

Heeeey Gary;

First off, it's a great pleasure to meet you at this brand new platform Songpress run by my friend Dave Johnson. And as I just been added as a coach and evaluator here, i'm happy to say you are my first of what hopefully will be many songs i get offer some helpful feedback on.

And so I will break this down into some key areas of discussion over the course of this evaluation, but let me start with some common turf.

I'm your slightly younger brother at 69 (birthday a few days ago...July 2nd), and I spent a year living in Nashville myself in 1985 (I was sub-letting from my friends Steve & Jan Buckingham, and was roommates with Steve Diamond when he first got there, among many friends and co-writing buddies of the time, back in the day...Gary Nicholson, Gary Burr, Tom Schuyler, Harlan Howard, Ralph Murphy, Don Schlitz, Matraca Berg, etc. And so I surely know how Nashville and your life was there from the 70's-90's and I still miss Tavern On The Row, Sunset Grille, and all the other Nashville staples that are long gone (plus the ones that remain though completely changed like The Bluebird Cafe). And so when you say a lot has changed since then...you are SPOT ON !!! I was there a few times in more recent years, and it's a whole new world and market as you surely know.

And as my background was as a music guy first and foremost, and later on over the years equally a lyricist, I was always a bit of a "LA music guy rebel" int my time and sessions there, as although lyrics were and still are sacred ground in top shelf Country songwriting craft, I was always there saying "but the music matters too !!!."

Translation... as you said....

*"Cobalt Blue Eyes, is 4:13 long, and due to not being under 3:30, would probably not get radio play and because of that, artists would only record it as an album cut (which they would use their own songs for would be my guess). Since I worked on the song, I know the story but, is it too confusing to a listener? Lastly, for a story song like this, is the format bad or wrong? Now it's : Intro/verse/chorus/verse/chorus/verse/bridge/chorus/outro"*

I definitely feel that this structure and song is TOO long !!! and so things need to be changed musically AND lyrically if you really want to have a realistic chance with this today. And surely your assessment of this being more like an 'album cut' in it's current form that an artist could and probably would write him or herself, rather than the stand out "single" But first let me pepper my "tough songwriter love with an emphasis on the love" approach with a few positives. I think the song overall is especially well produced and professional sounding to the max, all other considerations aside.

Lyrically it's a bit easier overall to discuss, because you tell the story so well, but surely you could lose some things which I'll suggest and i'm sure you could find a way to condense or shorten this lyrically for the sake of the best overall structure for this as a song, and for commerciality purposes. When you ask is the story "too confusing' for the listener, it's not that it's too confusing, but just that there's TOO MUCH story and information to take in. I got a bit of eye, ear, and brain fatigue by the end. And I always try to take these things in with my "Joe Average listening ears" and keep in mind the "attention span of a gnat" of most if not all listeners today in our ever more super charged social media and now AI world we live in.

In today's world the old adage "don't bore us, get to the chorus...and often" has never taken on more urgency and use in so many songs now in all genres. Including Country

So the main answer here is gonna be the music, and how we slice it and dice that up structurally with the lyrical edits needed going along for the ride to make this work. And so without any consideration about the lyrics or what you'll have to do to make it all work, here's my suggestions on the music and needed editing of it. And I know you're gonna HATE me by the end of this next part, because i'm gonna be suggesting to cut a lot out and condense this song down musically to far shorter than 4:13, maybe around 3 minutes or not too far over.

You start off with THREE sections before you reach the chorus !!! Now in my mind the chorus sounds like and pays off like the chorus as this.....

*She was a beauty, he was clever and bold  
They shared a secret – and I never told.  
They still haunt me,  
those cobalt blue eyes*

But I realize you might also see the section BEFORE it as the chorus musically, and that as the POST chorus.....

*The widowed man stood strangely silent  
Among all the tears and the sighs  
And I noticed that, behind her veil,  
The girl had cobalt-blue eyes.*

Especially as you say the title "Cobalt-blue Eyes" as the last line of BOTH sections. But as you don't have that "widowed man" section at ALL the next time around, and go right to what I call the chorus as you do, I suggest that you don't need that "pre-chorus" like section EITHER time up to that point. So using your existing lyrics just as placeholders to map out the structure, up through the first two choruses i suggest it should look like this musically.....

*There's a story that haunts me still  
'Bout a bride and a wedding gone wrong  
And a woman with eyes like the midnight sky  
Who's been hiding the truth all along*

*Was at the graveside I met her  
A dark silhouette on a dark afternoon  
The grieving family clasping their hands  
And trying to comfort the groom.*

*She was a beauty, he was clever and bold  
They shared a secret – and I never told.  
They still haunt me,  
those cobalt blue eyes*

*The eve of the wedding I walked through the night  
Unable to quiet my mind  
When I heard unseen lovers beneath the Oak trees  
Speaking of things left behind*

*The man's voice I knew—it belonged to the groom  
The woman's was tender and true  
They planned for a future beyond the next day  
If only the bride never knew*

*She was a beauty, he was clever and bold  
They shared a secret – and I never told.  
They still haunt me,  
those cobalt blue eyes*

Cutting out those two “pre-choruses” would save you 30-45 seconds alone, and get you to the chorus sooner the first time, and back to it more quickly like you do now the 2nd time around. Catch my editing drift so far? Moving on.....

Next, I think that after this 2nd chorus you should fly past that short instrumental solo section and go straight to..the...BRIDGE !!!

*[Bridge]*

*Well, don't ask me to comment.  
The groom is a friend of mine  
And just because there's circumstance  
That doesn't make it a crime.*

Followed musically by the final verse (or maybe insert the instrumental here AFTER the bridge)

*This all happened quite some time ago  
Though the memory runs deep  
And sometimes on those moonless nights  
I find it hard to sleep*

*They moved some way out to the country  
Far from the rumors and lies  
And I wonder: did he find Redemption  
with the girl with cobalt blue eyes.*

And wrap things up in some fashion with one final chorus....

*She was a beauty, he was clever and bold  
They shared a secret – and I never told.  
They still haunt me,  
those cobalt blue eyes*

AGAIN THIS IS ALL USING THESE LYRICS AS PLACEHOLDERS JUST TO SHOW THE MUSICAL EDITS I AM SUGGESTING !!! it is then up to YOU to re-write the lyrics and whittle it all down story and scan wise to fit this much shorter proposed musical structure. So with all that said, here is the complete musical structure I'm proposing with the accompanying lyrics as placeholders.....

***There's a story that haunts me still  
'Bout a bride and a wedding gone wrong  
And a woman with eyes like the midnight sky  
Who's been hiding the truth all along***

***Was at the graveside I met her  
A dark silhouette on a dark afternoon  
The grieving family clasping their hands  
And trying to comfort the groom.***

***She was a beauty, he was clever and bold  
They shared a secret – and I never told.  
They still haunt me,  
those cobalt blue eyes***

*The eve of the wedding I walked through the night  
Unable to quiet my mind  
When I heard unseen lovers beneath the Oak trees  
Speaking of things left behind*

*The man's voice I knew—it belonged to the groom  
The woman's was tender and true  
They planned for a future beyond the next day  
If only the bride never knew*

*She was a beauty, he was clever and bold  
They shared a secret – and I never told.  
They still haunt me,  
those cobalt blue eyes*

**[Bridge]**

*Well, don't ask me to comment.  
The groom is a friend of mine  
And just because there's circumstance  
That doesn't make it a crime.*

( maybe insert the instrumental here AFTER the bridge)

*This all happened quite some time ago  
Though the memory runs deep  
And sometimes on those moonless nights  
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*They moved some way out to the country  
Far from the rumors and lies  
And I wonder: did he find Redemption  
with the girl with cobalt blue eyes.*

*She was a beauty, he was clever and bold  
They shared a secret – and I never told.  
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