



Yufeng Motion Pictures
Executive Producer: Qiu Mu
(邱木)

Director: Lin Tuan-qiu (林搏秋)

Screenplay: Chen Zhou (陳舟)

Cinematography: Chen
Zheng-fang (陳正芳)

Sound: Lin Ding-gui (林丁貴)

Music: Wang Lao-qi (王老期)

Lyrics: Hong Xin-de (洪信德)

Editor: Shen Ye-kang (沈業康)

Cast:

Zhang Mei-yao (張美瑤)

Zhang Pan-yang (張潘陽)

Wu Li-fen (吳麗芬)

Huang Xue-ying (黃雪映)

Xu Yuan-pei (許元培)

1960

Black and White

102 minutes



The Husband's Secret

丈夫的秘密

Synopsis

Tshiu-Bi and her husband Siu-Gi have a seemingly perfect marriage but still have no children. When Tshiu-Bi's friend, Le-Hun, a single mother, is forced to work in a nightclub to raise her son, Tshiu-Bi tries her best to help her. However, unbeknownst to Tshiu-Bi, Le-Hun and Siu-Gi were once lovers. To avoid complications, Le-Hun decides to move away, only to run into Siu-Gi again in a nightclub. After a night together, Le-Hun becomes pregnant. When Tshiu-Bi learns this startling truth, she makes a surprising decision.

Commentary

Born into a wealthy family in the coal mining industry, Lin Tuan-qiu studied in Japan where he worked in theatre and filmmaking. Back in Taipei, he funded the short-lived Yufeng Motion Pictures. Lin wanted to raise the standard of the *taiyupian* by adapting Japanese novels and films, such as *The 6 Suspects* and *The Husband's Secret*, while situating the action in contemporary Taiwan. In this way he aimed to produce what Tan Joe-Eng has called an "elusive and modern bourgeois japonisme." This refined vibe was rarely seen in *taiyupian*. He crafted elaborate psychological portraits intimately related to local reality yet vibrating with an international, pan-Asian atmosphere.

As is typical of the *taiyupian*, *The Husband's Secret* offers an astonishing mix of genres and moods. Many sequences are contradictory yet matching. On one hand, there are the lyrical, over-the-top moments when Le-Hun cries her eyes out complaining about her misery, accompanied by Schubert's *Ave Maria*. Interestingly enough, even if on the verge of prostitution, she is represented as a paragon of virtue, ready to sacrifice her love for her son. On the other hand, Lin provides a stunningly depiction of violence, both psychological and

Physical. See, for example, the long sequence when destitute Le-hun walks like a junkie (according to the neighbours) under the pouring rain looking for a job, any job. Back in her shanty apartment, an astonishingly sensual low angle shot reveals her half naked body stretched across a futon. A neighbour enters the room, his lurid face lit to make him look like a ghost, and approaches the young girl like something out of a Füssli nightmare painting.

The downward spiral of the protagonist resonates with multiple cultural traits recurrent during the period. Firstly, the young girl is an orphan, which resonates with the anxiety associated with Taiwan orphan syndrome. Striving to achieve through the economic boom but under rigid martial law, Taiwan was caught in an identity crisis between Japan, China, and the West. Remarkable, the settings are – quite differently from other *taiyupian* classics, such as *Dangerous Youth* – plausible. Lin doesn't situate the action in a far-away country, such as the Hong Kong of *Dangerous Youth*, in order to evade censorship. On the contrary, he offers a precise topography where Taipei residents look down at the neighbouring "backward" areas. while corrupting their youth and taking advantage of their orphan girls. Le-Hun travels from Taipei to Songshan to Banqiao.

Although this film is adapted from Japan sources, Lin is keen in inscribing the story in contemporary Taiwan, which implies a sharp social commentary. The extramarital affairs of the husbands are tolerated in a patriarchal society, especially when his legitimate wife is not giving him children. Yet, Lin complicates the dark conservative tableau by the sublime treatment of the suffering mistress, and also in a more subtle way by offering a complex portrait of women. Some sequences hint at the fact that women can be understood as complicit with the repetition of the social mechanism of oppression, somehow reminding us of Eileen Chang's characters in novels like *The Golden Cangue*, as we can also see in *May 13th*, *Night of Sorrow*. Yet Lin also displays touching manifestations of female inter-class solidarity and some surprising dialogue, as when the female voiceover asks, "How could educated people do this?"

With its glossy camerawork, eclectic music score, Taiwan-specific travelogue, Japanese flavour, high pitched melodrama, Confucian-style cautionary tale and modern reconfiguration of gender roles, *The Husband's Secret* is an important rediscovery and restoration of Taiwan's Lost Commercial cinema.