When I Look At the World

by emorosadiaz

Summary

"You know what I see when I look at the world, Tasha? Beyond all of the bad things, I see nice things. I see dogs and happy families and rain and you. That's what I see when I look at the world." (Clintasha Week 2016, Day 1: Lyrics/Quote)

Clintasha Week, Day 1: Lyrics/Quote

When you look at the world,
what is it that you see?

When there's all kinds of chaos,
and everyone is walking lame,
you don't even blink, now, do you?

Or even look away?

So I try to be like you,
try to feel it like you do;

but without you, it's no use.
Clint Barton is an enigma.

Though her opinion of Clint changed over the course of the time Natasha has spent with him, the strange ways he perceives his surroundings acts as a constant variable throughout. When Natasha had been new to S.H.I.E.L.D. and looked to him as an assassin armed with arrows and a perverted savior-complex, Clint confused her. When they’d partnered up under the name "Strike Team: Delta" to combat injustice and massive criminal activity, he still confused her. To this day, even after she’s spent years by his side as his victim (though he hadn't killed her, he'd technically kidnapped her and brought her back to S.H.I.E.L.D.), coworker, friend, and partner, and despite her comfortable understanding of him, physically and emotionally, he confuses her.

And it all has to do with a simple question.

"How do you view the world?"

Stake-outs for their targets set the stage for many of their more personal conversations. Natasha may have operated in silence on her missions before joining S.H.I.E.L.D. under Clint's persuasive words, but after she found herself drowning in the sea Clint's ramblings on their first assignment together, she never made it back to the surface.

So she instigates sometimes. She raises her eyebrows, waiting for his response.

He hardly looks up from his vigilant watch of the glass front doors of the gray building across the street from their perch. "Could you be a little more specific? Because I'm currently viewing the world through binoculars, if that's what you're wondering."

"Thanks, I wasn't quite sure what you were doing with your hands and face there." Natasha rolls her eyes. "You just seem like the optimistic type."

"Optimistic? I may be an orphan, but you don't see me parading through the street singing about how the sun will come out tomorrow," Clint says. "You look more like little orphan Annie, anyway. You got the hair for it."

Natasha opts to ignore his Broadway reference. "How are you so upbeat about things when you see all the evil happening in the world? I just don't understand it."

"Well, me being sad about it won't help make things less bad," Clint points out, shrugging his shoulders. "I'm not really optimistic, either. You flatter me."

"You see the 'good in people,' or whatever."

"Is this about me saving you again?"

"Kidnapping me."

"Right, right. Is that what this is about?"

"Not particularly." Natasha looks at the anticipated location of their target, then back to Clint. "Though I guess that's a little part of it. This world is a mess. People hurt each other all the time. No
one is innocent."

"Kids are innocent."

"I wasn't."

"Eh. Neither was I, then, if we're going there. But still." Clint finally turns his eyes up to her, the light of the streetlamp several stories below illuminating just the bottom slivers of his steely irises. "Going back to your original question, I suppose I view the world as a mess, just like you. I'm just trying to help clean it up."

Natasha picks a stray red hair off of her Widow's Bites, flicking it into the cool, night air with her fingers. "But how much can we salvage by cleaning it up? Stopping an act of violence today won't prevent all of the violence to take place tomorrow."

"It's better than leaving it to permeate further over time," Clint says. "Trust me, the day I'm out of a job because the world's achieved peace will be the best day of my life."

Such a day doesn't sound as wonderful to Natasha. Of course, world peace is ideal for everyone, but she isn't sure what kind of person she would be without some kind of lifestyle involving bullets and her Widow's Bites. She's never lived such a life, as her transfer to S.H.I.E.L.D. had just been a shuffling of her hit lists (and her morals, she supposes).

"Trust me, Tasha, I think this world's just as full of evil as you do," he continues. "Despite that, I think it's also worth protecting, in whatever way I can contribute. This job just so happens to be the way."

A world worth protecting? Natasha mulls it over for a moment. This world has given her jumbled memories, bloodstained hands, and discomfort.

(But it has also given her Clint.)

Clint suddenly snaps back into Hawkeye-mode. "Target spotted."

"How can you look at the world as something to protect?"

Clint looks up from the white cot he's sitting on, several bandages covering various parts of his face (mainly cheeks and nose) and an ice pack pressed to his bruised eye. His grip on the ice slips slightly. Natasha lays her hand over his to properly apply the ice.

"Are you asking me this because I just got beat up by some mobsters?"

"I was just thinking back to our conversation a few months ago," Natasha says. "But, yes, this world has people like those mobsters in it. Everywhere. How can you protect something that supports the lives of such scum?"

"Not everyone is scum," Clint says. "And I'm sure there are nice mobsters somewhere. Those guys today just weren't it."

"And you told me you weren't an optimist."

He shrugs. "I'm just being sensitive to the fact that the phrase, 'all mobsters are evil', probably does not apply to every single mobster in the world. That's a bit harsh."

"If you could eliminate all of the evil in the world by pushing a button," Natasha prompts, "would
"Depends. Define 'eliminate.' Kill?"

"Yes."

"Hm." Clint glances up toward the metal ceiling of the helicarrier in thought. He then resumes eye contact with her. "Nope."

"Really? Just a little while ago, you said you looked forward to the impossible day world peace was achieved."

"That's different. Why would it be okay for me to push that button now," Clint points an index finger at her, "when pushing it five years ago would have cost me my future partner?"

It takes her a moment, but Natasha grasps the meaning behind Clint's words. If he'd had the power to "eliminate" all of the evil in the world with the simple flick of a switch years ago, Natasha would have, inevitably, been a part of those who suddenly ceased to exist after the switch had been flipped. But real life does not operate in this way - Clint lacks the power to organize all of humanity by his morals and filter out those who did not fit, so he'd brought Natasha in for a second chance instead.

"Besides," Clint points his finger to himself, "if someone else had done that ten years ago, I would've been wiped off the face of the planet with the rest of the bad guys. But both of us seem to be headed on the right path now, and I'm sure we're not the only ones with hearts under a poorly influenced exterior."

"You flatter me," Natasha says softly, echoing Clint's semi-typical line. It comes out every once in awhile.

"You know what I see when I look at the world, Tasha?" Clint rests his hand in his lap. "Beyond all of the bad things, I see nice things. I see dogs and happy families and rain and you. That's what I see when I look at the world."

The list unnerves Natasha. "I don't believe I'm synonymous with those things."

"I do," Clint replies without hesitation. "That's the world I fight to protect."

But Natasha fails to think of her Clint and her world as two things existing on the same plane. She would always protect Clint; he has only treated her selflessly. The world, meanwhile, has only done the opposite. It doesn't deserve her compassion just as much as she doesn't deserve Clint in all of the ways he'd lifted her life.

"I see you or I see the world." Natasha shakes her head. "They're not the same."

"To each their own." Clint shrugs his shoulders. "I mean, if you mean the world to me, I guess I see you as the world, and of course I'd protect that."

Natasha isn't sure how to respond to that. How can someone like her be seen in such high regard? She settles for a slightly scolding, "Clint."

"Though the world may have given us shitty lives, it also gave us the second chances that allowed us to meet and connect," Clint says, ignoring her reaction. "I see that when I look at you."

"I can't see what you see," Natasha admits. She regularly tries to avoid looking in mirrors.
"You're better than you think you are, Natasha," Clint says, his voice suddenly serious. The light smile fades from his face, replaced by a slight frown. Natasha lets go of Clint's hand holding the ice pack. He lowers his hand, unveiling the part of his face that had been hidden by the ice. "You may not see it for yourself yet, but I see it. Coulson sees it."

"You should get your eyes checked," Natasha murmurs. Clint grabs her left hand with his right, intertwining their fingers.

"Hate to burst your bubble, but I'm called Hawkeye for a reason." He has the audacity to wink at her. Christ. What a dork. (Her dork.) "You're fighting the good fight every day, just like everyone else at S.H.I.E.L.D. Your dedication has saved countless lives. I just wish you could see that."

"Is something wrong with me for not being able to?" Natasha chances a glance at their connected hands.

"You're your own worst enemy, as the saying goes. Nothing's wrong with you, Tasha. Your mind just likes to mess with you sometimes. That's what happens after you've had to go through some serious shit like you have."

"Well...when I see you, I see good things, too." She thinks of forgiveness, compassion, joy, and perseverance right off the bat.

"And it's hard for me to see that most of the time, too," Clint admits, tilting his head. "But it'll be okay, because I'm going to keep trying my best on missions."

Natasha nods. "I will, too."

"That's all we can really do."

---

Tell me, tell me,
what do you see?

Tell me, tell me,
what's wrong with me?

- "When I Look At the World" by U2

Please [drop by the archive and comment](#) to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!