



In the beginning

Video transcript: Clip from *Inside the Human Body* (BBC One, 2011)

MICHAEL MOSLEY:

The precious egg that became you was stored inside your mother's ovaries for decades. Then, when its time came, it rose to the surface and ripened.

As soon as an egg is ripe, it's released from the ovary, and gently wafted into the opening of the fallopian tube.

The sperm are now in a race to the finish. They have come a long way, but there can only be one winner.

The competing sperm break off the cloud of cells that surround the egg. They struggle to burrow in until finally one pushes through the soft shell underneath. This is a critical moment for the egg. If a second sperm gets in, the egg won't survive.

It must quickly protect itself. Under the shell, tiny granules detonate, hardening it and making the egg impenetrable.

A new life is underway.