Luisa begins our dialogue by saying to Max:”Are you still here?”. This is one of those questions you ask when you’re surprised about something obviously. Luisa can see that Max is 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?”, “Will 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 terms use for jobs when people work as that particular location more than 8 hours or that they are people working at that location for more than 8 hours. It might be, for example, a place where there is 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 a few work. The day shift, you’re working probably from 8 in the morning to around 4-5 in the afternoon. If you’re working the night shift, you’ll be working perhaps from 4-5 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. The vision of the worked day, in a place that usually open for more than 8 hours. Max said 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 a 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 he would be able to benefit from getting more money. He has some need of extra money. Luisa says ”But I thought you have another part-time job in the evening”. 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’s cutting back on something, we mean that he is using less of it or he is reducing the number of something. The two-word phrase verd “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 refer to the number of hours that he can work. Max says he tried to pick up as many extra shifts here as I can. Luisa then asks “And don’t you work at the amusement park at 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 [....] in them, places where people, especially children, can play games and get into these machines that go really fast. For example, Disneyland is an example of an amusement park here in South California. Luisa asks if Max is still working at the amusemeant park at the weekend. 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 that he usually work 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 out of place. If the business doesn’t have very many customers, it might have very few employees, and we might call that a skeleton crew, if during busy time, the company has more employees. This is the case with the amusement park, it has a skeleton crew. The word “crew” just refers to a group of people. The word “skeleton” normally use 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 assignmeants”. A temp, T-E-M-P, agency is a company that find people temporary jobs. The work “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 a 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 agency when I was in college. I would call up every morning and see if they have anywork for me. And they would send me to job that would last maybe one day, maybe 2 or 3 days, sometimes as long as a month. Temp agency 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 “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. Max 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-UA-L-I-F-Y, for something means to have these 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 a doctor. If not, please don’t, ah, be my doctor. Luisa is 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 this 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, refer to things, such as health insurance and vacation time and sickpay, 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 way of getting paid: one is by the hour, when you get paid a certain amount of money for everyhour that 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 says that he can’t affort to go back to school, he doesn’t have enough money to go back to school. Because in addition to pay his rent, he also has to eat. And to eat, he has 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 involve in a women 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’s just going to give him money to pay for his expenses and to go to school. Now listen to the dialogue this time, out of normal speed.