yuan's facial expression)*: You must obey your Mummy. She took you out of the orphanage. You ought to know how to be thankful.

YUAN *(produces some American notes)*: Here's the American money I've bought for you, ninety-eight dollars and fifty cents.

HSU *(takes the money. Suddenly)*: What's this? I knew you had bought some silver dollars! *(Speaking to Liu*

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<sup>1</sup> The Chiangs have made Yuan, their adopted daughter, address them respectively as "Daddy" and "Mummy" in English.

about Yuan as if commenting on something inanimate.) Thick-headed as she is she's been smart enough to buy silver dollars for herself. Look, two Chinese dollar coins!

*(Ho Chang-chuan comes in. Aged twenty-seven, he is fresh from college and is now an assistant at the bacteriological department of Yen Jen Medical College. He is a favourite student of Dr. Ling Shih-hsiang, the head of the department. Superficially, he impresses people as one who in the old society would have been called a man "excellent both in conduct and learning." He is a man of few words and is very hard-working as if, buried in the laboratory or library all day long, he were entirely ignorant of the outside world. As a matter of fact, before he came to the hospital, he joined the students' progressive movement and received a revolutionary education. Calm and full of enthusiasm, he is popular among the progressive junior members of the Medical College, but somehow they abstain from mentioning his name — perhaps to protect him. In the spring of 1948, he became an underground Party member. When the siege of the city came to a climax he assumed leadership of a small underground Party organization.)*

*He is Chiang Tao-tsung's nephew. He has a pair of bushy eyebrows and serene eyes. He now enters sedately in the white overall which he has been wearing in the laboratory.)*

HO (to Hsu): Aunt.

HSU: Chang-chuan, so you've come. (To Yuan.) How do things stand in the city?

YUAN: Things are completely out of hand in town. It's full of soldiers. Armoured cars are everywhere. (Stops talking.)

HSU: Yes, go ahead!

YUAN: All the grain shops in town have been plundered. Two men were shot at Hsinchiehkou.<sup>1</sup> People say they were Communists.

HSU: The Communists are coming, so we'll have better days. (*To Ho, mockingly.*) Don't you think so, Changchuan?

HO (*to Liu*): Miss Liu, I want to see Dean Chiang.

(*Exit Liu.*)

HSU (*toys with the contents of Yuan's handbag. Naggingly*): Who on earth told you to buy such cigars? That's quite wrong! Where are the coffee beans you were to buy for *Daddy*?

(*Yuan produces a parcel of coffee beans and hands it to Hsu.*)

HSU (*sniffs at it*): No, they won't do! They're poor quality! (*Hands it back to Yuan.*)

(*Yuan fails to take hold of it and it drops onto the floor. Part of the coffee beans are scattered on the floor.*)

HSU: Damn fool! I've brought you up till you're such a big girl but all for nothing. You're good for nothing but stuffing yourself with three bowls of rice each meal!

(*Yuan bends her head to pick up the coffee beans and sheds tears.*)

HO (*coldly*): Sister Yuan hasn't eaten your rice for nothing. Besides, if you had hired a woman servant, you would have had to pay her. (*Ho stoops to help Yuan pick up the coffee beans.*)

(*Enter Chiang Tao-tsung and Liu. Chiang, aged forty-six, is Dean of the Medical College. Next to Jackson, Chiang is perhaps the most influential man in the Medical College because the college president and the hospital superintendent are only nominal heads, being "yes-men" deliberately invited by Jackson and Chiang to fill such posts and to use them as figureheads. Chiang*

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<sup>1</sup> One of the uptown business centres in Peking.

is gentle and polite, but insidious. Those who have been together with him for a long while never fail to sense some unpredictable and treacherous motive behind his gentleness and smiles. He is quite popular among the foreigners. He knows how to curry favour and is ready to do anything for them, but he always manages to make himself look like a respectable and dignified man quite above such dealings so that nothing of the kind is discernible. He has a sharp and glib tongue, sometimes he also pretends to be warm-hearted and agreeable. However, he does not cringe before his master Jackson, but often purposely keeps the latter at a considerable distance. He has won over to his side a group of doctors whom he considers as his pawns. Towards Dr. Ling Shih-hsiang he maintains a "respectful and humble" attitude, always addressing Ling as a venerable senior of his. As a matter of fact, he never looks up to anybody, thinking that he has unlimited prospects before him.

He comes of an ancient family which later became bankrupt and poor. Even as a child, he was smart. He met Hsu in college, and it was only after a great deal of scheming that he succeeded in winning the hand of this rich woman from a comprador family. He has been helped very much by his wealthy father-in-law. He is a man of some education and acquired two doctor's degrees in the United States. Ever since he won Jackson's favour many years ago, he has made friends with those Americans whom he deems influential and has assumed the position of Dean of the Medical College which is virtually much higher than that of superintendent. Since then, he has become increasingly interested in politics and far less keen about learning, thinking that one should have "noble ambitions" and "high aims." He knows English fairly well and can compose some old-style Chinese poems. He thinks of himself as elegant, learned and above the ordinary peo-



ple. *In dealing with others, he always tries to impress them with his good upbringing.*

*He is of medium height, with a fair complexion and a pair of eyebrows so thin that they are barely visible. He stares at people fixedly through eyes which are nearly closed and his eyes glitter as if they wanted to absorb everything around him. He takes painstaking care of his appearance. He wears a pair of well-creased European-style pants underneath a long woollen gown, cosy and spotlessly clean. His leather shoes are pointed and shiny. He is meticulously clean.)*

CHIANG (*catches sight of Ho and Yuan picking things from the floor*): What's the matter?

HSU: Nothing is the matter. Only some scattered coffee beans.

HO: Uncle. (*Turns to Yuan.*) Sister Yuan, thanks a lot for visiting my hospital ward. I was asleep then. I've eaten up all the fruit you gave me.

YUAN (*mildly*): You ought to have a rest for a couple of days more. You look much thinner. (*Yuan goes out with the basket.*)

HSU (*to Chiang, sarcastically*): This nephew of ours has a hell of a sense of "justice." He has always been so "proletarian" ever since his childhood.

(*Lao Chang comes in through the centre door carrying tea.*)

CHANG: May I go in?

CHIANG (*to Hsu*): Are you free? They're having a break inside.

LIU (*to Chang*): Go ahead.

HSU: Having a break? (*She walks ahead of Chang in going to Jackson's office.*)  
(*Chang follows Hsu.*)

HO: We have run out of field-mice in the bacteriological department. Dr. Ling is worried.

CHIANG: I know it.