

Gang Lu's Letter to his Sister

Translated by Edward Chen

Shortly before his attack at Iowa University, Gang Lu wrote the following letter to his sister. The original was in Chinese. It appears in translation in Edward Chen's book *Deadly Scholarship: The True Story of Lu Gang and Mass Murder in America's Heartland* (New York: Birch Lane Press, 1995).

How are you! Please deposit the enclosed check in the bank speedily. This letter is written especially to you, so don't let other people in the family see it. When you read this letter, I will probably no longer be in the world of the living. I have already mailed some things back, which can be considered to constitute my legacy. I think that as long as you explain it to the customs officials, they will let these things pass through, just as if I had brought them back myself.

What I am most worried about is our parents; they are old, and I am afraid they will not be able to bear this turmoil. But I am at the end of my resources, so this heavy responsibility must fall on your shoulders. I beg you to take care of them and spare no expenses in the effort. Moreover, don't spend any money on a funeral for me. And by all means don't come to the U.S. to take my body home. The best thing would be to let the Chinese embassy have my body cremated here in the U.S., and just send some ashes back. Keep firmly in mind that you should not let anyone here in the U.S. blackmail you into paying anything. I think the money I have sent back will suffice to repay our parents' loving kindness in raising me and the gentle care my two elder sisters gave me when I was young.

Last night when I finished talking with you on the telephone, I wept my heart out here alone. For the life of me, I can't swallow all this. You know that all my life I have been honest and straightforward, and I have most of all detested cunning, fawning sycophants and dishonest bureaucrats who think they are always right in everything. I had this in mind for a long time, but I persevered until I had taken my doctoral degree. This was an honor for the whole family. You yourself should not be too sad about it, for at least I have found a few traveling companions to accompany me to the grave.

My experiences during my 28 years have caused me to adopt a rather jaundiced view of human existence; I have on occasion said to people that I would like to take orders as a Buddhist monk. There is no end to the hopes and desires in human life. In the U.S., even though there are no worries about food and clothing, up above there are still exalted, rich people, and compared with them I am poor as a church mouse. To sum up, on my own behalf I have vented my rage, and on behalf of my family I have provided a safeguard for their livelihood.

What further expectations do I have to live for? Hence it has been said of old: "After a long drought to encounter the sweet rains, in a different place to meet an old friend, to burn the candle in one's wedding chamber, and to see one's name listed on the golden placard of successful examination candidates." I have tasted all of these four great objects of a man's life, and it can truly be said that I have known satisfaction!

Though I am single, I have had a few girlfriends. When I lived in the dormitory in high school I had already started to have girlfriends. When I went to college I often slipped into our old home at the Number 262 Hospital under cover of darkness and spent the night with

girls. After I came to the States I had liaisons with Chinese and American women, with single and married women, with girls of good families and girls of the streets. I just don't have a constant heart in these matters; the grass always looks greener somewhere else, and I can't be satisfied with any particular person. Maybe I didn't meet the right one, or perhaps I thought either that they were too good for me or I was too good for them. No matter what the answer is, I feel a bit fed up with male-female relationships.

Moving on to another point I have already lost interest in physics, at which I labored for ten years (four in college and six years in graduate school); one could say I felt more and more that I had entered a dead-end street. The study of physics is more and more disappointing. The way it is now, one person says one thing, another says something else, and nobody really knows what's going on. So people form a number of factions based around different universities, each side attacking the other while grandly touting their own views as correct. No wonder that there are people who say, "Modern physics is self-delusion." I regret a bit that at the outset I did not study a more practical subject. But what can be done about it now? Our parents themselves were ignorant of these things and could not guide me in educational matters. I had to blunder on all by myself. Lots of Chinese physicists with U.S. citizenship, who had been messing around in the U.S. and weren't happy any more, returned to China for visits and bragged that in doing so they were making a contribution to their fatherland. And so then the Chinese government started propagandizing on a grand scale and beguiled the young people in to studying the theoretical sciences.

But, to get back to what I was saying earlier, if I had at the outset studied medicine, I could not possibly have come to the U.S. to study for a degree and earn American currency. Our parents did not have the economic resources to send me to the U.S. for advanced study. Some people at this school who are in the applied sciences, their parents are for the most part high-level intellectuals who have studied abroad. Their families have foreign currency, which they can use to enable their children to take the TOEFL and the GREs, and to defray their tuition and living expenses. Or they have relatives living abroad who can lend them money. That today I have come to this pass can justly be said to be partly the fault of our parents. I truly believe the saying, "In life be a paragon among men, and in death be a hero among the shades." I take personal responsibility for all that I have done.

And another thing, in the end it would be best not to let the younger generation (of our family) know how it really was with me, for it might be disadvantageous to their futures. My beloved elder sister, I take my eternal leave of you. Your younger brother.