

EPISODE 020

“Kiss Me Slowly” by Parachute – Why Change is Better than Repetition

See the show notes at storiesinsongs.com/podcast/episode-020

[00:00:00] Hey, this is Melanie Naumann, and welcome back to the Stories in Songs Podcast.

Today we'll talk about Parachute's song "Kiss Me Slowly." This is the first song we analyze in the category of the love story moment of the First Kiss.

And you're in for a surprise. The more we take that song apart, the more we discover why the lyrics actually confuse us and how we could have avoided that confusion. Not only that, but we also talk about three mistakes in lyric writing that you should never make – especially if you want to use the power of storytelling to really empower your lyrics.

There's no need to worry anymore. If you stick around to the end of the episode, I'll give you some tips on how you could avoid writing a plot that does not progress and repeats itself.

Sound good?

So let's get started.

TEASER

Intro

[00:01:26] As announced in the last episode, we'll continue with studying the lyrics of the second must-have love story moment: the first kiss or intimate connection between the two lovers of a courtship romance story.



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But to mix things up a bit, we'll also have some more bite-sized episodes in between the more extended lyric studies. So we will talk about the craft of storytelling and look at different tools and methods that will help you boost your songwriting and write better lyrics.

I also want to point out that you can now watch a free 3-part video series on my website. These three videos help you write powerful lyrics that move people.

Especially if you are

- struggling with writing confusing lyrics that no one gets,
- or want to know how your words can really make an impact,
- then I recommend you check out my free video series. Each video is about 10 minutes long and will help you discover how to use storytelling to unleash powerful lyrics.

Today, we'll start with the first song example of writing lyrics about the first kiss – a moment so many people love to hear about since it takes them back on memory lane or paints them a picture of a romantic moment they'd love to experience themselves.

What you'll learn in this episode

[00:02:48] So what will you learn in this episode?

I've also included lyric form and structure in my analysis for the first time ever. This way, we find out if the lyric structure actually supports the idea of the song or if it doesn't work together. It's all about prosody, right?

Furthermore, today we have the first song in our examples that does not include the moment that turns the tables. What that actually means for the song, well, you're about to find out.

It's a pretty long episode. So if you need time to pause, no worries. Just make sure you come back and listen to the rest of the episode because I really think you and your lyric writing can gain some great insights when we take apart "Kiss Me Slowly" by Parachute.



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The S.O.N.G. Framework

[00:03:35] Before we dive into analyzing the lyrics of this episode's song, here's a quick recap of the framework we use for studying the storytelling power in lyrics. It includes all the questions we need to answer when we want to find out how much a song uses the craft of storytelling to engage its listeners.

And the more it does, the stronger the song gets.

I call this framework: SONG - **S-O-N-G**.

It consists of 4 steps: S like Summary - O like Observer - N like Narration - G like Gist.

So it's SONG. Very easy to remember, right?

If we translate those acronyms into steps, we first look at what the song is about. We will summarize it. This summary will give us a bird' eye view of the song's main content in general.

After that, we dive deeper to find out more about the person who is the central character in that song. I call him the observer because it's the person who lets the listener know what is going on.

In the third step, we analyze the narration to learn about the inner dynamics of how the songwriters applied the craft of storytelling to the song.

Lastly, we get to the song's gist to find out the big takeaway for the listener. We will look primarily at the song's message and determine if it was a cautionary or a prescriptive tale.

Kiss Me Slowly" by Parachute

[00:05:05] The song we will analyze today is "Kiss Me Slowly" by the American pop-rock band Parachute.

"Kiss Me Slowly" is the second single release of Parachute's album "The Way It Was," released in 2011.

Although fans of the band might argue that "Kiss Me Slowly" is actually a breakup song since they know the artist's backstory, I always take the lyrics as they are written. That means, no



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matter what you write or someone else wrote, you can't assume people know what you know. They don't have the insights into all the background information. They only see what's on the page, or, as it refers to listening to songs: what they hear.

So that's something you always need to keep in mind when writing songs: Your audience puzzles your character's story together by what your lyrics state. Although, of course, the music sets the mood and gives hints to how you might perceive what's written between the lines, so does the structure of lyrics communicate a stable or unstable feeling letting us know how confident or unsure a character is in what he or she says. But again, although we will include some lyric structure analysis, too, we still mainly focus on the plot.

And Parachute's song could be perceived as a breakup song because there are elements of a breakup in it. But, as you will find out too, the main moment the lyrics focus on is the moment when the couple was kissing in that hotel room. That moment is at the center of the lyrics.

So without further ado, let's look at the lyrics of "Kiss Me Slowly" and then we'll analyze it in detail to find the answer to the question: "First Kiss or Breakup"- Song, or both?

The following lyrics to "Kiss Me Slowly" are under copyright by Warner Chappell Music.

[[Video]]

https://www.youtube-nocookie.com/embed/IXqYw_II6Pc

Songwriters: Charles Kelley / Dave Haywood / David Wesley Haywood / William Charles Anderson
Kiss Me Slowly lyrics © Warner Chappell Music, Inc

[Verse 1]
Stay with me
Baby, stay with me
Tonight, don't leave me alone
Walk with me
Come and walk with me
To the edge of all we've ever known
I can see you there with the city lights
Fourteenth floor, pale blue eyes
I can breathe you in
Two shadows standing by the bedroom door
No, I could not want you more than I did right then
As our heads leaned in



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[Chorus]

*Well, I'm not sure what this is gonna be
But with my eyes closed, all I see
Is the skyline, through the window
The moon above you and the streets below
Hold my breath as you're moving in
Taste your lips and feel your skin
When the time comes, baby, don't run
Just kiss me slowly*

[Verse 2]

*Stay with me
Baby, stay with me
Tonight, don't leave me alone (Me alone)
She shows me everything she used to know
Picture frames and country roads
When the days were long and the world was small
She stood by as it fell apart
Separate rooms and broken hearts
But I won't be the one to let you go*

[Chorus]

*Oh, I'm not sure what this is gonna be
But with my eyes closed, all I see
Is the skyline, through the window
The moon above you and the streets below
Hold my breath as you're moving in
Taste your lips and feel your skin
When the time comes, baby, don't run
Just kiss me slowly
Don't run away*

[Bridge]

*And it's hard to love again
When the only way it's been
When the only love you knew
Just walked away
If it's something that you want
Darling, you don't have to run
You don't have to go
Just stay with me, baby, stay with me*

[Chorus]



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*Well, I'm not sure what this is gonna be
But with my eyes closed, all I see
Is the skyline, through the window
The moon above you and the streets below (Don't let go)
Hold my breath as you're moving in
Taste your lips and feel your skin
When the time comes, baby, don't run
Just kiss me slowly
I'm not sure where this is gonna go
But in this moment, all I know
Is the skyline, through the window
The moon above you and the streets below (Baby, don't let go)
Hold my breath as you're moving in
Taste your lips and feel your skin
When the time comes, baby, don't run
Just kiss me slowly*

Now that we have read through the lyrics let's start dissecting them to study the storytelling power of "Kiss Me Slowly" using the S.O.N.G. Framework.

Ready?

Let's begin.

1. Summary (About)

[00:09:03] First, we summarize the lyrics and talk about what kind of story or story moment it includes. This first step helps us get a clear overview of what the song is about before diving deeper into characters, the different storytelling tools, and the message behind it all. This step is laying the groundwork for our lyric study.

So the first question is:

1. What is the song about?

I think the song is about a man who wants this one girl. But she has gone through bad relationships that did not end well for her. And now she is confused, even scared to love and



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commit to someone again. She is holding back. The main character empathizes with what she's been through to make her see that he understands her fear. He says in the bridge:

*And it's hard to love again
When the only way it's been
When the only love you knew
Just walked away*

He also wants her to know that he won't do to her what she's been through before. At the end of the second verse, he says:

*She stood by as it fell apart
Separate rooms and broken hearts
But I won't be the one to let you go*

So the song "Kiss Me Slowly" is about two people wanting more but being scared to get hurt again.

Of course, you might have a different take on what the song is mainly about. And that is totally valid. If you can make an argument for your thoughts, that's perfect.

Now let's dive a little deeper and pinpoint some main ideas to assign a story genre to the song. To find out to what kind of story content genre the song belongs to, you can ask yourself the following question:

2. If the song was a scene from a movie, under what genre would you promote the movie? What is the story's genre?

I think we don't have any problems identifying the story's content genre.

The song's title is called "Kiss Me Slowly" which could even be the title for a romance movie.

If we look up the activity of "Kissing" in the dictionary, it is described as a touch or caress with the lips as a sign of love, sexual desire, or greeting.

So the main content genre is Love.
Easy, right?



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3. After listening to the song, does the song refer to a specific moment that we expect to see in the love story?

Now that we have put a label on the song's story moment and identified it as part of a love story, we can further check if the lyrics fit into one of the must-have love story moments that the audience intuitively knows and identifies as one of the special moments that makes a love story complete.

As a reminder, the six must-have moments that the audience expects from a love story are:

1. the lovers meet
2. the first kiss or intimate connection
3. the confession of love
4. the breakup
5. the proof of love
6. and the scene where the lovers reunite or part.

Those six moments provide us with another waypoint when analyzing the song's lyrics – another step to move forward in our lyric study. They help us go further in one direction and discover more about the meaning behind the words.

In Parachute's song "Kiss Me Slowly," two story moments stand out. They are:

- the first kiss
- and the breakup.

We will talk more about the interaction between those two story moments in step 2 of the S.O.N.G. framework. So stay with me.

Let's move on to the next question:

4. Do the song's first lines set the expectations of what the song will be about. Do they give a promise to what kind of story moment the audience can expect?

Now that we know that the song is about love, and especially the lovers' first kiss paired with breakup elements, we now look at the first lines of the song.

You might wonder why the first lines of the song are so important.

Well, just think about the last movie you saw or the last book you've read. The first scene of the movie or the first pages of a book always let you ease into what kind of story you can



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expect. Just think of James Bond, Fast and Furious, or any other action story – they all begin with some kind of chase or fight scene. They do that on purpose to let their audience know: *Hey, this story is about life and death. Lives are at stake. It's an action story. So buckle up. You're in for an exciting ride.*

You see what they do: They set the expectations in their audience. They don't start with a prelude of a character's love life or show them at their desk job. They give their audience a piece of the action. Because action is the reason why they wanna watch the movie or read the book.

If the action story would start with a character's love life and later switch to a story where lives are threatened, we – as the audience – would feel cheated. We had expected a love story, but we were served an action story.

So whenever you wonder about how to write the first lines of your lyrics, consider that those lines give your audience a promise of what they can expect from the rest of your song. Don't confuse them by setting up a scene that you won't continue painting for them. Keep it simple. Just stay in the arena you've chosen and fill it with life for your audience.

And if you need some more convincing, here's another reason why the first lines are so important: We don't have much time in a song to hook our listeners and keep them engaged. That's why it's so important to give your listeners a clear picture or even a hint to what kind of song they can expect.

The first lines are the setup for the rest of your song. And your listeners want that promise fulfilled that the first lines gave them. So never underestimate the power of the first lines of your songs. Those lines are super important because their job is to hook your audience.

There are multiple ways to do this.

- you can establish the setting and the main character by giving them some unique, intriguing features that make the listener keep listening because they seem very intriguing and raise questions in your listener's mind
- Or you establish the central problem the song's character will have to deal with in this song. Because problems are a great way to let your listeners identify with your song's character and hook them because they want to find out how that problem is resolved. You opened a gap. And the audience keeps listening because they want closure.
- Or you start with the promise of what kind of moment of the chosen story genre the listeners can expect.
- Or you can pull the listener right into an unfolding event using action verbs, the first-person perspective, and a direct address through dialogue



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- Or, when thinking about the first lines of your song, you can even use a combination of the options we've just mentioned

Let's look at the first lines of Parachute's song "Kiss Me Slowly". They say:

Stay with me
Baby, stay with me

Those two lines give their audience already a great insight into the type of song they're about to hear.

1. They set up the point of view. That means we have, in storytelling terms, a first-person narrator that speaks directly to another person, called "Baby". Please don't confuse the point of view in storytelling with the point of view in lyric writing. In lyrics, the point of view for this song is Direct Address because we have the pronouns I and You.
2. Furthermore, the lines hint at the problem the main character has to deal with. He asks her to "stay", so something must have happened before that gave her a reason to leave.
3. We are intrigued to find out why she wants to leave. So the lines raise a question in the listener's mind.
4. The action verb "Stay" actually is a word that we use to get the attention of someone. It's like a command. Something to pay attention to. And since that word is used in direct address to the listener, they are inclined to "stay" and not switch the radio station.
5. The repetition of "Stay with me" further strengthens the listener's perception that this song is about love troubles. Something is about to happen, and we've just joined the two lovers at a climactic moment. Gosh, so exciting! So we want to keep listening to find out what's gonna happen next.

You see, the lines of

Stay with me
Baby, stay with me

don't seem so special when you first look at them. But they serve a purpose, and they do so wonderfully. They not only set up what kind of ride we're in for, but they also pull us right into an unfolding event. We're hooked. And that's the job of your lyrics' first lines.

Isn't this amazing to think about?



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The power of the first lines is something you should never ever underestimate when writing lyrics. Every line, even every word serves a purpose. And if you combine them well, you've got yourself a song that will keep your listeners engaged from the first word to the last.

Okay, let's continue by looking at some further love story must-haves.

5. Does the song use conventions of the love story genre as well?

Conventions are the conditions that set up the moments of change that are the obligatory moments we've just talked about – like the first kiss or the breakup. They are the setting, character, and catalysts that create the conditions for conflict that arise in the story.

In a story, a character can take on different roles. And specifically, in a love story, we have characters that can take on the role of a rival – which means there is another possible love interest, which makes the love story so much more interesting – or we have characters that are either in favor of or against the relationship.

Furthermore, conventions can also refer to the way the story moves forward.

For example, by including

- an external need that one of the lovers has to deal with something else externally and not just wants to find love,
- there can be opposing forces to overcome,
- there might be secrets
- rituals,
- or we go as far as letting morality weigh in.

In the song “Kiss Me Slowly” by Parachute, there is a reference to a former lover.

*And it's hard to love again
When the only way it's been
When the only love you knew
Just walked away*

This person is a rival for our song's main character because he still influences her ability to love and commit again. The rival was the only love she knew, and now our main character wants to be the person that makes her find love again. But he has to help her get over this person in order to make her stay and commit. And committing means kissing him again, slowly.



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Before we talk more about the song's characters, let's answer two more questions about the overall Gestalt of the lyrics:

6. Is the song's character talking about the distant past, their current state of mind, or an imagined future?

This question is important because it reveals ...

- if the song's story moment has already happened and therefore is just a retelling of events that might have led to a certain situation or used to build a bridge to the present,
- or if the song pulls the listener right into an unfolding event
- or if the song is about an imagined, anticipated, or feared future event

In the song "Kiss Me Slowly," we are right at the moment with the two characters. They are on the brink of breaking up because she is so scared to start a new relationship. He sings:

*Come and walk with me
To the edge of all we've ever known*

They have kissed once, and so the lyrics take us back into the near past and to a scene the main character thinks about again and again.

That moment is so important to him and so present in his mind, that for him it's at the edge of all they've ever known. This is a beautiful way to point out what connects the two lovers so uniquely. The kiss they once shared has created a super-strong memory.

The songwriters chose to assign that first kiss moment to the chorus to make it clear to everyone how special that one kiss was. They paint a picture of that kiss, giving us the surrounding setting of the fourteenth-floor room with the skyline view, and painting a detailed picture of how magic that kiss was.

And in the present, the main character struggles to make her stay with him – since she is so scared of past experiences and confused by their recent past as well. The kiss has changed everything between them. Her feelings for him are the reason why she wants to leave.

It's such a tightly constructed story and it works very well.

Do you see how the lyrics actually give us so much information about that couple in just two verses, a chorus, and a bridge? It's amazing storytelling power at work in those lyrics because the present is connected and influenced by the past that needs to be overcome (the



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past relationship) and embraced (their kiss). So we have the solution to the problem of the fear of commitment woven into the lyrics as well.

And it's all connected.

So well done. That's what I mean by tightly constructed. It just fits together.

We'll talk more about the narrative power in step 3, but let's just first complete the first step of the S.O.N.G. framework by answering this last question:

7. Are we hearing someone's inner monologue, someone narrating a story, or a conversation between two or more people?

This question helps us know how close the narrative distance is between the listener and the song's main character.

- If the main character is only talking to himself, then the narrative distance between listener and character is very close. Because we as the listener gain access to the character's thoughts and feelings, and if they use present tense, the chances are high that the listener gets pulled into the story moment and maybe even feels like the song's character.
- If the main character is only narrating a story, the narrative distance is not as close anymore. We are only being told a story. But as we've learned from the last episodes, there's still a way to include your listeners in your narration, such as using rhetorical questions aimed at the listener.
- And if there's a conversation between two or more people in the song, the narrative distance is vast between the listener and the song's character. The listener is only eavesdropping on a conversation without having access to the character's thoughts and emotions and without being paid attention to.

So this question helps us know how well the song's lyrics engage the listener and pull them into the story moment of the song.

In the song "Kiss Me Slowly", the main character is talking to his lover:

*Stay with me
Baby, stay with me*

He uses Direct Address because he uses the pronouns "I" and "You".

But in the second verse, the song's character switches to third person. He says:

*She shows me everything she used to know
Picture frames and country roads*



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*When the days were long and the world was small
She stood by as it fell apart*

Switching point of view, or in short POV, is something you should not do. A song, as we already said, is a tightly constructed little mini-story. You can neither introduce too many characters nor switch the way how you address them. You only end up confusing your listeners. And if they are confused, then they are thrown out of the narrative by that confusion. They start wondering: “Wait, to whom is he talking to now? I thought he talked directly to her, but now he refers to her in the third person. Why? Why does he do that? Did I miss something?”

You see, switching POV is something you should avoid. Just compare how the strength of the lyrics changes if we use direct address instead of third-person narrative in the second verse.

Here is the original version in third-person:

*She shows me everything she used to know
Picture frames and country roads
When the days were long and the world was small
She stood by as it fell apart*

And now let’s turn it into Direct Address to make it consistent with the rest of the lyrics’ POV.

*You showed me everything you used to know
Picture frames and country roads
When the days were long and the world was small
You stood by as it fell apart*

Wow, that’s so much stronger. The intimate connection between the two characters in the song is so heavy. It weighs much more and highlights their past relationship and what they’ve been through.

I’d go with direct address.
What about you?

Summary Step 1 - Summary

Okay, now we’ve finished the first step of the S.O.N.G. framework.

We now know:

1. The song is about two people wanting more and committing but they are scared to get hurt again.



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2. We know the song is about love.
 3. And it is especially about the lover's first kiss
 4. but only the troubled love story that hints at a breakup moment is set up in the first lines of the song.
 5. The song uses the love story conventions of a rival, even though that person is never identified. And he does not have to be. We focus strongly on the two main characters in that song. That's enough.
 6. The character is speaking in the present moment but refers back to their past.
 7. And he is talking directly to his girl, even though there is an unnecessary switch on POV from direct address to third person in the second verse.
-

2. Observer

[00:28:30] Now that we have a general overview of the story moment included in the song, let's talk about its main character.

Getting to know the character will help us figure out the problem or challenge he is dealing with, what he wants and needs, if we can sympathize or empathize with them, and if he has yet to grow as a person or if he's already sophisticated enough to recognize the consequences of his actions.

This second step is another foundation for evaluating the storytelling power of the lyrics. Story is character. So never underestimate the importance of who your song's main character is.

The first question of the second step of the S.O.N.G. framework is:

1. What is the role the singer takes on in the song?

This helps us figure out if the singer is taking on the main character's role in the song, if he's just a bystander or an unidentified presence. This ties back to narrative distance and how closely connected we feel to the song's characters.

It's typical for love songs that the singer takes on the main character's role or is the narrator of the story moment. And in Parachute's song "Kiss Me Slowly," the singer becomes the song's main character.



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In being that person, the lyrics give the listeners a very intimate view into that relationship that he's fighting so hard for.

2. Is the singer referring to another person?

This question serves to list all the characters present in the song. It's to have an overview of who else is taking part in that scene.

So there's no reason to talk about this any longer than necessary.

In Parachute's song, we have the main character who is talking to his love interest.

Now let's get to know the main character:

3. What does the main character in the song consciously WANT? What is his goal?

Answering this question will help you find out what your main character is actively after. What is he trying to achieve or get? In storytelling terms, we call this the "conscious object of desire."

Since we know the song is about love, there's no need to look any further than that. A story's content genre is defined by universal human values. Universal human values are the things that help us thrive and survive in this world. And every content genre is about one of those core values.

- A crime story plays on the value spectrum of justice to injustice.
- An action story is about life and death.
- A performance story like Rocky or Whiplash is about Shame and Respect.
- And a love story is about the universal human values of love and hate.

Those values give us a great clue to what the song's main character wants. If we didn't know the song's external content genre, we also wouldn't know what the song's character wants. So the song could or only might be about some internal struggle, showing us only the internal landscape of that character without knowing what's externally going on.

It's always good to include the external setting and let the audience know what the character in your song WANTS. Especially, when you write a song from the lyric point of view of Direct Address. That's always an external setting because someone else is included. We turn from the internal to the external by talking to another person.



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So make sure you know what your character wants.

Look at the story's content genre for help. Because, as already said, every genre has a core value that you can use as a guide for your character's want.

In "Kiss Me Slowly", the song's main character wants love. More specifically, he wants her to kiss him slowly.

Now that we know what the character is actively after, let's talk about his NEED.

4. What is the main character's NEED? What is his internal desire?

In the book *Story*, Robert McKee observes that "The protagonist may also have a self-contradictory unconscious desire." He goes on to say, "The conscious and unconscious desires of a multidimensional protagonist contradict each other. What he believes he wants is the antithesis of what he actually but unwittingly needs."

A character may be unaware that they want something that conflicts with their conscious desire. They start to act out of a conscious desire and end up trying to satisfy the unconscious one.

Let's look at one example better to understand the WANT and NEED of a character.

A song is great when it only focuses on one specific moment taken out of a possible larger story. Sometimes what the character wants will be all that is included because establishing the NEED as well is not always possible. Especially when the song's moment is just a short snippet, for example, like in Madonna's song "Crazy for You." There the character just wanted to hook up with their love interest.

Nevertheless, sometimes the need can make a difference. In the song "I'm A Believer" by the Monkees, the song's main character wanted to get away from love, but he needed to change his disillusioned worldview that love was out to get him. He needed to understand that love can be like in fairytales as well. This was a contradiction between what he wanted and what he needed.

So here's how you can use the character's WANT and NEED for your own songwriting:

- If you write a song that is just about a very short moment in time, focus on what your character actively tries to gain, achieve, or get.



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- If you write a song that builds a connection from the past to the present, sometimes even to the future, then you can include what your character needed.

In “Kiss Me Slowly”, I’d argue that the song’s main character needs to man up. I don’t know how you feel about it, but I think he comes across as a little whiny or needy. Those are certain characteristics I’m not looking for when the song is about someone fighting for love and wanting to win someone back. At least, if I’m looking for a happy end.

No why is that?

This all ties back to a character’s need.

In “Kiss Me Slowly”, the character needs company who will assure him he’s safe. That’s his unconscious need.

Just look at the lines:

Well, I'm not sure what this is gonna be

or

*Stay with me
Baby, stay with me
Tonight, don't leave me alone (Me alone)*

At the beginning of every verse, he asks her to stay, not run away, and not leave him alone. In the chorus, he says that he’s unsure.

So now we can see better why this song is also perceived as a breakup song. The song’s main character comes off very insecure. If he was already confident in what they could have – meaning he knows what they could be – he would fight for her without putting his own need so strongly into the foreground.

What do you think?

Let’s continue with the next question:



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5. Do we like the main character of the song? Does he have positive character traits? Or is it someone we despise and can't consider a role model?

We've already established the song's main character as being a little needy. He wants love but his internal need for safety is much stronger. So we don't see him as a very strong character, even though he tries to be better than her past love.

But all he gives us is insecurity about what they'll have. Of course, honesty is a very positive trait. But especially when you want someone to be with you – someone who went through their own share of love trouble – you should yourself provide some security – and not be the one looking for it.

All this talk about liking the main character of the song helps the listener find out if they see the character's actions as something they should do too, if they ever face the same problem – turning the song's character into a mentor-like figure – or if we should avoid what they do to prevent mistakes.

Since that song does not offer us a resolution to the character's main problem: Will they get together or not, and knowing that the song's main character is not that convincing, we might say that his attempt failed. He did not win her back or convince her to kiss him slowly.

If that's the case, we might consider the little mini story in this song as a cautionary tale. Don't be so insecure and look for safety when you want someone to be with you.

Please remember: Even if you like or dislike the character in the song, you might still be able to sympathize or empathize with them. It all depends if you can relate to their struggles.

So we can certainly empathize with someone who is kind of lost and needs some company because we've all been there. *Just don't leave me. Stay with me. Please. Don't leave me tonight.*

So, this character has our empathy, but he's certainly not stepping up to be a guide for our own love life.

NaiveSummary Step 2 - Observer

Okay, now we've finished the second step of the S.O.N.G. framework.

We now know:



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1. The singer takes on the role of the main character
2. and he talks to his love interest
3. He wants her love and to be with her
4. but he needs a feeling of safety and not being left alone
5. Even though we might not like the song's character, we can still empathize with him.

Alright, now we got a bird's eye view of what the song is about, and we are aware of who the main character is, what he wants and needs, and to whom he's talking.

3. Narration

[00:39:12] Now it's time to study the storytelling power of the lyrics.

Including the power of storytelling in your lyrics helps you to hook your listeners and keep them engaged until the end of the song. And since storytelling is all about delivering a message or some deeper meaning, your listeners will also be able to take something away from your song.

So let's dive in to find out what works in the lyrics, what does not, and what could have been improved to increase the storytelling power – and ultimately how the song keeps the listener engaged.

The first and easiest question is:

1. What are the characters literally doing?

Easy question, right? But there's more to it and there's a huge reason why we should always ask ourselves what the characters are doing.

Look, when we listen to stories, we want to be able to picture what's going on. That means, it's hard for us to picture something in our mind if we do not receive any clues whatsoever to where the characters are or what they are literally doing – that means how they move through the scene. If we don't get any clues to where they are, they are simply floating in the void. Hard to picture them there, right?

That's why it's essential to at least show your audience one activity that your song's character does. If you're really good, you combine that activity with a setting – answering the crucial question of WHERE and WHEN your song takes place.



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As you might know, songwriting instructor Pat Pattison also highlights the importance of establishing the crucial questions of WHO talks to WHOM in the song, and WHEN and WHERE the situation takes place.

There are also three more questions you need to answer: What do they have to say? Why do they say it, and how does it all come together?

Pattison calls those questions a songwriter's six best friends.

And they are, indeed, a great starting point for using the power of storytelling.

But for now, just remember, don't let your characters float in a void. Show them in action, show them move or do something – literally what are their actions – so that we, as the audience, can picture them in our mind's eye.

In Parachute's song "Kiss Me Slowly", we have no clue where the character is at the present moment until the end of the song. They have changed the first and second line of the chorus from:

*Oh, I'm not sure what this is gonna be,
But with my eyes closed all I see
Is the skyline, through the window,*

They have changed it to the following. Pay attention to the second phrase:

*I'm not sure where this is gonna go
But in this moment all I know
Is the skyline, through the window,*

They say "But in this moment .." which suggests that they have found each other in the same situation as before. They are in that hotel room again with those city lights shining in. So we know where they are and we can place those two characters as probably standing across from each other, very close together.

But, depending on how you see it, maybe that information of where the characters are would have been better communicated at the beginning of the song.

At least, we get a sense of where they are in the second part of the first verse as he says:

Two shadows standing by the bedroom door,



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But again, after that phrase he refers back to a past moment:

*No, I could not want you more than I did right then,
As our heads leaned in.*

This tells us he's caught in a memory. And even though we don't know where the character is currently or what he's doing while he remembers that moment, all we really need to know is about that memory and how special it is. No need to paint another picture – at least as long as you don't want to contrast the character's situation to how it's been to how it is now. If that one memory scene is all that's really important, focusing on one mental image is the place that you need to spotlight. Don't split the spotlight into two different places - again, if you don't want to create a CONTRAST.

Okay, now let's move on to the second question of step 3.

2. What is the essential action of what the character is doing in the scene? What is on his secret agenda? What is he trying to achieve?

Sometimes when we have a scene with at least two characters, the characters might try to influence one another. They might try to convince the other one to do something they want them to do. For example, if someone is nice to you and compliments you, their compliments would be what they are literally doing. But their essential action could be directed towards seducing you.

So when we ask ourselves if there's an essential action of the song's character in the lyrics, we try to find out what they are secretly after and if they might try to manipulate someone.

In the case of the song "Kiss Me Slowly", the character is trying to win her back. He's doing that by making her remember their first kiss at exactly that same place.

So everything he does is directed towards winning her back.

You see, by figuring out what's happening on a surface level and underneath, we can widen our perception of what the main character is doing in that scene and how he tries to get what he wants.

Let's move on to the next question:



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3. Is there a problem the character is facing? Does something challenge him? Or is there some kind of conflict that he has to solve? If so, what is the central conflict the main character in the song has to deal with?

This question is really important.

We want to root for a character in the song. We do that because we either want them to achieve their goal or we rather see them get what they need.

But we can't invest ourselves in their journey if there are no obstacles to overcome.

Well, after all, we don't even get hooked or interested in what's going on with them if they don't have to face any challenges.

That's why it's so crucial to include a problem right at the start of the lyrics. This way, same as the character in the song, the audience is eager to find an answer to that problem. We hate it when things stay unresolved. We just need to know. Right? We need to know how it all turns out. That's what keeps us engaged.

And if we like the character in the song, yeah, we root for them to overcome that problem.

If you want to know more about why addressing a problem in a song is such a great way to engage your audience, listen to episode 17 of the Stories in Songs Podcast.

In "Kiss Me Slowly", the main problem is the fear of the song's character's love interest to commit to a relationship again. She's too scared to get hurt again.

Now let's see if this problem was already used at the beginning of the song.

4. Do the song's first lines introduce the problem the main character will have to deal with? And thus hook us and spark our interest?

The first lines go like this:

*Stay with me, baby stay with me,
Tonight don't leave me alone.*

Hm, interesting, right?

In the light of everything we've already discovered about that song – especially about the main problem we just talked about – it suddenly seems that her problem to commit again isn't really at the center of the song. What's at the center of the song is the character's



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NEED for feeling safe and not being alone. So contrary to what we thought at first, the song is not about winning her back. No, that's actually not what the character secretly wants. His essential want is not to be alone. Convincing her to stay with him is his tactic to meet that need.

Huh.

That's a turn we didn't expect, but that certainly makes a lot of sense given what we've already learned about that character.

So you see, sometimes what's obvious and on the surface, is not really what's going on beneath it.

And the first two phrases of the song actually revealed in all honesty, what's really going on. But it's easy to get distracted. And then we start wondering why something does not quite fit together: Why does he really want her back? Why does he have no clue where their relationship can go? Why does he mostly just want her to stay with him? And commit to him by that kiss?

And then you understand: Oh, he wants her to kiss him slowly so that she spends more time with him SO THAT he's not alone anymore.

Wow, so that's really going on.
Don't you see that song in a whole different light now?

That's the power of using this framework. All those questions to analyze the lyrics help us to discover what the song is really about. And as you saw, we started off thinking that song was just about a memory of a first kiss and the troubles of committing to each other after having been hurt in other relationships. But we knew something was off. Something didn't make sense of what the character wanted in contrast to how he acted, what he said, and what he actually needed.

If that song's intention was to focus on the character's need, well, we could have gone that way by making that need come out stronger even more.

If that wasn't the intention and it was supposed to be a love song to win someone back and help them trust in love again, well, then some changes would make the lyrics even stronger to hammer home that message.

But we never know. It's the artist who has to decide which way they want to go. But they should decide one way or the other to really be able to give the listener a prescriptive



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message. Otherwise, we see that song as a cautionary tale and kinda keep our distance to it.

If you ever work with an artist or it's your own song, you gotta know your intention. No room for confusing your listeners, or your song will suffer.

Alright, let's continue with the 5 commandments of storytelling.

Analyzing the scene told in the song.

[00:50:07] Alright, now that we really know what the character wants and needs and what problem he's trying to solve, let's look at the Story Grid's five commandments. That means we will check if the lyrics contain the five key elements that every unit of story - be it a chapter in a book, a scene in a movie, or the overall global story needs to have. Those are the elements of change. And as we know, stories are all about change. And there are 5 elements that determine or help you find if there's a change and specify the kind of change.

The first question is:

5. What is the inciting incident?

An inciting incident is an event – either causal, anticipated, or coincidental – that thrusts the song's character into the story's main action.

This event is a stimulus that your character gets. It's something unexpected that they did not see coming and don't know how to deal with it OR they are so focused on achieving a particular goal that they are blind to everything that is going on around them. They just don't see what that particular event means to them. Or they ignore it completely.

As we've already discovered in the last song analysis episodes, the inciting incident may not explicitly be mentioned in the lyrics. Sometimes we are thrown right into an unfolding event without really knowing what incident caused it. Even if you don't include that moment in your lyrics, make sure that – at least – you know what that moment was.

This moment ties back to the problem your character faces.

In the case of "Kiss Me Slowly", something must have happened in the song's character's life that threw the character out of balance. And now we are witnessing how they are trying to fix that state to return back to a place of comfort and safety.

So is there an inciting incident mentioned in the lyrics of "Kiss Me Slowly"?



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I think that incident is the kiss they shared in that hotel room. That moment threw both their lives out of balance. This moment created a longing to be with each other, so it helped to create a goal state. It set up the character's want.

Let's continue with the second SG commandment.

6. What is the unexpected event that turns the tables?

This unexpected event is the most important essential element of storytelling. It not only serves the purpose of having a conflict in your story or story moment, but it is also the indicator that something changes. And stories are not only about conflict but also about change.

And this turning point event is the reason why a character has to face a dilemma and make a choice to be able to move on. Because at that moment, the character realizes the true nature of the inciting incident. They were blind but not they see. The inciting incident has revealed itself to what it truly means or is.

This revelation or the action of another character changes the values.

Remember before, we talked about universal human values?

A turning point changes those values either to the positive or negative, and they throw the character into a dilemma. All the options they still had before to deal with that event have now shrunk to a binary choice – a best bad choice or an irreconcilable goods choice.

But before we continue with the crisis, let's figure out if "Kiss Me Slowly" has a turning point.

I don't know what you think, but I can't identify a turning point for the song's main character.

If you ever have trouble finding the turning point in lyrics, you can go about this way:

1. Check if the situation for the character has changed. Is he better off at the end of the song or not? If nothing has changed, there's no turning point. If something has changed, try to figure out the cause for that change.
 - a. This approach ties back to looking for a resolution. Has the problem been solved? Can we see that solution as a positive message or as a cautionary tale? If the problem stays unsolved, chances are there was no turning point. That's not always the case, but if you really want to make sure if there's a moment that changes the values, just look at how the situation has changed.

In "Kiss Me Slowly", there's no resolution.



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From the beginning to the end of the song he's asking her to kiss him slowly. But she never does.

Added to that, his approach or his tactic to convince her to be with him never changes. The only thing that is different is that in the bridge he finally empathizes with what she's been through. And by the way, that's the job of the bridge to introduce a different perspective or a new idea. You don't want the bridge to be a repetition of an idea that you already went through in the verses.

So, yeah, the character addresses her pain in the bridge. He says:

*And it's hard to love again,
When the only way it's been,
When the only love you know,
Just walked away
If it's something that you want,
Darling you don't have to run,*

So when he changes his approach by trying to see what it feels like from her perspective, we might say that the turning point was him failing to make her react to his bidding. She did not kiss him, so he changed his tactic a little.

But if we'd count that as a turning point, it would be very, very weak. And honestly, his tactic has not really changed. After all, the bridge is embraced by two phrases that really show that he still does not want her to go.

At first, he says: "Don't run away", and he finishes by saying "You don't have to go".

So, he's going in circles.

And she still does not react.

No kiss.

No decision.

Neither from her nor him.



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7. What is the dilemma that the character has to face? What are his options?

Since there's no turning point, the song's character is not thrown into a dilemma of having to make a choice – either a best bad choice of choosing the lesser of two evils OR an irreconcilable goods choice where one option is good for him but bad for her, or vice versa.

If there's no moment that changes the value for better or worse, you still have options that are more than that binary choice of best bad choice or irreconcilable goods choice.

Of course, you could argue that the turning point has happened off-page. That means, her decision to leave him was the turning point moment in their little story. You could certainly do that, but then you gotta let your audience know the character's dilemma. What does their crisis look like? What options do they have? And you should definitely provide a clear decision or the resolution.

In “Kiss Me Slowly”, all we have is the character trying and trying and trying without getting anywhere. So even if we'd argue there's an off-page turning point, in the lyrics itself, the plot does not progress.

Don't get me wrong. I think the song's beginning with the plea of “Stay with me, Stay with me” is great because it introduces a problem right away. But all his pleading never changes. It all stays the same.

I think that's why the song suffers, too. Not only because of the mistake in point of view but also because there's no resolution at all. And too much repetition.

8. What's the decision the character makes?

The last two commandments are the decision and the resolution.

As we already said, neither of both is present in the song.

Even if she is actually the one in the dilemma – which she certainly is – she doesn't make a decision. So we are left hanging to how it all turns out between the two of them.

Since there's so much repetition of all that asking, we kinda have the feeling this will not end well. Somehow the character has already run out of options and if he does not change his approach completely – that means turning away from his own NEED – this story will never have its happy end.



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Change

[00:59:13] Normally, we would talk a little more about the change that happened for the song's character. What has changed externally and/or internally for him?

Since we've already established that the situation stays the same, we can skip this part of the SONG framework.

I'd just like to add that looking at the song's first and last phrases is a great way to find out very quickly if something has changed for the song's main character.

Check out my free three-part video series that you can find on my website. In it, I explain how you can use this technique to your advantage. Just visit storiesinsongs.com.

But for now, let's look at the first and last phrases of "Kiss Me Slowly".

The song starts with the line:

Stay with me, baby stay with me,

And the lyrics end with the line:

When the time comes, baby don't run, just kiss me slowly.

As you can see, he is still asking her not to leave him. Nothing has changed.

Interesting right?

Writing Techniques

[01:00:19] Lastly, let's quickly talk about some of the writing techniques used in this song. This just helps us talk about some additional things we could apply or avoid in our songwriting.

The first question is:



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13. Is the singer only revealing some general information, or does he go into the specifics?

The more specific you are in a story, the more universal the story becomes.

Specificity is very important for songwriting. It sets up how believable a song can be and if the listeners will be moved or not. It influences how well we get to know the characters. If we find the character relatable, we can empathize with them.

Specificity also helps the listener to see the little mini-story in their mind. This ties back to the question of what are your characters literally doing? Answering that question helps to provide some specificity, especially when we refer to the setting of WHEN and WHERE.

But you can also provide specificity when you reveal to the audience WHAT exactly makes their love so special. Don't just say it, show it to the audience.

In general, showing the audience something by letting them see the character's actions is always better than simply stating the facts. It's much more intimate and lots more convincing.

In "Kiss Me Slowly", we have a specific setting. It's the hotel room on the 14th floor, city lights, two shadows standing by the bedroom door. Wow, that's very detailed and descriptive information.

We also find out what life was "when the days were long and the world was small". Pictures and country roads. So there's some more specificity. Since the point of view changes in that section to third person, instead of helping us see, it confuses us more.

But overall, there's some specificity that really paints the scene.

Another question about the writing technique considering the storytelling aspect is:

14. Is the song evoking specific pictures in the audience's mind by using imagery?

This question can be combined with the previous one.

Imagery can support the lyrics' specificity.

But being specific can also be naming time and places or offering details or specific clues to who the character is, his ambitions, goals, struggles, or where we can place him.

But painting pictures with words is what imagery does.



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I'm not gonna repeat myself, the hotel room is painted very well.

15. Lyric Structure

[01:03:00] Lastly, and today for the first time, let's look at the lyric structure. Let's find out if the structure and the form of the lyrics actually support the song's idea.

For this analysis, I refer back to the five elements of structure as introduced and explained by Pat Pattison in his book: *Songwriting: Essential Guide to Lyric Form and Structure*.

That means, we'll look at the following aspects:

- Number of Phrases
- Length of Phrases
- Rhythm of Lines
- Rhyme Schemes
- Rhyme Type

Since we could make another episode just about the lyric structure, let's just pick out the things that really stand out – one way or another.

Let's start with the first verse.

Stay with me
Baby, stay with me
Tonight, don't leave me alone
Walk with me
Come and walk with me
To the edge of all we've ever known

I can see you there with the city lights
Fourteenth floor, pale blue eyes
I can breathe you in
Two shadows standing by the bedroom door
No, I could not want you more than I did right then
As our heads leaned in

What stands out in the first verse is the repetition of the word “me”. That word is at the phrase's most important position: their end. In the first part of the verse, we can count the



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word “me” five times. Now isn’t that interesting that our needy character puts himself in the foreground that much? It’s about him, him, him. Me, me, me. Wow, so much for the “We” in relationships.

Furthermore, the lyrics include a filter word: “see”.

Basically, filter words are verbs that increase the narrative distance, reminding us that what we’re hearing is being told by someone rather than experienced, or shown, through the eyes of the character. Whenever you use the verbs: I hear, smell, see, taste, ... any of those words, or “I watch ...” you use a filter because the experience is filtered through the character first reminding the listener that there’s a distance between them and the story’s character.

So a bad choice even though the songwriters probably just wanted to pick up that “e”-sound of “me” to rhyme it in the next phrase.

Furthermore, “alone/known” and “door/more” are perfect rhymes. Even though, the rhyme “door/more” is an internal rhyme placed in different phrases and placed asymmetrically.

“Me and Me” creates an identity. It’s just repetition.

We also have lights/eyes. I think that’s an assonance rhyme because the consonant sounds after the vowels are unrelated

“In” creates an identity again. But there’s also a consonance rhyme between in/then.

The first part uses the rhyme scheme of “aab aab”, even though “a” is only an identity. This rhyme scheme is very solid. It doesn’t push forward very hard since the opening couplet stops the section. It’s also harder for the sequence to kick in, though it’s in full force at the end of line 5. We really want something to rhyme with “alone”.

The second part of the first verse goes aabxab since “door / more “ is an internal rhyme.

So overall, looking at the rhyme types and the rhyme scheme, we can say that the first verse is very stable.

But does the character in the song make a stable or confident impression on you?

No, he does not.

Let’s look at the length of the phrases at the beginning. They go 1, 2, 3, 1, 2, 3 in the first part. Again. Very stable since the longer the last phrases are, the more stable the section becomes.



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Only in the second half, they go “4, 5, 1, 4, 5, 2. But since we have an even number of phrases (6+6), there’s still some balance to it. Even though that part is a little unstable.

So there’s no prosody between the lyric structure and the main characters’ internal struggle to meet his need.

Let’s quickly look at the chorus:

*Well, I'm not sure what this is gonna be
 But with my eyes closed, all I see
 Is the skyline, through the window
 The moon above you and the streets below
 Hold my breath as you're moving in
 Taste your lips and feel your skin
 When the time comes, baby, don't run
 Just kiss me slowly*

We have couplets here at the beginning of the chorus. “Be/see”, “window / below”, “in / skin” are also perfect rhymes. Or call them resolved. And we know perfect rhymes are not really surprising and very stable. And couplets stop the motion. For the purpose of the chorus – a moment when time stood still – we actually have prosody. The lyric structure supports the idea.

The only two rhymes that are not perfect or resolved are “comes / run”. That’s a subtractive rhyme because we lose the “s”. And there’s an additive rhyme to create the balance again in the end by picking up the sound “ow” from below in the fourth line and rhyming it with “slowly” in the last phrase.

Again, the chorus is very stable.

The phrase lengths are the same. And the number of phrases is an even number, too.

So comparing the first verse and the chorus we have two sections that are very stable. Although I would argue that the verse could have been written a little more unstable, either by taking a phrase away or giving it an odd number to move that section into the chorus. Or use more unstable rhyme types.

Let’s look at the second verse.

*Stay with me
 Baby, stay with me
 Tonight, don't leave me alone (Me alone)*



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*She shows me everything she used to know
 Picture frames and country roads
 When the days were long and the world was small
 She stood by as it fell apart
 Separate rooms and broken hearts
 But I won't be the one to let you go*

Interestingly, the second verse starts like the first one with an identity “me/me”, but then skips the first part of the first verse’s structure (3 lines) and picks up the second part.

Still, the line lengths are suddenly longer. Before, lines 3 and 6 were the shortest. Now they are longer.

The rhyme scheme changes too when we look at the second part starting with “She shows me everything ...”. Here we have aaxbba. “Know / Roads” is an assonance rhyme. “Apart / Hearts” is a subtractive rhyme, and “go /know” is a perfect rhyme. So the rhyme types are the only ones really providing some instability.

The bridge is a great contrast to the chorus and the verses.

*And it's hard to love again
 When the only way it's been
 When the only love you knew
 Just walked away
 If it's something that you want
 Darling, you don't have to run
 You don't have to go
 Just stay with me, baby, stay with me*

The words hardly rhyme, if they do so at all.

So overall, I think the song’s main problem is the second verse – the dreaded second verse. Mistake in the point of view + not sticking to the established structure of the verse section. Maybe that’s another reason why we feel so confused about that part of the song.



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Summary Step 3 - Narration

Okay, now let's quickly summarize part 3 of the S.O.N.G. framework.

We now know:

1. The song's character is thinking back on a memory of their first kiss in a hotel room
 2. while he tries to convince her to stay with him.
 3. His problem is that he doesn't wanna be alone
 4. Kissing her that one time was the inciting incident to the song's story moment.
 5. But the situation does not change in the lyrics. He keeps asking her to stay.
-

4. Gist

[01:11:55] Alright, at this point we would continue with the fourth step of the S.O.N.G. framework. This step is all about the gist or the message of the song.

Since we don't have a character who's in a crisis where they have to make an A or B choice, there's no decision. If there's no decision, there's no resolution. If there's no resolution, there's neither a prescriptive nor cautionary message to take away from the song.

So the song "Kiss Me Slowly" does not have a message.

The problem that the character faces is not resolved.
His situation neither changes for better nor ill.

What we've learned in this episode:

[01:12:33] Wow, we've discovered a lot about Parachute's song "Kiss Me Slowly".

Most importantly, we've learned why it's so important to stick to one point of view. We don't want to create confusion by introducing too many viewpoints.



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We now also know that when we write in first person, it's better if we introduce the audience to a character who does not come across as needy or whiny. After all, in first person, the audience identifies with the character. But if they don't like that character or a particular character trait, they'll keep their distance from them. But that's not what we want, right? We want the audience to be in that moment with our song's character. So even if we start the song with a character who's insecure, we should show how they change internally and gain some kind of wisdom or meaning, and get more confident. That internal change makes a huge impact.

And we've also learned that a song gets kinda boring if it doesn't progress. There's a lot of repetition in the lyrics. Not only by the identities in the rhyme types, but also when we look at the plot. Nothing changes the situation. At the end of the song, the character still keeps asking her to stay with him. Same as in the beginning. So no problem is solved and no takeaway for the listener. Kinda sucks if you don't really know how it all turns out.

What do you think about the lyrics?

What would you have done better?

Any ideas?

Song Exercise - The First Kiss

[01:14:07] Well, as always, there's an exercise you can do to apply what we've learned in this episode.

Go to the show notes or visit storiesinsongs.com/podcast/ and find episode 20 to download the exercise PDF.

Just so you have an idea of what I want you to do:

I want you to rewrite the verses of Parachute's song "Kiss Me Slowly" by changing as little as possible but as much as you need to meet the following criteria:

1. Keep the point of view of **direct address**.
2. Try to turn away from that "me, me, me" - aspect.
 - a. Tipp: Show the character's **internal shift** to being more sophisticated or wise, or how he's discovered meaning. Something that makes him change his approach, or that shows him being confident right from the start.



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If you do this exercise and compare the two kinds of song's characters, you'll see how that changes our perception of the lyrics.

Do you think this can be done?

Make sure to check out the show notes and find my suggestion.

And if you are really in the zone, why don't you write your original lyrics about the memory of a first kiss and how someone fights for their love and to be with that person?

That's it for today.

Thanks a lot and see you next time for the first bite-sized episode about storytelling in songwriting.



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