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Standing on vertical slabs of painted concrete and rebar, the air seemed heavy with a repressed aura of death and defiance, part success and divided failure. There wasn't much on one side, its dead grass and gravel barren from years of neglect and misuse, fields of sorrow marked by occasional memorial stones and broken wood slabs, traces of rusty razor wire. Behind my frozen body on the other side, life continued on with traffic and bistros, conversations and ice cream cones. They were polar opposites, the sides that is, a negative and positive terminal.

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People on + side milled with smiles and purpose, no longer bound in their pen, but happy and familiar enough to remain there anyways. While coming from the latter side, my eyes constant drift to the lifelessness before me caught me by surprise; my fascination reminding me of an accident scene, there was no turning away, it was too compelling. It was all so unfamiliar, so far from where I was from and what I knew. This grey place was a different planet, a sad world of alienation and repression, full of a history of running and pummeling.

Sitting down on top of the grey divider, my eyes clogged, the saline tears of sympathy, causing my sight to blur the dreary landscape of dirt, broken long forgotten buildings and abandoned cars. Staring off at where I knew there was a railway station that lay miles away, the blurred movement of something snapped me from the heavy weight that burdened my mind. There were people, not too close in the ruins, but there were people. They seemed to move quickly from one point to another, stop, then doing their movements in reverse. Their movement was something that intrigued me and prodded me to jump down off of the wall and go and find out what life was before me, amongst all the depression and ignored emotions that seemed to be dumped in the sterile waste.

My feet found no real path, somehow my mind knowing that my footsteps were probably the first to go in this path for some time, but I still pushed on. Deep down, the thought of someone crossing this path with a rifle trained on their head urged me to hastily try and cross the void as quickly as possible, urging me to not take my time.

Now, the subjects were close enough to make out their detail, and I stopped and sat on a rock and watched them. Their movements flowed, making them look out of place in this no-mans land of muted black tones and puddles. Pride filled my mind and I smiled as I looked on, seeing them notice me. They stopped and looked in my direction, then waved me over to come and check them out. I knew them, even though I had never met them, they seemed familiar. I saw their shirts and shoes, heard their sounds that I knew even in my sleep. I knew them already.

They were skating. In the middle of somewhere that looked like the end of the world, a bombed out black page of history, they were skating, with smiles on their faces and no fear in their hearts, they skated.

I went forwards to meet them, my questions and their quick tales and answers in broken English giving me the shivers with their ability to survive. But they were there, living another day, not living in yesterday. They showed me more markers, where more people had died, trying to leave this repressed land and make it over to the other side of the wall, a land of freedom and expression. After some more skating and talking, they took me and showed me Checkpoint Charlie, the symbol of repression that made the Berlin Wall so

imposing with its prison camp like entrance. We talked about freedom, they talked about skating. It had been their only hope, their only freedom in a land of separated families and life under the turret. They said that skating had saved them.

My new friends showed me it all, with boards in hand, they showed a history and life lesson I would never forget.