

How many times can YOU BE SAVED...

... before you learn to save yourself, wonders **Claudia Chung**?

The first time I was saved, I was four years old and drowning. My family was on a road trip to Yosemite Park and we had stopped for a picnic. We weren't even a year into being Americans but we started traveling the promised land almost immediately; as if seeing America would somehow make us more American by proximity. We did it all: Grand Canyon, Lake Tahoe,

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Vegas, Disneyland. It was a hopeful beginning that I still hold on to with love and gratitude.

Our designated lunch spot on this particular day was next to a massive river. Kids were swimming, wading on the outer edges, or floating on plastic yellow, duck-shaped boats. So, not wanting to be left out, and rambunctious enough to be fearless, I completely forgot I couldn't swim. I stripped down to my underpants and made my way to the river. There was a very clear moment of joy as I watched the water cruise by my feet, my eyes

squinting with delight as the sunlight hit the rocks. I remember the warmth of the water. Then, in one split second, everything changed.

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Here's the thing about almost dying in a freak accident. You are awake. You pay attention to what is happening in detail. And you listen to your internal dialogue about the whole matter. "What just happened? How did I get here from there? I have to hold on to this tree root!" I simply couldn't understand the turn of events and how it had happened so quickly; a script change from happy to terrifying. Of course, my dad saw me struggling and pulled me out in a matter of seconds. He had saved me. And I knew it.

The second time I was saved, I was also drowning — not in water, but in failure. I was in my early 30s. I had no real meaningful career prospects, no true friendships, and was hemorrhaging money. I was also epically single and mildly obese from a daily consumption of booze and deep-fried pizza. I was down in the dumps. Beyond low. And, as in all fairytales, I was saved by a man. A good man.

The man who saved

About CLAUDIA

Claudia Chung is a writer who moonlights as a school teacher. She is currently working on a book of essays and stories on the trials, tribulations, and the funny in being a young widow.

me was at first a friend and mentor. He was the best writer and editor in town. He encouraged me to write and maybe try teaching. But, mostly, he loved and cared for me until I started to love and care for myself. My guy saved me.

I once read that there are only two sins in the Law of Love. One is to interfere with the growth of another human being, and the second is to interfere with one's own growth. I can truly say I have no desire to be saved anymore. It would be a regression, not a progression. Growth would halt. Maybe even disappear.

My guy showed me what true love looks like and what it feels like. He taught me how to build a life that is supported by people who are kind, gentle, and talented. Does that make him my hero? I think so.

These days, my perfect moments come daily if I am paying attention. Nothing is mundane. And I have found many true loves — not in a man with a deep pocketbook, but a group of people who love me daily and let me do the same for them.

I don't know how much more I can be saved than that.

