At The Still Point (There The Dance Is)

by journaliar

Summary

"Root doesn't smile but her eyes soften and Shaw licks her lips, feels like she could maybe say something better if that's what Root wanted." Post ep 4x5 Prophets.

“What're you doing here?” Shaw asks quietly, stepping into the bathroom as the light flickers and the fan hums gently.

Something loosens. Something that was knotted and tight and high in her chest ever since she spoke with Harold, just lets go at the sight of Root bent over the bathroom sink, her blood glowing where it's smeared along the counter top and splattered on the tile floor. “Besides bleeding all over everything.”

“Searching for buried treasure.” Root bites out, bloodied forceps shaking visibly as she pulls a bullet from the unassuming wound at her shoulder. She is topless, the straps of her black bra cutting across pale skin and Shaw watches her ribs expand and contract with relief from behind as the bullet clatters noisely into the basin.

“I could've done that for you.” Shaw points out as Root shakily sets down the forceps, meeting Shaw's gaze in the reflection of the mirror and even though her mouth turns up in a smirk, her eyes are dull.

“I didn't want to be too forward.” Root says, eyes trained on Shaw until Shaw has to look away, glancing down at the blood seeping into the grout between floor tiles.

“More forward than breaking into my apartment and getting blood everywhere?” Shaw wonders and now Root smiles sharply. Shaw thinks, not for the first time, of how sharp her canines are.
“You may have a point.” Root murmurs and when Shaw looks up into the mirror, Root is still gazing at her but her eyes are soft and the way she's bracing herself against the counter top, injured arm tucked against her chest, makes Shaw breathe heavily.

“You gonna leave my bathroom a mess?” Shaw asks quietly, stepping closer and Root straightens, turning to face Shaw slowly and shifting her weight back against the counter. Blood is crawling down her arm in bright lines, red spidering across her skin and Shaw watches it ooze for a moment before her eyes focus on the flesh wound at Root's flank. It's raw and red and Shaw swallows hard against the emotion, hot like anger but sharper and more painful where it lodges in her throat.

“I wouldn't dream of it.” Root says quietly, watching Shaw stare at the exposed wound where it slowly bleeds at her ribs and Shaw ignores her piercing gaze.

“That hurt?” Shaw asks, moving forward and Root watches her face the entire time as her hand lifts to trace the injury, fingers prodding. Root gasps at the burning pain that comes with the examination, flinching slightly while goosebumps raise along her arms.

“It looks worse than it is.” Root offers but Shaw is thinking. Thinking of Root not being so lucky. Of Root taking a bullet in the gut. Root bleeding out. Root dying.

She doesn't like how she feels with those thoughts pounding in her skull. Like sadness but worse, deeper. The feeling is bitter in her mouth, makes her frown and dig her fingertips into the ugly edges of the injury just to hear Root gasp again.

Then she's reaching for the first aid kit balanced on the corner of the counter top, Root's bloody fingerprints smudged against the white plastic.

“Here.” Shaw grunts, already opening sterile dressings. She reaches to turn on the faucet, adjusting it so warm water is running quietly.

“How's a girl supposed to refuse an offer like that? ” Root sighs, cadence playful but her mouth is set in a thin line, brown eyes unreadable.

She is silent as Shaw cleans and dresses her wound but Root's eyes follow every single move that she makes in her familiarly unnerving way. Shaw's hands are steady and soon she is pressing the last piece of tape to Root's skin.

“What're you looking at?” Shaw finally bites out, crumpling the garbage and tossing it easily into the trash can beside the toilet and Root watches like it's the most riveting she's ever seen.

“Did Harold...tell you anything?” Root questions softly and Shaw bites down hard on her bottom lip, forcefully ignoring Finch’s earlier words.

“Finch says a lot of stuff.” Shaw grunts quietly, smoothing down an edge of tape at Shaw’s shoulder.”He never shuts up.”

Root only smiled tiredly.

“You have beautiful hands, Sameen.” Root says sincerely, her words lacking the teasing lilt that would normally earn her an eye roll. Instead of annoyed, Shaw feels unsettled.

“Are you leaving?” Shaw asks and it sounds more like a suggestion than she means it to. Root doesn't have to leave but she does want her to stop looking at her the way she is. “I mean, i’m not making you or anything.”
“She hasn't told me where to go yet.” Root admits, the sentence leaving her lips like the words pain her. Shaw watches the pad of her own finger as it traces the taped edges of Root's bandage absently and when Root shivers, Shaw sighs. “I hope you don't mind that I came here.”

“I don't.” Shaw mutters, leaning past Root to get to the medicine cabinet behind the mirror. Root doesn't move, just breathes out against Shaw's neck as she pulls out a pill bottle and steps back. She opens it and shakes two pills into her palm, thinks better of it and adds one more.

“Take these. You need to eat.” Shaw says invitingly and Root smiles, faint and soft along the edges of her mouth as Shaw presses the medication into her hand. “I'll make you something.”

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“You get shot a lot.” Shaw murmurs to the glowing television screen, half paying attention to the basketball game playing on the screen while she hunches forward over the bowl of cereal in her hands.

“Look who's talking.” Root groans, wincing as she balances her own bowl of cereal on her knees with the hand of her injured arm. Shaw glances at her where she sits on the other side of the couch, chewing thoughtfully and gaze lingering on Root's chest for a moment too long. She's still only half dressed, avoiding the task of pulling a shirt on over her injuries and Shaw doesn't really mind.

Shaw's cover apartment is small and over decorated like she personally owns stock in Ikea, making Shaw long for the wide open spaces and cool floors of her own place. It should probably be more surreal, Shaw thinks, having a bloodied Root eating Lucky Charms on her Swedish couch wearing only pants and a bra but somehow its not. Shaw doesn’t hate it.

“She should take better care of you.” Shaw says and Root glances at her with glassy eyes, the pain medication she'd taken leaving her pupils blown open even in the shifting light of the television. “I mean, you are her interface after all. She needs you.”

“Didn't know you cared.” Root teases, pushing her cereal around with her spoon before lifting the bowl and setting it on the coffee table. Shaw notices that she's eaten all of the marshmallows but doesn't comment even though the realization feels sweet and soft where it tucks away in the back of her mind.

Shaw rolls her eyes, raising her own bowl and swallowing the sugary milk before speaking again. “Yeah, you did.”

The empty bowl clatters noisily when Shaw sets it on the table too. “Did you kill that bitch at least?”

“No.” Root admits, staring at Shaw so hard that Shaw's skin is tingling. She dares to meet Root's eyes, looking away from the game she's hardly paying attention to. “I ran away.”

Shaw chuckles at that, leaning back against the couch and Root smiles, rolling her eyes a little.

“Had to get her away from the number.” She says and Shaw nods, amusement fading from her mouth as Root goes quiet.

“You could've died out there.” Shaw says lowly, looking back to the television screen as the referee blows his whistle and calls a personal foul. “Alone. You could've died out there alone when you didn't have to.”
“It was too big of a risk, Shaw.” Root murmurs and Shaw ignores her burning gaze on the side of her face. “With you, any of you, there...casualties were almost guaranteed. She knows what's best...”

“She still talking to you?” Shaw asks, turning to meet Root's eyes and for a moment they're locked in, until Root swallows and looks away.

“It's very quiet.” Root admits softly and Shaw doesn't like the way the admission sits in her ears.

“You plan on putting on a shirt anytime soon?” Shaw grunts, reaching over to trace over Root's bandaged side again but her eyes stray to the black lace against Root's skin.

“Not if you keep staring at my breasts like that.”

Shaw grins, leaning back into the couch and turning back to the screen. “Just keep eating..”

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Shaw watches Root drift into consciousness, her body slumped over against the arm of the couch as she wakes warily. The television is still on, a post game show playing quietly on the screen but Shaw is more interested in Root, righting herself with a bitten off groan.

“I fell asleep.” Root croaks, clearing her throat and touching her shoulder and Shaw nods, leaning forward to pick up the remote from the coffee table. She clicks off the television, plunging the apartment into darkness save for the city's glow burning through the drawn curtains.

“You need the rest.” Shaw says standing and stretching. She can feel Root watching her in the half light, eyes soft with exhaustion.

“Were you watching me sleep, Sameen?” Root wonders and Shaw scoffs, ignoring the warm, unapologetic feeling settling along her shoulders. She lifts her arms above her head, attempting to stretch the sensation from her muscles.

“Just making sure you were still breathing.” Shaw says lowly and she can't see it but she's knows Root is smiling.

“Oh, yeah?”

Shaw says, “Yeah. Dragging your corpse off of my couch would've been a real pain in the ass.” Even though every time she looks at Root there is a deep and urgent sense of relief that reminds Shaw of mouthfuls of ice cold water on scorching hot days.

“Me? A pain in the ass?” Root rasps coyly, tucking her injured arm against her chest again like a broken wing and Shaw breathes deeply.

“The couch is yours if you want it.” Shaw asks and Root stares up at her expectantly. “Unless you need more room.”

“I could use some place to stretch out.” Root stands slowly, unsteady on her feet and Shaw only watches wordlessly. “If you're offering.”

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That place to stretch out is underneath Shaw in her bed, sweating and bleeding in her sheets.

Shaw watches as blood blooms behind the stark white bandage at Root's shoulder, bright and
enticing as it oozes through the layers of dressing and Shaw presses her mouth hard to the edge of the gauze and tape. Root groans, pained and obscene even as her fingers fist in Shaw's hair so tight that Shaw's eyes water while strands give and break.

Root abandons Shaw's hair to claw at her back. And their torsos are unaligned but their legs are interlocked in the best way and Shaw grinds forward against Root's cunt over and over with her own. Fucking her with only her hips and an emotion that seems like it's wrapped in cellophane but Shaw can still understand the shape of it, feel the weight of it.

She grips Root's thigh where its draped over her hip with both hands while the bed creaks obscenely and the tension in Root's spine visibly tightens until she's arching away from the mattress and into Shaw. Like she's being held together by strings and Shaw has control of all of them.

“God.” Root exhales quietly, muscles exploding in orgasm suddenly. Shaw watches breathless as Root comes, hard and quiet and wet, her hands fisting in the pillow beneath her head.

“Look at me. Look-look at me.” Shaw croaks and Root does, starry eyed and Shaw leans forward to kiss her hard. Hand lifting to hold Root still and urge her jaw open with her thumb while her fingertips press into the cochlear implant.

“Sameen.” Root moans and Shaw bites her bottom lip hard before pressing her forehead to Root's, fingers sliding down to curl around the column of Root's neck.

“Just...” Shaw bites out, hips still working as the tension in her pelvis threatens to explode. The size of the inevitable explosion growing and growing the longer Shaw peers down into Root's eyes. “Just keep looking at me.”

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Shaw wakes to an empty bed two hours later.

It's not strange. Their trysts have always been messy and urgent and wedged in between one deadly situation and another so waking alone isn't unusual or unwelcome.

Except this time, waking up to cool sheets and Root still on her fingertips, feels off.

Shaw doesn't rush. She washes the dishes on the coffee table and changes the sheets before she pulls on her boots.

She doesn't really think she'll find her. By now Root could be a totally different person in a totally different place with The Machine whispering in her ear but either way Shaw zips up her sweatshirt and tries to think of where Root would escape to in the middle of the night without The Machine telling her where to go.

As it would turn out, that place is a run down bar with a shot security system and cheap beer, half a block from Shaw's apartment.

She's standing against the bar, a half empty beer and a full shot of something the same color as her eyes sitting in front of her and Shaw sidles up to her without a word, reaching out for the small glass.

“What's a girl like you doing in a place like this?” Root whispers, propping her chin in her palm and gazing at Shaw. Her eyes are liquid and her mirth is forced and it washes over Shaw all wrong.

“What're you doing here?” Shaw answers, swallowing down the shot easily and Root smiles down at her beer for a moment before looking at Shaw again.
“I couldn’t sleep.” Root murmurs, tossing her hair back and bringing the bottle to her mouth. “It’s just too quiet. Just sort of ended up here. The jukebox only plays Stevie Nicks.”

She drinks and Shaw watches her throat work, eyes the way the hickey on her neck bobs shamelessly, before glancing around the dingy bar. There aren’t a lot of people but there is a man at the other end of the bar who is eyeing Root with interest and Shaw can’t help but roll her eyes.

“We need a sling. For your arm.” Shaw mutters because Root is holding it close to her chest and Root smiles against the lip of her beer for a moment, glancing down the bar at the man who lifts his glass in greeting.

“It’s fine, Sameen.” Root sighs, taking a long pull from the bottle.

There's something right to say in this moment, some feeling that Shaw knows she should be tapping into but it feels like there is a barrier between her mind and the emotion and she can only let out a frustrated breath.

“You could barely keep your eyes open when I finished with you earlier.” Shaw points out after a moment and Root studies her face quietly.

“It's okay, Sameen.” Root finally murmurs like she knows and she doesn't care and it really is okay.

“I can....” Shaw starts, reaching out to tug at her belt loops before sliding her hand down over her ass and into her far back pocket where she knows the guy at the end of the bar will see. “Come back with me and I can give it another shot.”

Root doesn't smile but her eyes soften and Shaw licks her lips, feels like she could maybe say something better if that's what Root wanted. But Root leans forward, eyes dropping to Shaw’s mouth before she kisses her hard and hot and sharp.

“Buy a girl dinner first?”

“What? You're too good for my Lucky Charms?”

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“What's going on with you?” Shaw asks as Root nudges her half finished plate of french toast towards her. The booth is small and uncomfortable but Shaw is content to sit here, eating Root's food and watching her across the table.

“What do you mean?” Root sighs, reaching up to fiddle with her implant before pushing her hair over her shoulder. Shaw watches her for a moment, cocking an eyebrow before pushing Root’s abandoned plate closer and pushing her own empty one away.

“You seem...” Shaw trails off, searching for the right word and Root looks up expectantly. “Off.”

“Off?” Root teases, mouth lifting in a weak smile and Shaw shrugs.

“Sad.” Shaw amends and she knows it's not quite the right expression but it's as close as she can grasp and Root's face falls, her gaze sliding away to stare blindly at the empty restaurant.

“I'm not sad.” Root says quietly, running a hand through her hair. “I'm scared.”

“Scared of what?” Shaw asks, chewing slowly and Root shrugs.

“Samaritan. This war...” Root murmurs, eyes finding Shaw's suddenly and Shaw swallows and
holds the contact. “I am scared because we are not winning.”

“But She has a plan, doesn't She?” Shaw says and Root leans back, eyes still locked on Shaw.

“She does. I'm just not totally positive we're all meant to survive it.” Root says quietly. “And the thought of certain… losses… it's terrifying.”

Shaw's chest is suddenly tight with emotion she can't name but it makes her want to reach out for Root. She doesn't though, she blinks down at her plate for a long moment, letting the tense emotion wrap around her spine like a serpent. “I'm also...concerned.”

“I'm not very use to wanting to protect people.” Root says carefully, gaze unwavering and Shaw slouches into the booth, her mouth turning up just a little before she can control it.

“I know. It's weird, right?”

Root smiles at Shaw's hesitant honesty, head dipping to the side in the way that Shaw knows to mean something cloyingly sweet is moments away from passing her lips. But instead of an embarrassing declaration, Root only reaches across the table to steal a triangle of syrup soaked french toast with her fingers.

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“Do you remember the computer game? Oregon Trail?” Root asks softly, like she's not palm up and two knuckles deep inside of Shaw, slowly curling her fingers over and over and doing absolutely nothing else. Shaw ignores her, keeps her eyes focused blindly on the ceiling as she palms her own naked breasts and listens to the liquid sound she makes around Root's fingers.

“I wasn't...” Shaw hesitates, eyes fluttering when Root presses upwards and rubs the pad of her fingers against a spot that makes her see electricity. Her eyes flick down to Root, on her knees and fully dressed between Shaw's legs in front of the couch.“Computers aren't really my thing.”

“But you played it? In school?” Root wonders, her head resting on Shaw's thigh while she watches herself move inside of her. And Shaw wants to bury both hands in Root's hair and pull hard, wants to sink her teeth into the smooth skin of her neck, wants to hurt her just enough but instead she drops a hand between her legs to rub at her clit since it seems Root has no intention of doing it.

“Root.” Shaw bites out in warning and Root's eyes drift away from her own slick fingers and up into Shaw's face. She leans forward, kissing Shaw's knuckles softly and when Shaw extends her index finger in offering, pressing down hard on her clit with her ring and middle finger, Root takes it into her mouth slowly. “I was bad at it. Kept dying of dysentery.”

Root doesn't say anything for a moment, just pushes deeper inside of Shaw with one hand and digs her nails into Shaw's side with the other.

Root bites down hard on Shaw's fingertip before pulling away and Shaw watches dazedly as Root moves upwards, one hand finding Shaw's hair and the other thrusting slow and deep inside of her. The fist and pull of her hair is almost affectionate and Shaw is practically seeing stars as Root fucks into her but she grits her teeth and focuses on Root's face. On the look in her eyes that makes the tightness in the pit of her stomach crawl up until it's in her chest and in her throat, strangling her.

Root opens her mouth and Shaw is ready to stick her finger back in her mouth to shut up her continuing line of questions about some old computer game but Root murmurs, “You're always so
wet and swollen for me, Sameen.” like a compliment and Shaw gasps through her teeth.

Shaw’s hand is moving frantically between her legs, grazing Root’s palm over and over and when Root’s thoughtful expression melts into something teasing and dark, head tilting to the side expectantly, Shaw comes with a painfully clenched jaw. Root has always pulled almost embarrassingly intense orgasms from Shaw and this is no different and the searing heat that burns across her nerves makes her legs tremble.

Root pulls Shaw’s hair hard, turning her face away to speak into her ear and Shaw grips at her neck with the hand not currently tucked between her thighs. “Sometimes you remind me of someone I knew. Not of her, exactly, but the way I felt about her.”

It’s a deep moment, Shaw can feel it but she has no idea where it leads, no idea where to go if she falls into something so significant so Shaw turns in Root’s grasp to press her mouth to her jaw softly. Root inhales shakily then tugs at her hair again.

“Trying to make me jealous?” Shaw groans as Root’s mouth falls to her ear. Root bites her ear and pulls and then moans when Shaw flutters around her wet fingers helplessly.

“I wouldn’t dream of it.” Root teases, pulling her hand free and Shaw watches her lick across her fingers before twisting and shoving her down into the unoccupied space on the couch.

“And what do you dream of?” Shaw demands, pulling at Root’s blouse and she hisses when Shaw’s fingers scrape over the bandaged wound at her side.

“Ruining you.” Root gasps and Shaw doesn’t stop her mouth from twitching into a smile.

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“Don’t you have somewhere to be?” Shaw asks practically into Root’s mouth even as Shaw tightens her legs around her slim waist and Root makes an annoyed sound, pulling out of the kiss to nuzzle the underside of Shaw’s jaw. Shaw lets her for a moment before grabbing a fistful of Root’s hair and tugging her away hard. “Root.”

“You say it like you want me to go.” Root pouts, leaning forward against Shaw’s grip on her hair to lick at Shaw’s bottom lip and Shaw grunts noncommittally because it’s not necessarily the case.

And she knows that Root knows it, that she doesn’t have to say the words because Root gets that the bruises Shaw left on her wrists, the bite marks at the sweet spot where her ass and thigh meet, the orgasms she spent all night pulling from Root’s body, all meant stay. “Fine.”

She shifts away from Shaw, out of the prison of her thighs and stands at the side of the bed. Shaw watches her step into her underwear. “I just thought you’d be more excited that The Machine’s whispered sweet nothings in your ear again.”

"She never really leaves me. I believe in her, Sameen. You should too.” Root says, pulling on her bra and Shaw watches. Shaw doesn’t bother saying that it’s Root’s unwavering faith in The Machine that she really believes in.

Instead she just sighs longingly, watching the possibility of an approximation of a day off with Root hanging around, disappear as she puts on her dark jeans. Shaw pushes her hair off of her face before moving to sit at the side of the bed without bothering to cover herself.

"Can you be careful out there.? Shaw says with a frown, pursing her lips at the way the words leave her tongue. Root gives her a confused look as she shrugs on her blouse and Shaw winces. “I mean,
"You know one of those holes belongs to you, Shaw." Root smirks, batting her eyelashes and Shaw rolls her eyes even as Root comes to stand between her knees. Shaw welcomes her quietly, reaching with one hand to hook her fingertips in the waist of Root's pants, watching her slender hands button up her blouse, top to bottom, like she's keeping safe all the marks Shaw has given her.

"I'm serious. We have a war to win and we won't be able to do it without you."

Shaw doesn't look up but she can feel Root's eyes burning into the top of her head even as her fingers pause only halfway down the shirt. Shaw doesn't know what to do with this feeling, this aching, restless acknowledgment that if something were to happen to Root she would burn the entire world to the ground. Shaw cranes upward to press a hard kiss to the clean bandage at Root's side and Root's body bows instinctually away from the sudden pain but then she shuffles in closer to Shaw.

"Sameen." Root begins heavily and Shaw doesn't like the way her voice fills the spaces around them, the way Root saying her name makes her feel in this moment. She doesn't lift her eyes like the tone of Root's voice asks either, instead she thumbs the leather of Root's belt before pulling it apart slowly.

"I don't worry about dying. I don't even think about it." Shaw mutters, unbuttoning and unzipping Root's pants before tugging them low on her hips. Root's arms fall to her sides as Shaw traces the finger shaped marks on the cradle of her pelvis. "But when I think about you dying it makes me very, very angry."

For a moment there is only the sound of Roots slow breathing that goes ragged when Shaw leans forward to lick at the place where her touch is bruised into her skin. A hand lifts to palm the back of her head, holding her close and Shaw bites just hard enough as Root's nails glide against her scalp.

"I hear you." Root murmurs and Shaw lifts her eyes to find Root's drilling into her.

"She talking to you again?" Shaw wonders against Root's skin and Root's mouth turns up in the corners like she's in on something Shaw's not.

Root shakes her head, moving her hand to cup the side of Shaw's face and Shaw stays still as Root's thumb drags across her bottom lip. "I wasn't talking to Her."

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