It was another busy night on the floor of Labor and Delivery. I was a brand-new medical student on rotation. Just sitting in the fishbowl. Fishbowl—funny thing. They sat us at a desk in the middle of the ward, surrounded by glass walls. Fishbowl. Even from inside, I could hear the muffled moans of women in labor. I could see nurses busily going from room to room. I felt a little protected in the fishbowl, but also helpless.

Then came a call—they needed help in Room 8. A woman was going to deliver soon. So off I went with the nurse. Having never seen a woman in labor, I was taken aback. She was in pain. How do I help? Her family was nervous and exhausted from the long labor. What should I do?

The attending physician came in, and like a ray of light, brought new energy into the room. The family jumped up. It was time to push! I fumbled to unlock the bed and managed to not get run over as we moved into the Delivery Room. "Gown up!" the attending told me. He must've seen the look of inexperience on my face. "Like this. Now, hand here."

What? Why?
"Hold your hands like this."
Really?
The woman gave a deep groan and started pushing. I saw the head of the baby start to emerge. Then I was guiding the baby out. "Hold tight. They're slippery little devils."

I ran my hand down the back of the baby and cradled him until he was finally free.

I heard nothing then. No shouts of joy. No "It's a boy!" No crying of relief. I just saw the baby, with his scrunched-up face, slightly blue and slippery.

Then I felt a nudge. It was the attending. He said, "You don't need to hold that tight; the kid's got to breathe."

"Sorry!" In that moment I knew my life was going to be in the fishbowl.  

How to Cite this Article

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Accompanying artwork: Fishbowl by Aster Pang.