

# THE WOMB

## Cast – in order of appearance

**Ian** – Glaswegian, rough around the edges

**Quincy** – Southern English, uptight and pompous

**Alice** – Schoolgirl who knows very little but thinks she knows it all

**Barbara** – Surprisingly reticent, underestimated

## ACT 1

[Lights come slowly up on an empty stage. It is completely deserted, with no props and no backdrop]

IAN enters stage-right. He is confused and slightly angry.

IAN                               Where in the fuck am I. [Looks around at his surroundings] What the fuck is this?

[Moments pass, then Ian finds a stool in the wings, drags it out and sits on it, comfortably.]

IAN                               Not exactly my fucking idea of a Friday night. And who the *fuck* are *you*?

[Ian points finger at the wing opposite. His words are aggressive but his intention is friendly]

[From the wing, QUINCY emerges. First we hear only his voice]

QUINCY                         Quincy, sir.

IAN                               What kind of a fuck name is that?

QUINCY                         It's Latin, derived from a Roman clan name for-

IAN                               I know what the fuck it is. You think I never ate quincy before?

QUINCY                         Not *quiche* it's-

IAN                               So what is this.... [gestures around] *place*?

QUINCY                         I'm not quite sure, I was going to ask you the same thing. I was out doing my grocery shopping when I ended up here.

IAN                               Is that right pal? Well I was about this close to shagging some wee piece from the bar when I ended up here so I think we all know who the real loser is, eh? Here, if you need somewhere to sit on pal there's fucking stools and some other shite over there. [Ian points to the wings]

[Quincy walks over to the wings, we hear a lot of clattering around and banging which, from the look on Ian's face, he is finding annoying]

IAN                               Any luck?

QUINCY                         Aha! Yes, thank you, I found it. [Quincy re-emerges with a comfortable armchair]

IAN                                You fucking bampot, I was talking about one of *these*!

[Ian points to his stool]

QUINCY                        [Secretly smug] Oh well, I suppose this will have to do.

[Quincy gets himself comfortable in the chair]

ALICE                        [Voiceover] Hello? Hello?

QUINCY and IAN            Hi!

[Silence]

ALICE                        [Voiceover] Urgh! I can't see anything, this is *hopeless*.

IAN                                We're right over here, can you no see us? It's no like it's a fucking maze in here, it's just one 'room'.

[Silence]

QUINCY                        Oh well, maybe she'll be back.

IAN                                [Sarcastically] Can't wait.

[An uncomfortable silence passes over them where neither is very sure how to continue the conversation]

IAN                                You dress really funny.

QUINCY                        Beg your pardon?

IAN                                Aw I'm no meaning it tae take offence like, just that you look like you're...

QUINCY                        ...Yes?

IAN                                Like you're... I don't know, aw dressed up for something! Did you have somewhere you were going?

QUINCY                        I told you, I was grocery shopping.

IAN                                Is that right? Aye, so you did now mind, I remember.

[More uncomfortable silence passes]

ALICE                        [Voiceover] HELLO! Can you hear me?

IAN                                Aye! We can! [Ian is beginning to find all this a bit tedious] If you see a big, bright fucking light then walk right into it!

ALICE [Voiceover] Oh, is that where you are?

IAN Nope.

[A beat passes. The men wait for more sounds from Alice but nothing happens]

IAN So Quiche, I suppose we may as well get acquainted eh?

QUINCY [Really considers this] I suppose.

IAN What is it, like, that you do in the day, then? You got some kids? A job? An ex-girlfriend locked in your attic?

QUINCY No. I'm a teacher. Have been for eight years now.

IAN Ooooft! Rapists get less pal.

QUINCY I teach classical studies at the University of Edinburgh.

IAN Aw fancy eh? I did classics at school, only took it cause it was that or Modern Studies and there wis a paedo who taught that one, and I wis a good-looking boy an aw back then so I wasnae gonna take my chances. Took classics instead, eh? Learnt aw about that guy, what wis his name?

QUINCY Plato? Aristotle? Oh! Euripides?

IAN Joaquin Phoenix! Played that guy in fuckin' *Gladiator*. Fucking class film that wis.

QUINCY It is positively *ridden* with historical inaccuracies.

IAN [Starts cracking up with laughter, so much he struggles to get his words out] That bit-when the-when the-King gives him his first wife-and he's just standing there-standing there! Wie a look on his face [slapping his thighs with glee] – like a fucking pleb!

QUINCY That's NOT *Gladiator*, that's *Prince of Persia*.

IAN Is that right? Aye, maybe you're right.

[Silence]

IAN Well Quiche, maybe you will be wondering what I do during *my* spare time. The answer to that is: absolutely fuck all. Generally my day looks like this: I get up, I take a shite, then I piss around for 14 hours, then I take another shite and go to sleep. Now I know what you're thinking – I've got a pretty good bowel-ular system going on, but it wisnae always like that. I used to take just one shite per day, but I wis shagging a vegetarian for a while and fuck man, that fucking roughage changed my life! I telt ya man, you need tae fucking look it up pal:

plant-based diet, cannae go wrong. Still treat myself to the occasional sausage roll likes, cause you've still gotta live a little, eh?

[Suddenly Alice stumbles clumsily onto the stage from the wings.]

IAN Who the fuck are you?

ALICE I'm Alice [beat], the girl from before?

IAN [singing/screaming] ALICE, ALICE, WHO THE FUCK IS ALICE! [Ian erupts into splits of laughter, which are not met with pleasure by either Alice or Quincy]

ALICE [Sarcastically] Right, I'm sure you're the first one who's *ever* sung that to me.

IAN Really?

[Alice stares at him]

IAN Well welcome to our humble abode, *Alice*. I'm Ian, that's Quiche over there-

QUINCY It's *Quincy*.

IAN -and this is our lovely expanse of nothingness.

ALICE Well I'm Alice, nice to meet you. [She looks at both the chairs expectantly]

IAN Aw here, were you looking for somewhere to sit down? There's some shite back there [points to the wings], you might be able to find a box or something.

[Quincy comes to the rescue]

QUINCY I'll go and look for it. [He glares at Ian]

[Ian lights up a cigarette]

ALICE You can't do that in here!

IAN Why not?

ALICE It's illegal – you can't smoke in public spaces.

IAN [Bursts out laughing] 'Public spaces'? You think this is a fucking public space?

[Ian shakes his head, incredulous]

ALICE Well... I don't know what it is exactly, but *since* we don't know we should take the proper cautionary measures. There's not the proper ventilation in here to protect non-smokers against the poisonous gases. If I were pregnant my child's life would be at risk.

IAN Are you pregnant?

ALICE [Blushes] No of course not! I'm only 17 years old, that's wildly inappropriate for you to even ask.

IAN Alright pal, calm down, I'm no asking you to suck ma booby or something.

[Alice lets out a huff, unimpressed with the undignified turn the conversation has taken]

[Quincy reappears, holding a stool identical to Ian's]

QUINCY I could only find this stool unfortunately, but I mean *of course* you can have my armchair if you like.

IAN Aye! I think someone's got a soft spot for Miss No-Smoking-In-Public-Spaces-Who-The-Fuck-Is-Alice over here...

[Quincy blushes and is visibly annoyed, Alice pretends not to have heard the comment]

ALICE I'll be fine with the stool, thank you. [To Quincy] Have you been down here long?

IAN Aye, too fucking long in my opinion!

QUINCY About twenty minutes I'd say, although it is difficult to tell in here, my watch doesn't seem to be working anymore. How did you end up here?

ALICE Well you see, I'm not sure really. I was in the library – I haven't started yet, but I want to get ahead on my studies so I asked my department if they could grant me a temporary pass for their online collection on account of my records of attainment and why, they said yes of course.

[Ian rolls his eyes]

QUINCY What will you be going to study?

ALICE Ancient Greek primarily, but I selected anthropology and Latin as my other modules. I'm going to the University of Manchester.

QUINCY Why, what a coincidence! I teach Classical Studies! Right here in Edinburgh!

IAN [Mimics] *Why what a coincidence!* Keep your cock in your trousers pal! Hang on, have we established that we're in Edinburgh? I certainly don't fucking remember being in Edinburgh.

QUINCY Of course we're in Edinburgh. You're from Edinburgh, aren't you?

IAN I'm from Partick, you spanner.

ALICE                                 Edinburgh? I've never even been to Edinburgh. I come from Hook, it's around one hour from London.

QUINCY                                Oh! My family has a holiday home close-by in Winchester, we used to [using air quotes] "holiday" there when I was younger.

ALICE                                 Really? How fantastic! I haven't been to-

IAN                                     Okay guys, guys, guys, can we leave the fucking catch-up for another time? I'm sure you're aw fucking distant cousins of the highest breed in some way or another. But where the actual fuck are we?

[Barbara comes onstage, she walks on pretty casually, nothing is surprising her. She talks in a thick northern accent]

BARBARA                               Hi. What have we got here then?

IAN                                     [To himself] *Finally*, a fucking normal human being.

BARBARA                               Who the fuck are you?

IAN                                     I was about to ask you the same question!

BARBARA                               I'm Barbara, you can call me Barbs. What the hell is this place? And are *you* gonna be a gentleman and offer me your seat or what? [She is pointing at Quincy, who is clearly taken aback by her presence]

QUINCY                                Uhhhh...

BARBARA                               [Mimics] "Uhhh..." Come on then, off it!

[Quincy jumps to his feet from the armchair and stands around rather awkwardly, not knowing what to do with himself]

BARBARA                               Ah! What a long day. I had to take the kids to school, played tennis with Kate, and I had to plan my lesson for Thursday. I tell you, people don't know how difficult it is going back to work after you had your kids. Two days per week I have to do – can you imagine? *And* take care of the house *and* the kids! If it wasn't for my weekly facial honest to God, I don't know how I'd cope. Here babe, you've got your cardigan on all inside out. [She is pointing at Alice]

ALICE                                 It's *supposed* to be that way.

BARBARA                               Oh... right.

[Silence]

IAN Nice to meet you. I'm Ian, that's Quiche, and that's sassy Alice over there who you've already insulted. But Barbs before we get properly acquainted I have to ask: are you pregnant?

BARBARA You what? Do I look like I'm pregnant? Is that what you're saying?

IAN No pal, you see our wee Alice over there - she's got an issue with smoking in public places on account of the possibility of baby death.

ALICE Ha ha. You can leave it now.

IAN Aw, I'm just having a wee joke pal.

ALICE Yeah well, ha ha, it's very funny, we're all in hysterics.

BARBARA Anyone got a clue why we're here?

[Silence]

BARBARA Am I the first person to ask that question?

QUINCY No! God no, of course not. I've been asking that as well...in my head.

IAN Well Barbs, I've got this theory that they just knew we were aw gonna get on so well together that they thought 'Hey, let's put these fuckers in some wee confined space and make them aw hang out together for the foreseeable future. And hey, why the fuck not? Let's not put any food in there either'.

QUINCY Who's 'they'?

IAN Aw I dunno man, whoever the fuck you wanna call it: the government, the royal family, wee green men in silver lycra jumpsuits, Jeremy fucking Hunt, that guy fae Macdonalds that always serves my sausage roll that wee bit too cold. The fuckers that put us in here.

QUINCY [Mutters] Here come the conspiracy theories...

IAN Eh?

QUINCY Nothing.

BARBARA Well, what about our mobiles?

IAN They're deid. You don't get any reception here.

ALICE Well I think we must have all been in some kind of accident. Maybe we were together when this happened but we just can't remember. Maybe we hit our heads or something?



QUINCY                   What, like some kind of collective amnesia?

ALICE                    Exactly.

IAN                      Okay wise guys, here's a question: why the fuck would we all be together? Do you guys also like snorting eccies at 5 o'clock on a Thursday?

QUINCY                 For Christ's sake.

ALICE                    What are 'eccies'?

QUINCY                 I think what Alice is saying is that maybe that's not what you were *actually* doing.

IAN                      [Thinks about it for a while] Okay you've lost me.

QUINCY                 Mother Mary.

IAN                      I heard that you fucker!

QUINCY                 Well I didn't exactly whisper it.

BARBARA                So let me get this straight: from what you remember, you were doing *that* in... Glasgow? [Ian nods] I was on my way back from tennis in Crosby...

ALICE                    Yes and I was studying at the library reading the ancient Greek drama *Antigone*.

QUINCY                 And I was doing grocery shopping at the Marks & Sparks just off Waverly station.

BARBARA                Right, so given all that information [she processes it] I can't think of a single thing that we have in common.

IAN                      See! I fucking told you. Tell you what, it woulda been a totally different scenario right now if I *had* got some eccies before we got here.

BARBARA                Do any of you have anything to do with mergers and acquisitions? My husband works in that.

IAN                      I'm gonna save you some time Barbs: I'm an unemployed reprobate, she's a sassy wee speccy-eyed know-it-all geek, and he's a-

QUINCY                 You know what? I think I can introduce myself. I'm a Classical Studies lecturer at the University of Edinburgh.

BARBARA                Okay. Eh, what about kids?

QUINCY                 No, none for me.

IAN                                Yeah... I used to have one.

QUINCY                            [Smirks] You? Wow. And was that before or after you succeeded in becoming the antithesis of Scottish inferiority complex?

[Ian doesn't understand what he said but decides it was offensive]

IAN                                Look! [He points to Quincy's crotch area] The wee posh fanny's growing some balls – or is it just a tiny wee pussy to match your ugly boarding school fuck face?

[Quincy makes like he is up for a fight, but we all know he isn't]

[Ian laughs]

[Lights flash on and off]

ALICE                              What was that?

IAN                                It's been doing that loads since I got here. I call it 'the bends'.

BARBARA                        Why?

IAN                                Because of that feeling – you know? It feels like you're bending, or it feels like the world is bending. But you're not, nothing's changed, you're standing upright. It's the only way I could think to describe it.

ALICE                              You're right, it does feel like bending. I couldn't think of how to describe it but that's it.

BARBARA                        How often do the bends come?

IAN                                Let's see... [thinks] I think that's about the sixth time since I got down here.

QUINCY                            Sixth time? So you've been here long before us.

IAN                                Well I dunno, it's difficult to tell down here eh? It's no like there's a clock on the wall.

ALICE                              I felt it once when I came in, it was dark but I definitely felt it.

BARBARA                        Well, what are they?

IAN                                How should I know? First when they started I didn't really feel anything. I thought it was just my stomach because earlier on I ate a fucking giant fry up and I felt at the time that it could well repeat on me. But then it just wasnae going away and it was like this feeling like I'd never felt before. It seems like it gets stronger and longer each time.

QUINCY Well thanks for warning us about it.

IAN Oh sure pal! Right in between you cumming in your troosers to Miss Sassy Pants' university library story and then your chat about whose holiday home is bigger, I was all set to jump right in and warn you about the weird supernatural bendy feeling that I'm feeling.

QUINCY Well maybe you got distracted while you were terrorising a young and vulnerable woman with your inappropriate language and behaviour!

[Ian walks up very close to Quincy so they are almost nose-to-nose]

IAN *That* would be a pretty good joke pal, except that *you're* the one who's got a hard-on over the "young and vulnerable woman"! [points to his crotch]

[Alice is shocked]

QUINCY [Turns bright red] That is NOT an erection! [Turns to Alice] It is not an erection, I promise you, it's... it's... it's an unfortunate trouser crease! This is outrageous!

[Ian is in fits of laughter]

ALICE I am feeling very uncomfortable!

QUINCY Well no wonder, he's an animal!

BARBARA Alright that's enough, both of you, we don't have time for this.

IAN Barbs, there is no time down here, his watch isn't even working.

QUINCY It might just be broken.

IAN Oh yeah? Here Barbs, how long do you reckon we've all been here for?

BARBARA I don't know. Four hours?

[Ian scoffs]

QUINCY What?

BARBARA Or longer? I don't know, we need to work out how we can get out of here.

IAN Well isn't there a way out the back?

ALICE Where is the back?

IAN [Gestures] *There*.

ALICE No, I just came from there. Or was it *there*? It's all too dark, it's impossible to tell.

IAN Well, what about where you came from, Barbs?

BARBARA Me? Oh God, I can't remember which way I came from. How did I even get here?

IAN It seemed like it was from over *that* way. [He gestures vaguely to stage-right]

QUINCY No, I am *certain* it was from *that* way. [He gestures vaguely to stage-left]

IAN Okay, okay, egg tart, this could go on forever. So, should we just wait? Maybe one of us should go back there and try to have a look.

ALICE Well, who? I'm not going, I've got my whole future ahead of me, and as you mentioned I *am* young and vulnerable. I don't want to get lost in the darkness, I start at the University of Manchester in less than two weeks.

IAN Yeah, so you've told us! Congratulations.

QUINCY You should go [he is pointing at Ian], you've got no family, no real prospects, why not go back there and have a gander? I mean it might not be as bad as it looks.

IAN Hey, what the fuck? Who the fuck are you to say I've got no prospects!

QUINCY You just said you spend the whole day defecating and sleeping!

IAN I've got healthy bowels! What kind of a crime is that?

BARBARA Alright boys, just settle down will you? Jesus Christ. I'm trying to think.

[Moments pass]

ALICE Oh! I know! I know how we can decide!

QUINCY What?

ALICE It's this game we used to play at boarding school. You go around in a circle and each person has to carry on the story. The first person to repeat a word loses.

IAN [Under breath] For fucks sake...

QUINCY Brilliant idea! Oh! Who gets to start?

ALICE Well, normally it's the oldest that gets to start.

BARBARA Great. [Beat] So, I just start do I?

ALICE Yes, it can be about anything – a magical Kingdom, a paradisiacal island, a mystical castle filled with demons and warlocks... Use your imagination!

BARBARA Okay, okay I get it. [Clears throat] Once upon a time, there was a horny postman who knocked on a front door – right who's next?

ALICE Can we *please* save the profanities for once?

IAN I know! The granny's front door opened and the postman took out his-

QUINCY Okay, okay! I think we all get the purpose of the game. I believe I'm the second-oldest so I go next.

IAN Right, on you go Barbs, [in an aside] a censored version this time for the kiddies.

[Alice scowls at him]

BARBARA Once upon a time there was a lonely old man-

QUINCY -who liked nothing more than to read books all day-

IAN -and then wank off into the sunset-

ALICE *But* one evening, a visitor came to pay him a visit-

BARBARA -because he needed his electricity meter read.

QUINCY The old man-

IAN Ha! You lose! You said 'old man' twice, you fucking fanny!

QUINCY What? But, but, that doesn't count! [He looks to Alice for confirmation]

ALICE Why don't we call that a practice round?

IAN Practice round! You fucking skivvies, that wasn't a practice round, we were all playing just fine, we don't need practice.

BARBARA Alright, alright, let's just call that a practice round and be done with it. Quincy, you can start this time.

IAN [Starts clapping hands and shouting] Go on then, quiche boy! Show us what you got!

QUINCY [Clears throat] Late at night in the foothills of India, there was a magician who lived by the name of Patak-

IAN -which incidentally was the same name as a famous curry brand, but he didn't seem to care.

ALICE He was stood gazing over the mountains, staring into the future when a mysterious figure appeared-

BARBARA -who said he had to climb over to the next village and find some treasure.

QUINCY He frantically packed his bags and ran out of the house-

IAN But the house-

QUINCY Ah-ha! [Claps hands with glee] You said 'house'! I already said 'house'! You're off! Bye-bye then!

IAN Aw great, I bet you're all well happy now, get rid of the Scot so you can start some private members club boarding school masturbation fuck party-

BARBARA Now hang on a minute, I am still here aren't I?

IAN Oh yeah, sorry Barbs – I meant those two.

ALICE Just utterly absurd that you would talk in this way to a young woman!

[They start arguing, Barbs eventually breaks it up]

IAN So what, I just go over there then? [Gestures vaguely to behind the stage]

ALICE Well yeah! Or... [she looks at him thoughtfully then walks up to him with a face full of pity, as if to suggest that they forget the whole thing] you can always go that way if you prefer. [Points sharply towards the audience]

IAN Well, which way do you think is better?

QUINCY How should we know?

IAN Hey, you're the ones that got us into this mess!

QUINCY Oh really? And how's that? None of us want to be in this mess! Frankly, it's about the last place I'd like to be right now!

IAN Yeah right pal, you're fucking loving this. Are you trying to tell me I'm supposed to believe you had nothing to do with this?

QUINCY You were the one that was here first! If anything, *you're* the one that's most responsible, so you should be getting us out of here!

[More arguing starts]

BARBARA                    Alright boys, ALRIGHT! Will you just shut up the both of you? I spend enough of my time looking after six-year-olds, do you think I want to spend all day listening to you lot yammering on? What we really need is a plan. I say we all go.

ALICE                        All of us?

BARBARA                    That's right, all of us, and there'll be none of your whining and shouting or I'll fucking throw you into the darkness myself, is that clear?

QUINCY and IAN            Yeah.

BARBARA                    Good, now let's get a move on.

[They all move towards the back of the stage. Lights down.]