

CHARACTER DESCRIPTIONS / STORY ATMOSPHERE

Mark Sandman: European-American 28-year-old male.
Doctor Keiko Yamada: Asian-American 42-year-old female.
Father: European-American 67-year-old male.

AI-generated image to encapsulate the emotional tone of the story:



Song I created to capture the emotional tone of the story:
?

PAGE 1 | 6 PANELS

PANEL 1

MARK SANDMAN is sitting at a [nurse's station](#), getting his blood drawn.

1. CAPTION (MARK SANDMAN): I woke up one day, happy. Happy in a way I'd never been before.

PANEL 2

A [blood centrifuge machine](#) containing multiple blood vials is spinning, the centrifugal force lifting up the vials and separating the fluids.

2. CAPTION (MARK SANDMAN): And the next day.

PANEL 3

The blood vials from the machine have fallen back into their resting place. A status indicator light on the front of the machine is now glowing red with a black exclamation point in the center.

3. CAPTION (MARK SANDMAN): And the next after that.

PANEL 4

Mark Sandman is in a patient room, changing into a [hospital gown](#).

4. CAPTION (MARK SANDMAN): A week went by. Then two weeks.

PANEL 5

Mark Sandman is undergoing a [CT scan](#).

5. CAPTION (MARK SANDMAN): And all that time, I felt positive. Every activity, every person I encountered, every experience served only to reinforce my contentment.

PANEL 6

DOCTOR KEIKO YAMADA is standing in a patient room, facing Mark Sandman, who is sitting on the exam table, explaining his diagnosis. Mark appears unfazed by the bad news.

6. DOCTOR KEIKO YAMADA: Your CT scan has revealed a glioblastoma tumor in the right frontal lobe of your brain.

PAGE 2 | 7 PANELS

PANEL 1

A younger Mark Sandman, at the age of eight, runs through a meadow with his beloved dog, a boxer. Mark is cheering exuberantly.

7. CAPTION (DOCTOR KEIKO YAMADA): You have less than six months to live.

PANEL 2

A younger Mark Sandman, at the age of 12, sits under the bleachers with a girl. She kisses him on his rosy red cheeks. His eyes are closed, his face, content.

8. CAPTION (DOCTOR KEIKO YAMADA): If we do surgery, there's a good chance we can remove the tumor and prolong your life.

9. CAPTION (MARK SANDMAN): For how long?

PANEL 3

A younger Mark Sandman, at the age of 17, holds hands with his girlfriend. They are sitting in the back of his pickup truck, on the tailgate, watching the fireworks. It is the fourth of July.

10. CAPTION (DOCTOR KEIKO YAMADA): In some cases, up to five years.

11. CAPTION (MARK SANDMAN): But I feel good. Wonderful, even.

PANEL 4

A younger Mark Sandman, at the age of 22, is at the center of the stage, shaking hands with the University Provost and [receiving his college diploma](#).

12. CAPTION (DOCTOR KEIKO YAMADA): The tumor bonded to receptors, kicking your DOSE levels into overdrive. Your brain is flooded with Dopamine, Oxytocin, Serotonin, and Endorphins.

13. CAPTION (DOCTOR KEIKO YAMADA): No matter how happy you feel, make no mistake, it is killing you.

14. CAPTION (MARK SANDMAN): And the surgery, what will that do?

PANEL 5

A younger Mark Sandman, at the age of 24, has backpacked to the peak of an epic vista. He looks out over the vast, untamed terrain.

15. CAPTION (DOCTOR KEIKO YAMADA): We'll shrink the tumor, then remove it and scrape the surrounding area. This will provide time... perhaps new treatment options emerge.

16. CAPTION (MARK SANDMAN): What would the impact be?

PANEL 6

A younger Mark Sandman, at the age of 26, rides the [Eurail through the Scottish countryside](#). He is staring out the window, as the world blurs by.

17. CAPTION (DOCTOR KEIKO YAMADA): For starters, your DOSE levels would return to normal.

18. CAPTION (MARK SANDMAN): So, I could choose to live a short while in total happiness, or a longer while in moderate despair?

PANEL 7

Doctor Yamada is sitting in a chair, near a computer station, turned to face Mark, who is still sitting atop the exam table. Mark's arms are spread out, palms raised, as he acquiesces to the doctor's recommendation.

19. DOCTOR KEIKO YAMADA: I might not characterize it that way, but essentially, yes.

20. MARK SANDMAN: Okay. Let's move forward.

PAGE 3 | 5 PANELS

PANEL 1

Mark Sandman, looking despondent while at a happy hour, surrounded by friends. Everyone else around him is glowingly happy.

21. CAPTION (MARK SANDMAN): I'm told the surgery was successful.

PANEL 2

Mark Sandman, looking despondent, while at the Zoo with his parents. His parents are both exceptionally happy.

22. CAPTION (MARK SANDMAN): The tumor was removed. The surrounding part of my brain... scraped.

PANEL 3

Mark Sandman, lying despondently on the couch in the living room of his home, watching pornography.

23. CAPTION (MARK SANDMAN): But instead of feeling normal, I feel... emptiness.

PANEL 4

Mark, lying catatonic on his couch, staring at the ceiling. The TV is off.

24. CAPTION (MARK SANDMAN): I haven't left my apartment in weeks.

PANEL 5

Doctor Yamada sitting at her desk in a private patient room, speaking to Mark over the phone.

25. DOCTOR KEIKO YAMADA: The tumor, it spread significantly... we had to remove a substantial portion of your brain.

26. DOCTOR KEIKO YAMADA: Which, in turn, stopped producing the hormones responsible for the feeling of happiness.

PAGE 4 | 4 PANELS

PANEL 1

Mark Sandman, lying catatonic on an operating table, mirroring his catatonic state from page 3, panel 4. His head is now shaved.

27. CAPTION (DOCTOR KEIKO YAMADA): We can install a device to manually trigger the release of dopamine.

PANEL 2

Mark Sandman's cranium is open, with the brain exposed. A neural implant device sits on a sterile metal tray nearby, with a small circuit board, and a light indicator that turns red when the device is triggered.

NO DIALOGUE

PANEL 3

Mark Sandman is sitting up on the operating bed, his cranium back in place, and fresh stitches intact. The implant device is sticking slightly out from the back of his neck, just under the hairline, with the indicator light visible but not lit.

NO DIALOGUE

PANEL 4

While the hospital staff are busy around him, Mark sits calmly in the center of all the commotion, with a wry smile on his face.

NO DIALOGUE

PAGE 5 | 4 PANELS

PANEL 1

Mark Sandman's FATHER clutches his heart at the diner, spitting out his food.

28. CAPTION (MARK SANDMAN): My father passed while I was in surgery.

PANEL 2

Mark Sandman's father rests peacefully in a casket at the front of a long room.

29. CAPTION (MARK SANDMAN): At the funeral, while pondering the absurdity of life, I began to laugh uncontrollably.

PANEL 3

A red light has just activated on the neural device implanted in Mark Sandman's head, releasing a new DOSE.

30. CAPTION (MARK SANDMAN): The device, dictating my every emotion.

31. CAPTION (MARK SANDMAN): All of us, mere puppets to the hormonal imbalances of our brain.

PANEL 4

Mark Sandman sits in the front row, feet together but knees apart, hands resting on his thighs, laughing hysterically. His grin is ear-to-ear, an homage to The Joker.

32. SFX: HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA

END
