

## CHAPTER 1

# Josie and the Cakes

---

THAT SATURDAY, Josie was helping her mum in the kitchen baking cakes. Dad had taken the others out to the park. Josie enjoyed those moments when she and her mum were alone together. It made her feel more grown-up and she tried to behave like it.



"I'll get the eggs out," she said, and one promptly fell splat on the floor.

Her mother saw Josie's face and chipped in quickly, saying, "Bad luck. Here's some paper towel."

Josie busied herself on the floor before remarking, "Beth's mother is having another baby. I wish we could have one."

Her mother laughed. "You don't think this house is full enough as it is?"

The girl stood up, scrunching the paper towel in her hand. "Mum," she asked, "where do babies come from?"

This time it was Mum's turn to be a bit embarrassed. "Well," she began. "You see these eggs?"

"Yes?" said Josie.

"They come from a hen, don't they? If they'd been fertilised by a cockerel when they were still inside the hen there would be little chicks inside. You see, women also have **eggs** deep inside them."

"Really?" said Josie, her eyes widening. "I've never seen anyone laying an egg."

Mum laughed. "People are similar but not quite the same. You may not know it, but you already have inside you all the eggs you will ever have for your own future babies. About half a million of them."

"Half a million?" exclaimed Josie. "But they'd never fit in."

"If they were as big as these eggs, certainly not. But there is a big difference between hens and human beings. Birds' eggs contain all the **genetic material** necessary to create a new bird, ..."

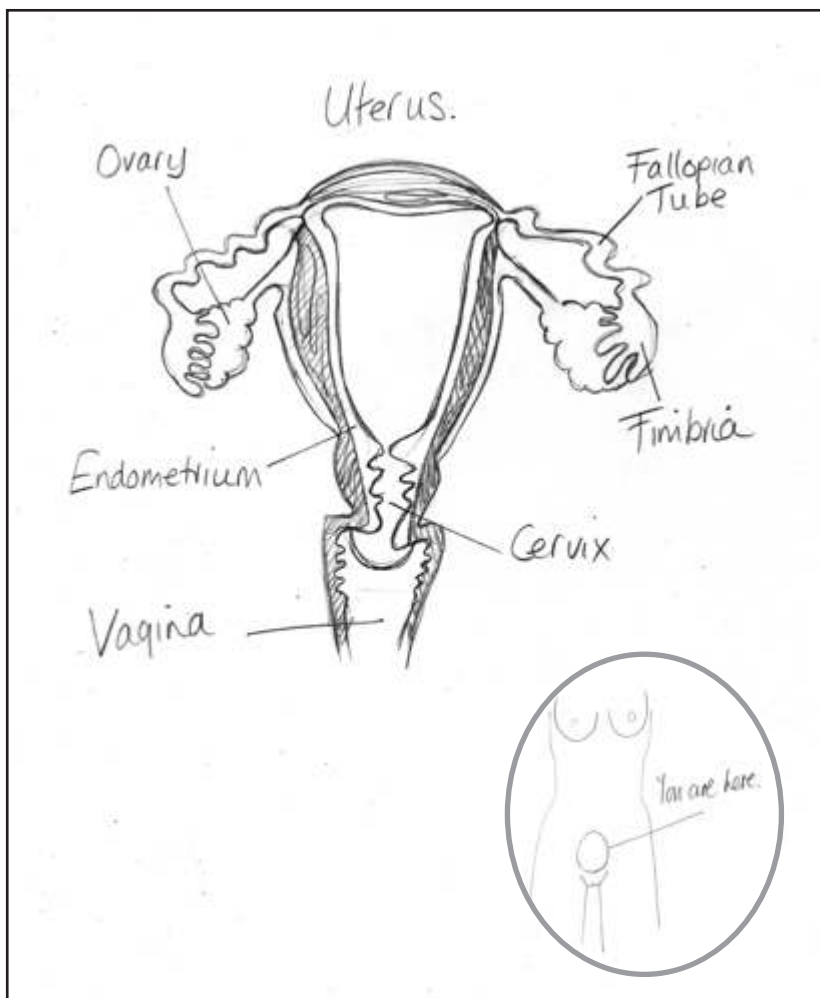


Figure 1: Female reproductive organs

"That's the **DNA**?" interrupted Josie.

"Where did you learn that from? School? Yes, the DNA. But most of a hen's egg isn't DNA. When we eat an egg, what we're eating is the food which a new chick would feed off until the moment it hatches. The hen sits on the egg to keep the chick warm, but it doesn't give it more food.

"With a human mother, the egg contains only the mother's genetic material. That's why it can be so small, minute in fact. Inside the mother's womb—or **uterus**—all the food for the baby is provided by the mother's body.

"Give me some paper from that pad over there, and I'll draw you a diagram of what