Luisa begins our dialog by saying to Max “Are you still here?” This is one of those questions you ask when you surprise about something, obviously, Luisa can see that Max still, wherever they are. She says “I thought you got off at 3:00.” To get off of work means to finish your work schedule, to be able to leave the place where you work. If someone says “What time do you get off?” they mean what time do you get off of work, when do you stop working, what time do you stop working. Max says “I picked up a second shift.” A shift s-h-i-f-t refers to a period of time when people work, usually this term is used for job when people work at that particular location, more than 8 hours or that there are people working at that location for more than 8 hours. It might be for example a place where there are someone working 24 hours a day. Well, one person is not going to work 24 hours straight, so they break up the day into shifts. So if you work the day shift, you’re working probably from 8 in the morning to around 4 or 5 in the afternoon. If you work in a night shift, you’ll be working perhaps 4 or 5 in the afternoon to midnight. If you’re working what we call the graveyard shift, you’re working probably from 11:00 at night (or midnight) to 7 or 8 in the morning. Those are shifts then, division of the work day in a place that usually is opened for more than 8 hours. Max says he picked up a second shift. To pick up here means to get, to obtain. He was working one shift, and now he picked up the second shift, which means of course he’s working more than 8 hours a day. Why has Max done this? Well, he says “I could use the money.” When someone says “I could use the money”, he means that he would be able to benefit from getting more money; he has some need of extra money. Luisa says “But I thought you had another part-time job in the evenings.” A part-time job is a job usually that is less than 40 hours per week. In United States, 40 hours per week is considered full time. If it’s less than 40 hours, we might call it part-time. Luisa thought that Max has another part-time job. Max says “I normally do, but the restaurant where I work has been cutting back my hours.” When we talk about someone cutting back on something, we mean that he’s using less of it or he’s reducing number of something. The two-word phrasal verb “to cut back” then means to reduce the number of something, in this case, we’re talking about the restaurant where Max works cutting back his hours (his hours refers to the number of hours that he can work). Max says “He’s trying to pick up as many extra shifts here as I can.” Luisa then asks “And don’t you work at the amusement park on the weekend?” An amusement a-m-u-s-e-m-e-n-t park is a large park usually that has lots of what we would call “rides” in them, places where people (especially children) can play games and get into these machine that go really fast. For example, Disney Land is an example of an amusement park here in Southern California. Luisa asks if Max is still working at an amusement park on the weekends. He says “I do half the year (meaning I do work there part of the year), but it’s winter and the park only keeps a skeleton crew on during these months.” Max is saying that the amusement park, where he normally works in the summer time, only has a skeleton crew during the winter time. The phrase skeleton s-k-e-l-e-t-o-n crew c-r-e-w refers to a very small number of workers, the minimum number of workers you can have at a place. If a business doesn’t have very many customers, it might have very few employees, and we might call that a skeleton crew. If during busy times, the company has more employees, this is the case with the amusement park can has a skeleton crew. The word “crew” just refers to a group of people; the word “skeleton” is normally used to describe the bones of your body, or the bones of an animal. Max says “In the meantime (meaning during this winter season), I’m working for a temp agency, which gives me short-term assignments.” A temp t-e-m-p agency is a company that finds people temporary jobs, the word “temp” is short for “temporary” meaning short term, not permanent, not for a long time. There are of course many companies that find workers, find people to work for companies that just need workers for a short period of time. Max says the temp agency gives him short-term assignments. Short-term refers to a short amount of time, perhaps a week, perhaps even a day. I used to work for temp agencies when I was in college, I would call up every morning and see if they had any work for me, and they would send me to job that would last maybe one day, maybe two or three days, sometimes as long as a month. Temp agencies are very popular now, especially when the economy is not doing so well, companies don’t want to hire employees full time. Luisa says “I don’t know how you juggle all these jobs.” The verb to juggle j-u-g-g-l-e usually refers to throwing objects up in the air and keeping them up in the air, we refer to someone who does it as a juggler. But here, the verb means to handle many different things at the same time, to be able to do many different things at the same time. Max says “I have no choice (I have no other option). I have to piece together an income if I want to pay rent.” To piece p-i-e-c-e together something means to put together, to assemble. An income i-n-c-o-m-e refers to the money you get for working. Mas is saying that he has to work a little bit at this job and a little bit at that job in order to make enough money to pay for his rent. Luisa says “Have you ever thought about going back to school to qualify for other work, something full-time?” To qualify q-u-a-l-i-f-y for something means to have the skills and or education in order to be able to do something. So for example if you want to be a doctor, you have to study for many years in order to qualify for that kind of job, at least I hope you study many years if you’re doctor, if not please don’t be my doctor. Luisa asking if Max has thought about going back to school to qualify for some kind of job that would be full-time, that would be 40 hours a week. Max says “Sure, all the time (meaning I have thought of it a lot).” He says “I’d like a better job, one with benefits and a reliable salary.” Benefits b-e-n-e-f-i-t-s refers to things such as health insurance and vacation time and sick pay (money you get when you can’t work because you’re sick), these are common benefits that you get when you have a full-time job. Salary s-a-l-a-r-y refers to money that you get to work at a certain place usually by the month or by the year. When we talk about a salary, we’re talking about money you get regardless of how many hours you work. There’re two kinds of ways of getting paid, one is by the hours, when you get paid a certain amount of money for every hours you work. Another way of getting paid is by salary, when you’re getting paid on a salary we would say, you are getting a certain amount of money and are expected to do your job even if it takes more than the normal 40 hours a week. Luisa says “What’s stopping you?” what’s preventing you from going back to school? Max says “I have to pay for something called “food”. Max is making a joke here, he’s saying that he can’t afford to go back to school, he doesn’t have enough money to go back to school because an addition to paying his rent, he also has to eat, and to eat here is to buy food. He finishes by saying “I haven’t met my fairy godmother yet!” A fairy f-a-i-r-y godmother g-o-d-m-o-t-h-e-r is a character from children’s stories, stories that we tell children usually involving a woman who has some sort of magical powers. The fairy godmother is a common character in certain fairy tales that are told to children. These are made up stories about magical events. Here, Max is using the expression to mean that he hasn’t found someone who just going to give him money to pay for his expenses, and to go to school. Now let’s listen to the dialog this time at a normal speed.