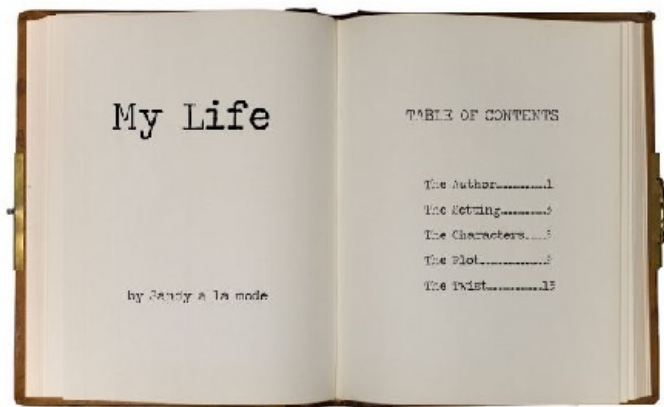


## EMPOWER YOURSELF WITH THE STORIES OF OTHERS



When you are working a given job, there are a set of expectations, a career line, a trajectory, that you don't much have to think of, so much as follow, obey, and accept. What is expected of you at any job is usually made manifest, first, by the orders of your boss, and secondarily by the work culture, where people talk informally, and gossip, and what not, leaving you with a strong indication of what both your boss and everybody expects of you. The coveted jobs are laid out: everybody wants them, everybody praises, or bitterly denounces, those who advance. Everything is easy as cake. Being laid off might seem a more **desperate** plight, as your next move isn't at all clear, and what is expected of you to land your next job may also come informally from family and friends. But truly, being in such a situation gives you more freedom than you could at a given job. Working a job, after all, you know what is expected of you, you know what is possible and what is impossible. But when looking for a new job, when lacking any job at all, you do not have a boss commanding you, nor coworkers gossiping. You have that daunting and sometimes terrifying prospect of pure freedom: you can choose where you go next. This might be a time to get a sense for the big picture, to ask yourself, as you ought to do from time to time, "what is it all about?" If depressed or cynical, you might say its all futile, it adds up to nothing, but have the courage to dismiss that voice. Try again, and ask where you want all this to go. If you are struggling to find a shape or trajectory for your life, consider this: hearing the stories of others can be greatly effective and determining your own story. Now is the time to do a little reading, and read an essay or even a book, a biography of somebody you respect. You might read the biography of a saint or a war hero or a great politician, and that might help you indirectly, but there are other people to look at too, maybe people closer to standing where you stand. You will discover that the sorts of travails, indignations, and self-doubts that may plague your heart from time to time haunted the best of them, that, being human, we all experience the same thing. Yet we keep it to ourselves, or don't know how to express it. Reading a biography can expose the sameness between us, when we see that the hero's struggle is our own. Another tact to consider is to have coffee with somebody you regard as successful. Ask him to tell his story. This is not about gloating, and don't present it as if you want him to encourage you. Simply listen to his actual story, the things he had to face and how he overcame them. Not only will such **networking** help you with your job hunt, it will help you make peace with it. Mere platitudes and endless annoying advice isn't going to help you. But hearing stories you can believe in may make the difference in letting you take your career in a direction you might not have suspected was possible. You don't know what your **goals** can be until you've heard how others approached their own struggles.