

EPISODE 028

# “Shut Up and Kiss Me” by Mary Chapin Carpenter – Avoiding Contradictions in Lyrics

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See the show notes at [storiesinsongs.com/podcast/episode-028](https://storiesinsongs.com/podcast/episode-028)

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

Today we'll do our third lyric study about the love story moment of the first kiss. More specifically, we'll talk a little more about the tension, and the anticipation BEFORE the first kiss happens. After all, that's an incredible feeling to be moments away from that first kiss while the butterflies are rushing in roller coasters through your tummy. But we also point out what can completely ruin that special moment. And you should be aware of avoiding that mistake in your own lyric writing.

Wanna find out more about this?

Then just keep listening.

## TEASER

## Intro

**[00:01:15]** As said, today we start with our third lyric study of talking about one of the six must-have moments of a great love story: The first kiss or the first intimate connection.

If you haven't listened to the other episodes about the first kiss, I highly recommend checking out episodes 20 and 24. In [episode 20](#), we talk about the song “Kiss Me Slowly” by Parachute and specifically highlight why including change is better than repetition. In



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[storiesinsongs.com/podcast/episode-028](https://storiesinsongs.com/podcast/episode-028)

[episode 24](#), we talk about another song about the anticipation of the first kiss. It's "Rumor" by Lee Brice that does a really good job at using multiple love story conventions.

Today though, it's still all about the anticipation of the first kiss. And we use the song "Shut Up and Kiss Me" by Mary Chapin Carpenter.

## What you'll learn in this episode

**[00:02:06]** So, what will you learn in this episode?

Three things will stand out in the lyrics we'll look at today:

1. Why using contradictions between what your character says and does is a great way to cut all the power from your song's central idea. I hope you understand that's something we should avoid. ;-)
2. Why leaving out crucial answers of "Where, When, and What is happening" is not the way to go when using the point of view of Direct Address.
3. And how repetition can be avoided in two simple ways.

Furthermore, I'll include a revised version of "Shut Up and Kiss Me" at the end of this episode to show you an example of how we can apply what we've learned to the lyrics of Mary Chapin Carpenter's song.

Are you ready to get started with our lyric study?

Then let's do it!

## The S.O.N.G. Framework

**[00:02:57]** As always, we'll use the S.O.N.G. framework to study the storytelling power of the lyrics.

It consists of 4 steps.

First, we look at what the song is mainly about. We'll summarize it.

After that, we dive deeper to find out more about the person who is the central character in that song.



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[storiesinsongs.com/podcast/episode-028](https://storiesinsongs.com/podcast/episode-028)

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.

## “Shut Up and Kiss Me” by Mary Chapin Carpenter

**[00:03:31]** The song we will analyze today is “Shut Up and Kiss Me” by the American country music artist Mary Chapin Carpenter.

She recorded and wrote that song. It was released in August 1994 as the first single from her album *Stones in the Road*. The song became a number one hit on the Billboard Hot Country Singles & Tracks.

So let's go through the lyrics. As always, I'll read them to you first.

The lyrics are copyrighted by Sony/ATV Music Publishing LLC, Universal Music Publishing Group.

[[Video]]

<https://www.youtube-nocookie.com/embed/1Oisj8AMSyU>

Shut Up and Kiss Me lyrics © Sony/ATV Music Publishing LLC, Universal Music Publishing Group

*Don't mean to get a little forward with you  
Don't mean to get ahead of where we are  
Don't mean to act a little nervous around you  
I'm just a little nervous about my heart 'cause*

*It's been awhile since I felt this feeling  
That everything that you do gives me  
It's been so long since somebody whispered  
Shut up and kiss me*

*Didn't expect to be in this position  
Didn't expect to have to rise above  
My reputation for cynicism  
I've been a jaded lady when it comes to love, but*

*Oh, baby, just to feel this feeling*



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[storiesinsongs.com/podcast/episode-028](https://storiesinsongs.com/podcast/episode-028)

*That everything that you do gives me  
It's been too long since somebody whispered  
Shut up and kiss me*

*There's something about the silent type attracting me to you  
All business, baby, none of the hype  
That no talker can live up to*

*Come closer, baby, I can't hear you  
Just another whisper, if you please  
Don't worry 'bout the details, darlin'  
You've got the kind of mind I love to read*

*Talk is cheap and, baby, time's expensive  
So why waste another minute more?  
Life's too short to be so apprehensive  
Love's as much the symptom, darlin', as the cure*

*Oh, baby, when I feel this feeling  
It's like genuine voodoo hits me  
It's been too long since somebody whispered*

*Oh, baby, I can feel this feeling  
That everything that you do gives me  
It's been too long since somebody whispered  
Shut up and kiss me  
Shut up and kiss me*

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Now that we have read through the lyrics of “Shut Up and Kiss Me” by Mary Chapin Carpenter let’s start dissecting them to study their storytelling power.

Ready?

Let’s begin.



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**EPISODE 028: “Shut Up and Kiss Me” by Mary Chapin Carpenter – Avoiding Contradictions in Lyrics**

[storiesinsongs.com/podcast/episode-028](https://storiesinsongs.com/podcast/episode-028)

## 1. Summary (About)

**[00:05:44]** Let's start with getting an overview of what the song is about before diving deeper into characters, the different storytelling tools, and the message behind it all. This first step is laying the groundwork for our lyric study.

So the first question is:

### 1. What is the song about?

The song's about the anticipation of the first kiss, right? It's all about that crazy feeling when the sparks are ignited just by a single touch or gaze that will lead to an amazing firework once two people share their first kiss.

Since we know what the song is about, we also know it's a love song. And more specifically, we also know it's about that must-have love story moment of the first kiss.

Now let's dive a little deeper because there's much more to find out about that song.

### 2. Do the song's first lines set the expectations of what the song will be about. Do they give a promise to the audience that they'll hear about a love story or the first kiss moment?

As you know, it's crucial to nail the first lines of your song because they decide if your song gets listened to or if your audience loses their attention.

So the first line of your lyrics have to:

- set expectations what the song's content will be about
- hook the listeners by
  - opening a narrative gap or creating a question in the listener's mind
  - creating intrigue
  - referring to a problem that needs solving
- create tension
- create the setup for the rest of the song. It's the foundation. Everything else you add has to build on top of your lyric's beginning.

Let's look at the first line of "Shut Up and Kiss Me". The lyrics starts like this:




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**EPISODE 028: "Shut Up and Kiss Me" by Mary Chapin Carpenter – Avoiding Contradictions in Lyrics**

[storiesinsongs.com/podcast/episode-028](https://storiesinsongs.com/podcast/episode-028)

*Don't mean to get a little forward with you*

That line does the following things:

1. It sets up the point of view of Direct Address, which lets us know that the singer takes on the role of the song's main character, talking to someone she knows.
2. Furthermore, the lines hint at a problem. We're unsure how well she knows that person because if it were a good friend like in "Rumor" by Lee Brice, the character wouldn't worry about being forward. So we get the feeling they don't know each other that well. So that's definitely something the song's main character has to overcome.

So just by looking at that first line, we're still unsure where the lyrics will be headed. Then, when we listen to the second line:

*Don't mean to get ahead of where we are*

We get the sense that she's talking about their relationship and we get the feeling, this will be a song about love. And especially, it's gonna be a love song about a time when the two people in question are not yet in a committed relationship since there's still some distance to overcome.

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

3. Does the song also use conventions of the love story genre?

Conventions are the conditions that set up those expected must-have moments of a love story. They create the conditions for conflict by using setting, character, and catalysts.

So love story conventions are different character roles like a rival, helpers, and harmers.

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

For example, by including

- an external need
- opposing forces to overcome,
- secrets
- rituals,
- moral weight

In the song "Shut Up and Kiss Me" by Mary Chapin Carpenter, we encounter a love story convention as the song's main character says to her love interest in the first lines of the lyrics:



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**EPISODE 028: "Shut Up and Kiss Me" by Mary Chapin Carpenter – Avoiding Contradictions in Lyrics**

[storiesinsongs.com/podcast/episode-028](https://storiesinsongs.com/podcast/episode-028)

*Don't mean to get a little forward with you  
Don't mean to get ahead of where we are*

What do you think: What love story convention is at play here?

Yes, until that moment, she has kept a secret about how she feels. So the first love story conventions are secrets, even though it's nothing grave.

Furthermore, we encounter another love story convention. Look at those lines:

*My reputation for cynicism  
I've been a jaded lady when it comes to love*

She has to overcome some internal opposing forces regarding love.

Now the next question is:

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

In the song "Shut Up and Kiss Me," we are right at the moment with the two characters. So we are thrown into an unfolding event. But, unfortunately, we have no clue where we are nor when this situation is happening. But more about that when we talk about some of the writing techniques in step 3.

5. What's the point of view?

Point of view defines the relationship between the singer and the audience. But point of view also sets the context for your ideas.

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

"Shut Up and Kiss Me" uses "Direct Address". That's the most intimate point of view. In the case of Carpenter's song, the singer or song's main character is talking to some second person. That second person is their love interest.



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**EPISODE 028: "Shut Up and Kiss Me" by Mary Chapin Carpenter – Avoiding Contradictions in Lyrics**

[storiesinsongs.com/podcast/episode-028](https://storiesinsongs.com/podcast/episode-028)

## 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 the anticipation of the first kiss in a little love story.
  2. In the song's first line, we get introduced to the kind of relationship those two characters have. They are not close yet.
  3. The song uses the love story conventions of secrets and opposing forces.
  4. The character is speaking in the present moment, and we're right there with her as the events unfold.
  5. And she is using Direct Address. So the narrative distance is very intimate.
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## 2. Observer

**[00:11:39]** Now that we have a general overview of the story moment included in the song, let's talk about its main character.

This second step is another foundation for evaluating the storytelling power of the lyrics because characters and their actions make a story. 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 question helps us determine if the singer is taking on the main character's role in the song, whether he's just a bystander or an unidentified presence. Again, this ties back to narrative distance and how closely connected we feel to the song's characters. Or in other words: What's the level of intimacy?

Since we have the point of view of Direct Address, the singer takes on the role of the song's main character.



**EPISODE 028: "Shut Up and Kiss Me" by Mary Chapin Carpenter – Avoiding Contradictions in Lyrics**

[storiesinsongs.com/podcast/episode-028](https://storiesinsongs.com/podcast/episode-028)



## 2. Is the singer referring to another person?

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

So the song's main character is talking to a man they like but don't know that well. But as far as we can tell, there are no more characters present in that scene.

Now let's talk about the main character in more detail:

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

Remember, if a character didn't have a goal, they wouldn't need to take any action. Without any action taken, we don't have a story.

So what is it that the character wants?

If you are ever unsure when answering this question, just look at your choice of the content genre from step 1. Every genre has its own specific universal human value. You can always look back at those values to give you a clue what a character wants.

If you haven't listened to [episode 23](#) yet in which we talk about universal human values and different topic ideas for your lyrics, I recommend you listen to episode 23 of the Stories in Songs Podcast, too.

We have a love song in "Shut Up and Kiss Me" by Mary Chapin Carpenter. And love stories are about the universal human value of love.

And in love stories, the main character wants to be loved or love someone. Or they try to get away from love. But their goal is always connected to love.

In "Shut Up and Kiss Me" – same as "Rumor" by Lee Brice, which we've talked about in our previous lyric study – the song's character wants to kiss that other person they're feeling attracted to.

That's obvious, right?

But maybe, and we'll get to the WHY of this in a minute, maybe she just likes the feeling of someone being attracted to her and wanting to kiss her. Maybe she just wants to keep




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**EPISODE 028: "Shut Up and Kiss Me" by Mary Chapin Carpenter – Avoiding Contradictions in Lyrics**

[storiesinsongs.com/podcast/episode-028](https://storiesinsongs.com/podcast/episode-028)

enjoying this moment of being wanted. This would certainly explain why she's talking so much instead of just kissing him.

Let's talk about her NEED to get to know her even better.

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

Needs refer to a character's thought, fortune, or character. Or speaking in storytelling terms of internal content genres: Needs refer to a character's status, worldview, or morality.

When we look at the lyrics, we can find some clues to the internal state of mind of our song's character:

*My reputation for cynicism  
I've been a jaded lady when it comes to love, but*

as well as the lines

*Talk is cheap and, baby, time's expensive  
So why waste another minute more?  
Life's too short to be so apprehensive  
Love's as much the symptom, darlin', as the cure*

When we listen to those lines, we get the scope of the character's life in the lyrics. We get a clear sense of what they've been through before. But, interestingly, we get introduced to the character's cynicism at first and how they've been jaded when it comes to love. So we think they're not really up to get into that whole love business again.

Surprisingly, the character shows a very sophisticated worldview by embracing the paradox of love. Love is "as much the symptom [...] as the cure". Taking all those lines into account, we have a character with a mature worldview who has let go of a naive black and white view of the world and sees the world in all its shades of gray now.

However, we don't know what incident has led to that change in their worldview. It wasn't meeting that guy she talked to. We just see how she can respond to a situation where it comes to love again.

So all we can say for the character's need is that she might want to prove to herself that what she thinks about love – not only the symptom but also the cure – is indeed true. She needs that proof to stop thinking of herself as a jaded lady and finally just be in love.




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**EPISODE 028: "Shut Up and Kiss Me" by Mary Chapin Carpenter – Avoiding Contradictions in Lyrics**

[storiesinsongs.com/podcast/episode-028](https://storiesinsongs.com/podcast/episode-028)

But will that guy be the cure for her jaded love life?

I doubt it. It's not like we have two characters who've been friends for a very long time. It's not like in "Rumor" by Lee Brice, where you just know that those two belong together.

Here, it's more like a stranger she wants to hook up with. And that stranger just wants her to stop talking and make out with him. So that's why he continues to whisper, "Shut up and Kiss Me", while she keeps on talking about love and her life and her thoughts and her feelings ... you get the idea.

So it's kinda strange that she says: "Talk is cheap and, baby, time's expensive", and then she's the one who keeps rambling on. That behavior shows us that she might know things about the world, but she hasn't lived them yet. So we can see that she's still a step away from truly living in a world that she accepts as imperfect and multi-layered.

So actively embracing and acting on a sophisticated worldview is what she needs.

Let's continue with the next question:

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

See this question like this: Would you listen to someone's advice if you don't like them? Hardly, right? And if you don't like the character in a song because of how they behave, talk, or think, you keep your distance from them. The outcome of their situation – even though it might carry a meaningful and positive message – will not be something you take into account for your own life – because you didn't like that person.

So especially when you want to write a song that has a positive and meaningful message, you gotta look at your song's main character and what kind of person it is. Even if they start out struggling, they've gotta come around either in thought, character, or their fortune – which means show a positive shift in who they are – in order for us to listen to what they've been through and learn from it.

We'll talk more about the song's message in step 4 of the S.O.N.G. framework. But it's important to remember that who your song's character is and how we perceive them influences if the audience takes the message into account or not.



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**EPISODE 028: "Shut Up and Kiss Me" by Mary Chapin Carpenter – Avoiding Contradictions in Lyrics**

[storiesinsongs.com/podcast/episode-028](https://storiesinsongs.com/podcast/episode-028)

In “Shut Up and Kiss Me” by Mary Chapin Carpenter, it depends on the listener if they like that person or not. She talks a lot. Some people like that. Some people don’t like people who just talk but don’t act. I belong to the latter. But given the hardships this character went through, she still has my sympathy. I can understand that she feels a little stunned by her situation. After all, she’s been through some bad things when it comes to love, and suddenly there’s someone interested in her, and she tries to understand the situation. And that struggle leads to her rambling on and giving him her full life backstory. So I can understand where she’s coming from. In that sense, though, it becomes evident that she’s naive.

Wait.

Didn’t we just say she has a sophisticated worldview by recognizing her jaded worldview and by talking about love as “the symptom but also the cure”?

Yes, in theory, she understands that paradox of love.

But in another area of her life: When it comes to meeting someone who shows her some form of affection, she’s completely naive. He’s just a stranger to her. After all, in the first lines of the song, we’re clearly introduced to the kind of relationship those two have. And they’re not very close yet and don’t know each other well.

So it’s valid to think that he’s just trying to hook up with her — without any special feelings on his mind. But she can’t see it because she’s too blind. She thinks that some form of attraction means love, but that’s not the case. So in truth, she’s really naive. And her naivete is masked as sophistication. So that’s the negation of the negation when it comes to the spectrum of understanding and lack of understanding.

So taking into consideration that she’s a talker who doesn’t act, and that’s why she comes across as sophisticated at first when she’s truly still naive. She only masks her naivete as sophistication. So she’s hardly the type of person I’ll ever listen to. She may have the talk, but not the experience. She still has to learn a lot. So I don’t consider her a role model.

That’s my take on the song’s character. I’d be interested to hear what you think about her and the situation she’s in. If you want, leave a comment in the show notes and let me know what you think.

Summary Step 2 - Observer

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

We now know:



**EPISODE 028: “Shut Up and Kiss Me” by Mary Chapin Carpenter – Avoiding Contradictions in Lyrics**

[storiesinsongs.com/podcast/episode-028](https://storiesinsongs.com/podcast/episode-028)

1. The singer takes on the role of the main character
  2. and she talks to the guy she's attracted to
  3. She wants love, and more precisely, to kiss that guy. Or just keep enjoying the moment that someone wants to make out with her?
  4. She needs a better understanding of what meeting a stranger (who shows you some affection) really means. Her naivete is masked as sophistication.
  5. So I don't really like the song's main character, and because of her lack of understanding, I don't consider her a role model – or someone I'll listen to for love advice.
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Alright, now we got a better idea of what the song is about, and we are aware of who the main character is, what she wants and needs, and to whom she's talking.

### 3. Narration

**[00:22:43]** Now it's time to study the storytelling power of the lyrics.

Including the power of storytelling in your lyrics helps you hook your listeners and keep them engaged until the song's end. 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?

Well, we are already struggling to answer this easy question. We can say the characters are talking to each other. One is rambling on about her feelings while the other one just replies: "Shut up and kiss me."

But we know nothing else about them. We don't know what they are doing at the moment. Are they dancing? Standing at a bar? Meeting in an office? For all we know, they could be floating in space. Well, if you could kiss and talk in space.




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**EPISODE 028: "Shut Up and Kiss Me" by Mary Chapin Carpenter – Avoiding Contradictions in Lyrics**

[storiesinsongs.com/podcast/episode-028](https://storiesinsongs.com/podcast/episode-028)

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

## 2. What is the essential action of what the characters are doing in the scene?

The essential Action is all about how the characters can achieve their goal in the song. What strategy do they apply to get what they want?

So, if the Literal Action is what's happening on the surface, then the Essential Action is what's happening below the surface or the subtext within the scene. For example, sometimes characters are kinda manipulating each other, or at least trying to convince the other one to do something for them.

In "Shut Up and Kiss Me" by Mary Chapin Carpenter, the person she's talking to wants to hook up. They are essentially trying to seduce her.

On the other hand, she keeps stalling so that she can feel desired a little longer. So that's what they do, and you can see this back-and-forth will have to stop eventually. The other person won't keep asking her forever.

Let's move on to the next question:

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

If you include a problem for your song's character, you have some options to develop your verses and engage your audience. Everyone loves to hear about other people's problems and how they've overcome them. That's why we love stories because stories are about those challenges and how to deal with them.

In "Shut Up and Kiss Me" by Mary Chapin Carpenter, the song's character says:

*Didn't expect to be in this position  
Didn't expect to have to rise above*

So she is aware that she has to overcome her inner attitude concerning feelings of love and attraction. She has to overcome her past experiences and her jaded love life in order to commit to this kiss.

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.



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**EPISODE 028: "Shut Up and Kiss Me" by Mary Chapin Carpenter – Avoiding Contradictions in Lyrics**

[storiesinsongs.com/podcast/episode-028](https://storiesinsongs.com/podcast/episode-028)

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

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:

*Don't mean to get a little forward with you  
Don't mean to get ahead of where we are*

The first lines don't refer to her internal problem of overcoming her attitude. But they establish the external problem our song's character has to deal with. She doesn't know that guy very well. But he's the reason why she's internally challenged even though he's more like a stranger to her.

Since both problems are connected, it's okay to start with one problem that leads to another. However, if you ever write lyrics with multiple problems, make sure they relate to each other. One should be the cause for the other. And in the best-case scenario, one problem concerns the character's external world and the other one their internal world. This way, it's easier to concentrate on how they are connected without risking confusing your audience by including too much and losing focus.

Analyzing the scene told in the song.

**[00:27:14]** Alright, now that we know what the character wants and the problem she's dealing with, let's look at the five key elements of storytelling.

The first question is:

5. What is the inciting incident?

An inciting incident is a causal or coincidental event 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



**EPISODE 028: "Shut Up and Kiss Me" by Mary Chapin Carpenter – Avoiding Contradictions in Lyrics**

[storiesinsongs.com/podcast/episode-028](https://storiesinsongs.com/podcast/episode-028)

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.

In "Shut Up and Kiss Me" by Mary Chapin Carpenter, the inciting incident must have been meeting that stranger who shows his attraction for her. He throws her life out of balance. As we've just talked about: Meeting him challenges her internal worldview about her jaded love. She has to overcome her internal attitude to be able to commit to him, and that kiss. So that's the inciting incident of our lyrics' scene.

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 is 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 now they see what that incident truly means.

In the case of "Shut Up and Kiss Me" by Mary Chapin Carpenter, we don't have a moment that changes the situation for better or worse. If you read through the lyrics, everything stays the same for those two characters: She talks, and he whispers, asking her to shut up and kiss him.

When we look at the song's problem, she said:

*Didn't expect to be in this position  
Didn't expect to have to rise above*

So if she had managed to do just that, the situation would have changed. Her rising over her jaded love attitude would have been a great resolution. But all we get in the lyrics is her talking, talking, talking without any action taken.

It's kind of boring thinking about this song in which nothing happens. It must be quite frustrating for that guy as well. More so for us since the lyrics don't even paint an image in our head. We know absolutely nothing about where they are, when, and what they do. All we can do is listen to her rambling on.



**EPISODE 028: "Shut Up and Kiss Me" by Mary Chapin Carpenter – Avoiding Contradictions in Lyrics**

[storiesinsongs.com/podcast/episode-028](https://storiesinsongs.com/podcast/episode-028)



## Change

**[00:29:54]** Normally, we would continue with the other three commandments of storytelling now. They are the crisis, the climax, and the resolution. However, since we don't have a turning point in that lyric's narrative, our character isn't thrown into a dilemma where they have to decide between two binary options: no choice, no resolution, and no message.

You can see that not including a moment that changes the situation and throws the character into a crisis affects the power of your lyrics. Especially, you have lyrics that don't provide a takeaway for the listener. And if a song doesn't have a message, there's nothing the listener can take away from that song. So ultimately, they'll just forget all about it.

Sad, right?

But it doesn't have to be this way.

Trust the power of storytelling, apply it to your lyric writing, and you'll write songs that will make an impact on people's lives. To do this, focus on having a turning point moment in your lyrics. That means: The turning point is the moment when the initial strategy of your song's character in dealing with that inciting incident no longer works. All the options they once had at their disposal have shrunk to a binary choice because the turning point happened either through another character's actions or a revelation. It's like someone kept poking your song's character to finally see the truth about what that inciting incident truly means. And at the turning point, they see it. And now they gotta deal with it. And they only can do A or B – but neither of those options is really good, and you can't have both.

Only by having a character who overcomes their dilemma and makes a choice can the audience watch how the character dealt with their challenge – either in a good or bad way. But there's a lesson to be learned. Because we can clearly say what the cause or stimulus was and how the character responded. And if we have those two things: stimulus and response, we can form a message and thus take something away from the lyrics.

## Writing Techniques

**[00:32:04]** Lastly, let's 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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**EPISODE 028: "Shut Up and Kiss Me" by Mary Chapin Carpenter – Avoiding Contradictions in Lyrics**

[storiesinsongs.com/podcast/episode-028](https://storiesinsongs.com/podcast/episode-028)

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

It's always good if your lyrics answer the following questions:

- Where is the scene taking place?
- When is the scene happening?
- What is happening? How do the characters move over our imaginary stage?

If your lyrics answer those questions, your audience will be able to picture the surroundings and what's happening. Those questions refer to a songwriter's six best friends. If you want to hear more about them, listen to the bite-sized [episode 25](#) of the Stories in Songs Podcast.

Unfortunately, in "Shut Up and Kiss Me" by Mary Chapin Carpenter, we don't get an answer to any of those questions. We don't receive any clues that tell us where they are, what their world looks like, and how they move through that world.

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?

Imagery refers to figurative language to create a picture with words for your audience. By utilizing effective descriptive language and figures of speech, songwriters appeal to a listener's senses of sight, taste, smell, touch, and sound, as well as internal emotion and feelings.

In figurative imagery, a thing is often not what it implies. As a result, hyperbole, simile, or metaphors often construct an image that could be different from the actual thing or person.

In "Shut Up and Kiss Me" by Mary Chapin Carpenter, there's nothing that helps evoke a mental picture in our minds. The only thing that gives us a slight sensory description is in the line:

*It's like genuine voodoo hits me*

But it's very weak, and it appears very late in the lyrics. By that point, we've already lost our interest.




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**EPISODE 028: "Shut Up and Kiss Me" by Mary Chapin Carpenter – Avoiding Contradictions in Lyrics**

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## 15. Lyric Structure

**[01:03:00]** Lastly, 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 introduced and explained by Pat Pattison in his book: *Songwriting: Essential Guide to Lyric Form and Structure*.

That means we'll look at things that stand out – one way or another – of the following aspects:

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

Let's just look at the first section:

*Don't mean to get a little forward with you  
 Don't mean to get ahead of where we are  
 Don't mean to act a little nervous around you  
 I'm just a little nervous about my heart 'cause*

*It's been awhile since I felt this feeling  
 That everything that you do gives me  
 It's been so long since somebody whispered  
 Shut up and kiss me*

What stands out is the dullness of the lyrics. No wonder we're losing interest. It's not just because there are no images about the character's world created, and there's nothing really happening except someone talking, but also the rhyme scheme, the rhyme types, the number and length of phrases, and the rhythm doesn't show much variation. It's just repetition.

Just look at all the repetitive words in this section:

***Don't mean to get a little forward with you**  
**Don't mean to get ahead of where we are**  
**Don't mean to act a little nervous around you**  
 I'm just a **little nervous** about my heart 'cause*




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**EPISODE 028: "Shut Up and Kiss Me" by Mary Chapin Carpenter – Avoiding Contradictions in Lyrics**

[storiesinsongs.com/podcast/episode-028](http://storiesinsongs.com/podcast/episode-028)

*It's been awhile since I felt this feeling  
That everything that you do gives me  
It's been so long since somebody whispered  
Shut up and kiss me*

So here's how many repetitions we have in that first section:

- 3x "Don't mean to"
- 2x "you" at phrases end position
- 2x "a little nervous" in consecutive phrases
- "It's been a while since" and "It's been so long since" has the same meaning
- "feel this feeling – very unspecific and repetition
- 2x "me" at phrases end position

So when we say the song's main character is just rambling on, you can clearly see that she is doing so indeed. At the beginning of the song, she's not really saying anything worth mentioning in the first section. We needed to hear that she doesn't know that guy that well and she's feeling a little overwhelmed.

But those eight phrases don't have the power to engage the listener. There's just too much repetition, and nothing interesting is happening.

Furthermore, the chorus has changed a lot. For example, the refrain line "Shut up and kiss me" stays the same, but what comes before that changes again and again. So a listener can't join in singing because the chorus's words change throughout the song. And what's the meaning of chorus: Many people singing together. You can't achieve that if you change the words all the time.

So just by looking at the lyric structure in those two cases already gives us a great insight into what could have been improved to make the lyrics a little more engaging, especially by avoiding so much repetition and vagueness.

Summary Step 3 - Narration

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

1. We don't know what the characters are literally doing
2. but we suspect she just wants to feel desired.



**EPISODE 028: "Shut Up and Kiss Me" by Mary Chapin Carpenter – Avoiding Contradictions in Lyrics**

[storiesinsongs.com/podcast/episode-028](https://storiesinsongs.com/podcast/episode-028)

3. She's externally not knowing that guy so well and internally overcoming her internal attitude about love and feelings.
  4. The inciting incident was him showing his affection for her.
  5. But the situation does not change in the lyrics. The lyrics don't progress, and there's a lot of repetition and just talking. No action-taking.
- 

## 4. Gist

**[00:38:10]** We can leave out step 4 of the S.O.N.G. framework because, as we've already discovered, the song doesn't have a takeaway for the listener. It's just talking.

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## What we've learned in this episode:

**[00:38:20]** Before we talk about the song exercise, let's just sum up what we've discovered by studying the lyrics of "Shut Up and Kiss Me" by Mary Chapin Carpenter.

Looking at the lyrics, we've discovered that everything you write or don't write is connected and influences your character's situation and how your audience perceives the world of your character.

For example, if the lyrics don't answer the important questions like:

- Where is the scene happening?
- When is it happening?
- What is happening?

Then your listeners can't place your song's character anywhere. Especially when you use Direct Address, which is kinda a one-sided dialogue or a snippet of dialogue without the other person responding, it's important to visualize where that conversation takes place. Don't just write what your character says. Also, show them moving around the scene. If you want to find out how to achieve that, listen to [episode 25](#) of the Stories in Songs Podcast. In that episode, we'll talk about the important questions that Pat Pattison called "A Songwriter's Six Best Friends". We'll also talk about the Story Grid Diorama Model that helps you put those questions to best use and apply them easily. I'll include the link to [episode 25](#) in the show notes.



**EPISODE 028: "Shut Up and Kiss Me" by Mary Chapin Carpenter – Avoiding Contradictions in Lyrics**

[storiesinsongs.com/podcast/episode-028](https://storiesinsongs.com/podcast/episode-028)

We've also discovered that if we only have a character talking, it can get quite boring and even confusing. In "Shut Up and Kiss Me" that boredom happens because not only is the song's main character just rambling on and only talking without giving us some **specific information** to where and when, and to what is exactly happening, but the lyrics itself use lots of **repetition**. We hear the same stuff over and over again. Furthermore, the chorus is changed every time so that we can't even sing to the song. We're left out – left out of everything that's going on. To avoid that mistake of repetition, use a rhyming dictionary and come up with some rhymes that aren't perfect, especially don't use identities where you just repeat a word or part of it at the phrases' end position.

Furthermore, the lyric idea has to progress from one verse to another so that the message in the chorus or refrain gets a stronger meaning each time you hear it. To achieve that, take your lyric concept through Pat Pattison's Development Engine and apply the 5 Commandments of Storytelling to them, too. If you don't know what I'm talking about, listen to [episode 26](#) of the Stories in Songs Podcast, where we talk about verse development in greater detail.

And lastly, just having a character talking is especially not a good idea if what they are saying **contradicts** the song's main message. The song "Shut Up and Kiss Me" is about the anticipation of the first kiss. That's what the lyrics are about on the surface. But as soon as you notice how the song's character is just rambling on while the other one keeps telling them to shut up, then we have a contradiction between what is said and done. And somehow, it takes the special feeling out of the whisper of "Shut Up and Kiss Me". We feel that one character only wants to hook up with our song's main character and that there are no special feelings involved. It's pure desire, nothing more.

So having one character talk and the other one say: "Shut Up", is a contradiction. And it undermines what the songwriter tries to say and the feelings they want to express. So be aware of writing contradicting lyrics.

Furthermore, we also find the contradiction between what the song's character says and what she does. She comes across as very sophisticated with her smart talk, but it's just talking. She can't act on her words. That's why we think her naivete is masked by sophistication. And that's a contradiction too.

Just look at those lines:

*There's something about the silent type attracting me to you  
All business, baby, none of the hype  
That no talker can live up to*



**EPISODE 028: "Shut Up and Kiss Me" by Mary Chapin Carpenter – Avoiding Contradictions in Lyrics**

[storiesinsongs.com/podcast/episode-028](https://storiesinsongs.com/podcast/episode-028)

He's the silent type and she's the talker.  
There's so much contradiction.

## Song Exercise - The First Kiss

**[00:42:45]** Well, as always, there's an exercise you can do to apply what we've learned in this episode. And stay with me. As promised, I'll give you an example of my answer after telling you about the exercise.

Go to the show notes or visit [storiesinsongs.com/podcast/](http://storiesinsongs.com/podcast/) and find episode 28 to download the exercise PDF.

So that you have an idea of what I want you to do:

**I want you to rewrite the lyrics of "Shut Up and Kiss Me" by Mary Chapin Carpenter 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. Include the answers to the questions of:
  - a. Where is the scene taking place?
  - b. When is it happening?
  - c. What are the characters literally doing?
3. Avoid the contradiction of wanting to kiss someone but then just talking about it while the other one is already ready to kiss.
4. Include a turning point moment that changes the situation and/or the character's worldview for better or worse
5. Keep the refrain of "Shut up and Kiss Me."
6. Try to avoid the repetition of certain words or word meanings within the different sections.
7. Be more specific.

If you do this exercise and compare the two kinds of lyrics, let me know what you think. Do you think the changes you made improved the lyrics? What was better before? But what's better now?

Feel free to send me your comment in this episode's show notes.




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**EPISODE 028: "Shut Up and Kiss Me" by Mary Chapin Carpenter – Avoiding Contradictions in Lyrics**

[storiesinsongs.com/podcast/episode-028](http://storiesinsongs.com/podcast/episode-028)

Now, are you interested to hear a revised version where we've included the changes of what we've talked about?

Okay, let me read to you the original version first. And then I'll include my suggestion.

Shut Up and Kiss Me lyrics © Sony/ATV Music Publishing LLC, Universal Music Publishing Group

*Don't mean to get a little forward with you  
Don't mean to get ahead of where we are  
Don't mean to act a little nervous around you  
I'm just a little nervous about my heart 'cause*

*It's been awhile since I felt this feeling  
That everything that you do gives me  
It's been so long since somebody whispered  
Shut up and kiss me*

*Didn't expect to be in this position  
Didn't expect to have to rise above  
My reputation for cynicism  
I've been a jaded lady when it comes to love, but*

*Oh, baby, just to feel this feeling  
That everything that you do gives me  
It's been too long since somebody whispered  
Shut up and kiss me*

*There's something about the silent type attracting me to you  
All business, baby, none of the hype  
That no talker can live up to*

*Come closer, baby, I can't hear you  
Just another whisper, if you please  
Don't worry 'bout the details, darlin'  
You've got the kind of mind I love to read*

*Talk is cheap and, baby, time's expensive  
So why waste another minute more?  
Life's too short to be so apprehensive  
Love's as much the symptom, darlin', as the cure*

*Oh, baby, when I feel this feeling  
It's like genuine voodoo hits me*



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**EPISODE 028: "Shut Up and Kiss Me" by Mary Chapin Carpenter – Avoiding Contradictions in Lyrics**

[storiesinsongs.com/podcast/episode-028](https://storiesinsongs.com/podcast/episode-028)



*It's been too long since somebody whispered*

*Oh, baby, I can feel this feeling  
That everything that you do gives me  
It's been too long since somebody whispered  
Shut up and kiss me  
Shut up and kiss me*

And now, here's my suggestion.

Remember: This is just an exercise.

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*Don't mean to get ahead of where we are  
but it's late and some things shouldn't wait  
So let's just stay another minute in your car  
I'm just a little nervous about my heart 'cause*

*It's been awhile since I felt this struggle  
To keep my attention on your words  
before I can control it I've already whispered  
Shut up and kiss me*

*Didn't expect to be in this position  
Didn't expect to have to rise above  
My reputation for cynicism  
I've been a jaded lady when it comes to love, and*

*It's been awhile since I felt this struggle  
To keep my attention on your words  
before I can control it I've already whispered  
Shut up and kiss me*

*Never thought I'd lose my guard without a drink for courage  
But as you stepped into the office  
I needed to take this foolish risk*



**EPISODE 028: "Shut Up and Kiss Me" by Mary Chapin Carpenter – Avoiding Contradictions in Lyrics**

[storiesinsongs.com/podcast/episode-028](https://storiesinsongs.com/podcast/episode-028)

*Come closer, baby, I can't hear you  
Just another whisper, if you please  
Don't worry 'bout the details, handsome  
You've got the kind of mind I love to read*

*Talk is cheap and we know time's expensive  
So why waste another minute more?  
Life's too short to be so apprehensive  
Love's as much the symptom, darlin', as the cure*

*It's been awhile since I felt this struggle  
To keep my attention on your words  
before I can control it I've already whispered*

*It's been awhile since I felt this struggle  
To keep my attention on your words  
before I can control it I've already whispered  
Shut up and kiss me  
Shut up and kiss me*

Can you see the difference?  
Can you feel it?

Now, what have we achieved by changing some parts of the lyrics?

- We have included the answers to the questions of Where is the scene taking place? When is it happening? What are the characters literally doing?
  - That means we know it's late at night, and the characters are sitting in a car.
- We've also avoided the contradiction of what is said and how the character acts. We've accomplished that by letting her be the one who says, "Shut up and Kiss Me."
- We've also followed the five commandments of storytelling:
  - The inciting incident was meeting that guy at her office.
  - The Turning Point moment – the moment that changed the value at stake – was her internal revelation that she has to be the one to rise above. She didn't expect to be in the position to be the one who had to make the first move. But she knows she's gotta do it.
  - So her crisis was making the first move on him and taking the risk OR not making the first move and missing out on her chance?
  - Her decision kinda came intuitively as she whispered: "Shut up and Kiss Me."



**EPISODE 028: "Shut Up and Kiss Me" by Mary Chapin Carpenter – Avoiding Contradictions in Lyrics**

[storiesinsongs.com/podcast/episode-028](https://storiesinsongs.com/podcast/episode-028)

- I have left out the resolution because in all her talking, she's already said enough about how short time is and that you better live your life. So the resolution is already implicated and her actions also underline what she says. This way, we also have a truly sophisticated character because they act on their words. Remember, in the original version, we had a main character whose naivete was masked by sophistication – sounding smart but not acting like it.

Of course, that's just one quick possibility of the changes you could make in those lyrics. But the goal was to change as little as possible but as much as necessary to see how we could implement the given constraints of revision.

That's it for today. I hope you enjoyed this lyric study and you've discovered some new insights about what you should pay attention to when writing your lyrics.

Thanks a lot, and see you next time for our next bite-sized episode about storytelling in songwriting. More precisely, we'll talk about the topic: Every Character WANTS something. But how do you figure out WHAT that is?

That will be the question, and our next episode will give you the answer.

Bis bald und auf Wiedersehen, eure Melanie

## Show Notes

- Shut Up and Kiss Me lyrics © Sony/ATV Music Publishing LLC, Universal Music Publishing Group
- Finding Topics to Write about by Looking at Universal Human Values – <https://storiesinsongs.com/podcast/episode-023/>
- “Kiss Me Slowly” by Parachute – Why Change is Better than Repetition <https://storiesinsongs.com/podcast/episode-020/>
- “Rumor” by Lee Brice – Using Multiple Love Story Conventions <https://storiesinsongs.com/podcast/episode-024/>
- A Songwriter’s Six Best Friends - ADVANCED: The Story Grid Diorama Model <https://storiesinsongs.com/podcast/episode-025/>
- Development Engine: Pattinson's 3 Boxes - ADVANCED: 5 Commandments of Storytelling <https://storiesinsongs.com/podcast/episode-026/>




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**EPISODE 028: “Shut Up and Kiss Me” by Mary Chapin Carpenter – Avoiding Contradictions in Lyrics**  
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