

Now Before

She could have said something different on the night before she decided to take a turn towards the headlights, towards steel at least three times as large as hers. Malia imagined the tears and the grieving and the funeral and the shaking and him. Malia imagined Luc and it warmed her heart. He was on his knees, immobile with tears. She knew she was twisted in her brain and her feelings – she didn't care, she really didn't care.

She wanted to know eternal happiness, which for her meant knowing beyond any inkling of doubt that someone, somewhere (in this case, Luc, who was asleep at this particular moment, .68 miles away), cared about her so deeply to his core that he would be a wreck just like she was, and would wear black like Queen Victoria for the rest of his days.

Malia wasn't really a wreck.

There was some point we could have changed things, but I just don't know where.

*N*O*W*D*E*

*C*O<*>N*S*

T>>R<*<U*

*+*C*+*T*+*

A darkness.

A street.

A sigh.

An idea.

A truck.

A calculation.

A smile.

A decision.

A turn.

A

*N*O*W*R*E*

*C*O>*<N*S*

T<<R>*>U*

*^*C*^*T*^*

When could we have changed when the end would come? Was there a time to stop it before it began? Or were we doomed from the start?

Cries, splitting shrieks into the air air air, covering the night night night. There was nothing blessed tonight. Brian, Brian, Brian, Hopeless Worm Brian – he was the worst tonight.

People gathered ‘round in this candlelight vigil for the ones who had forsaken their lives. A casket, a casket was not far from their minds, in this candlelight vigil held in watch for Malia. Sweet, dear Malia, who could have been something more. They all wept and cried and wondered if they could have done something before. “Cut down before she could find herself,” one said.

Not true, not true. Malia found herself in a casket of steel. She knew perfectly well what she was meant to be. The smile on her closing eyes said everything. She knew this is what she was meant to be.

*N*O*W*D*E*

*C*O<*>N*S*

T>>R<*<U*

*+*C*+*T*+*

01010100 01101000 01100101 01110010 01100101 00100000 01110111
 01100001 01110011 00100000 01101110 01101111 01110100 01101000
 01101001 01101110 01100111 00100000 01110011 01110101 01110011
 01110000 01101001 01100011 01101001 01101111 01110101 01110011
 00100000 01100001 01110100 00100000 01100001 01101100 01101100
 00101110 00100000 00100000 01010011 01101000 01100101 00100000
 01110111 01100001 01110011 00100000 01110000 01100101 01110010
 01100110 01100101 01100011 01110100 01101100 01111001 00100000
 01100010 01100001 01101100 01100001 01101110 01100011 01100101
 01100100 00101110 00100000 00100000 01010011 01101000 01100101
 00100000 01101011 01101110 01100101 01110111 00100000 01100101
 01111000 01100001 01100011 01110100 01101100 01111001 00100000
 01110111 01101000 01100001 01110100 00100000 01110011 01101000
 01100101 00100000 01110111 01100001 01110011 00101100 00100000
 01110111 01101000 01100001 01110100 00100000 01110011 01101000
 01100101 00100000 01110111 01100001 01110011 00100000 01100100
 01101111 01101001 01101110 01100111 00101110 :) :) :) :) :) :) :) :

*N*O*W*R*E*

*C*O*>*<N*S*

T<*<R>*>U*

*^*C*^*T*^*

Hello, hello, it's me, Luc. Can you hear me? I'm going to find you. I swear I will. I wonder if there was something I could have done before... ah, it doesn't matter anymore.

step. Luc. He only had a thousand more. She didn't want to watch, didn't want to see, but she was gripped by invisible cackling hands, forcing her forward – she became his shadow.

Nine hundred and ninety two more steps.

Anticipation in her head. A promise to which he was wed.

Her eyes were finally wide open and they were not smiling.

*N*O*W*D*E*

*C*O<*>N*S*

T>>R<*<U*

*+*C*+*T*+*

To do:

~~1. Atone~~

2. Wait

3. Wait

4. Wait

~~5. Rise~~

~~6. Atone...~~

*N*O*W*R*E*

*C*O>*<N*S*

T<<R>*>U*

*^*C*^*T*^*

Mom? Can you hear me? I can barely breathe. Mom, I – help me please before –

Oh. I can no longer breathe.

Mama? Bye, Mama.

Hello, shadow. Shadow, you look so familiar, even lifted from the ground.

*N*O*W*D*E*

*C*O<*>N*S*

T>>R<*<U*

*+*C*+*T*+*

MISTAKE

UBSEL CIMFE ODGGP QEULC OPETW BFEXB NYVFO MIUMG VAVVN LXXYG

BPWWQ LIUGV WNFAA LRXGV ARCEY HBRBH INKCF KUGWQ TVNWD OWVWU

HIEYK RHAPR CSUXY MOKXX VV

*N*O*W*R*E*

*C*O>*<N*S*

T<<R>*>U*

*^*C*^*T*^*

Luc and Malia's shadows stood facing each other.

*N*O*W*D*E*

HAVE

*N*O*W*R*E*

Her shadow kept saying no, no, no. His kept going on and on about the way it was before.

Before.

*C*O<*>N*S*

YOU

*C*O>*<N*S*

There was to be no light anymore. No shadows anymore, not after the way Malia's shadow tore at itself. It tore and tore and tore and tore. More, Luc's shadow wailed and wailed, I needed more! More what – still tearing and tearing. MORE TIME. The shadows began to melt.

*T>*R<*U*

SEEN

*T<*R>*U*

Tear and wail. Tear and wail. Tear tear tear and wail and wail and wail ail ail ail.
Everything ails in the golden light when it is stained in the red fog.

*+*C*+*T*+*

BEFORE

*^*C*^*T*^*

Before.

.

.

.

Malia and Luc slept, and so did their shadows.