

to realise what it was but slowly growing in her like a cancer until her parents death had exploded it.

Now she has had this epiphany, she can see that in the past she has tried to fill the hole without even realising it existed. She had taken from other people the part that had been missing from her. She would absorb their reason for being, their wants and desires, their world view.

Mainly she had taken from James, and he had been more than willing to give, but it had been hard to see the world as he had seen it. It had been to Sophie a totally grotesque world. A world full of selfishness, barren of any real feeling towards anything other than yourself. Which is crazy because James is the most passionate and caring person she's ever met, yet so many times in the past she has sat with him and had him argue her to tears as he had decimated her attempts to prove that things like altruism and love existed.

Eventually, she had submitted her head to it and accepted that every act of kindness is motivated by either aversion to the unpleasant feelings of guilt or a predilection to the feelings of well being that accompany the act. She had even allowed her head to accept that there is no spiritual component to love, that it is just, as James had argued, complete mutual empathy directed at someone whom your body has told you, via the release of chemicals into your brain, that you are biologically compatible with and that your subconscious has told you, based on years of social conditioning, is a suitable match

As Sophie's body sits in the examination room being poked, prodded, and measured by James, her mind is able to see him so clearly sitting on the green green grass, under a blue sky, watched by a yellow sun, being so excited as he explains to her how the complete mutual empathy of being in love means, not only that you just feel every quicken of your partners heart, but that they feel you feel it and that you feel them feeling you feel it so a feedback loop ensues. You are happy which makes them happier, them being happier makes you happier still and the two of you spiral ever higher till you reach nirvana.

Sophie had accepted all this with her head, but not with her heart. Secretly she had believed in altruism, secretly she had believed in love. She had clung to her mystical romantic notions. So vague compared to the clarity of James' chemically motivated feedback inducing empathy. She had believed that people do kind things because they are kind, not because they selfishly crave the warm glow they get from it or fear guilt if they do not do it. Secretly she had known why her heart had clung to this belief: it had seemed to her that if she had accepted that kindness is purely selfish then it would nullify the pleasure of doing a good deed. Sophie had kept this thought in her heart for she had known her head would scream out that she was just proving the point.

Sophie looks at James and is pretty sure that his sermons on sex and love weren't drawn from experience, yet premarital sex is such a taboo it is conceivable that he would have hidden it even from her. She doubted though that, even if he had tried, he could have managed to hide the other tell-tale signs: the overcompensating when trying to avoid looking at this girl, the girls surprising occurrences in conversations due to half his mind thinking of nothing but her, and the other hundred and one little things he would have done if he had been in love with someone, if he had made love with someone.

However, even if the way James had talked about sex had been from a theoretical point of view, more than anything it had rung true for her, theoretically speaking. For this had been how she had felt. She had wanted to pleasure people. She had wanted to make them happy. She had known nothing in the world would make her happier.

Back in the present, Sophie's body is lying on the cold earth, all happiness has left it. James' body, gives it heat. His hot breath fills its lungs making it breathe, but nothing he can do can make it wake because her mind is still in the hospital between the worlds reliving what happened a decade ago.

Sophie is almost delirious with happiness. She has given up trying to contain the part of her that believes that when her blood is tested it will prove that they were wrong about her mother, that they are