

Excerpt

Berlin Butterfly- Ensnare

My eyes darted about until they reached the other side of the street. There, in a meticulous line, stood a multitude of soldiers in every direction along a razor wire fence. Each soldier faced the crowd, their hands gripped tightly around a weapon.

Onlookers stumbled in disbelief. Women cried for mercy and freedom. Some of the men chanted, “*Schweine!*” and raised their fists angrily to the soldiers. The young squaddies seemed mostly unaffected by the insults but clutched their long rifles carefully across their chests, ready to use if the command ever came.

A similar scene developed across the newly formed border. Parents, children, siblings, cousins, friends, and lovers separated by a mere moment. Simple choices made one day resulted in life-altering effects the next.

As my eyes followed the curve in the road and over the top of the cemetery walls, a row of apartment buildings directly on Bernauer had actually become the border line overnight. Astonished, I watched desperate people tie linens together and make a rope as their only means of escape. A couple slid down with only the clothes on their back. Towards the opposite end, a family took turns as they leapt from a second-floor window and into the arms of firemen on the west side. A young girl, frightened to jump, clung desperately to the window sill as her feet flapped wildly beneath her. I watched as her fingers lost grip one by one. My ears rang with her screams as she disappeared from my sight.

My throat strained as if it were on fire. I choked sharply and turned back towards my own building to catch myself from collapsing. One hand pressed weightily up against the rough surface while the other shook uncontrollably. I should have listened to Anton months ago. He warned of the gossip developing, but Papa and I didn’t want to believe it. Life in East Berlin was difficult but not hopeless.

After all, the *Deutsche* Democratic Republic, our own government, denied the possibility of such a separation. Even Herr Ulbricht, the council chair, publicly stated, “*Niemand hat die Absicht, eine Mauer zu errichten!*” No one has the intention of erecting a wall! And we wanted to believe him, this was our home.