Luisa: Are you still here? I thought you **got off** at 3:00.   
  
Max: I **picked up** a second **shift**. I **could use** the money.   
  
Luisa: But I thought you had another **part-time** job in the evenings.   
  
Max: I normally do, but the restaurant where I work has been **cutting back my hours**, so I’m trying to pick up as many extra shifts here as I can.   
  
Luisa: And don’t you work at the **amusement park** on the weekend?   
  
Max: I do half the year, but it’s winter and the park only keeps a **skeleton crew** on during these months. In the meantime, I’m working for a **temp agency**, which gives me **short-term** assignments.   
  
Luisa: I don’t know how you **juggle** all these jobs.   
  
Max: I have no choice. I have **to piece together** an **income** if I want to pay rent.   
  
Luisa: Have you ever thought about going back to school **to qualify for** other work, something **full-time**?   
  
Max: Sure, all the time. I’d like a better job, one with **benefits** and a reliable **salary**.   
  
Luisa: What’s stopping you?   
  
Max: I have to pay for something called “food,” and I haven’t met my **fairy godmother** yet!

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 considers 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? 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 jobs when people work at 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 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 shift. So if you work the day shift, you’re working probably from 8 morning to around 4-5 in the afternoon. If you’re working the night shift, you’ll be working perhaps from 4-5 from the afternoon to midnight. If you’re working what we call the graveyard shift, you’re working probably from 11 o’clock at night or midnight to 7 or 8 in the morning. Those are shift then. Division of the work day in a place that usually open 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 a second which mean 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 the 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’re talking about someone cutting back on something we mean that he is using less of it or he is reducing the 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 he 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 the machines 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 the amusement park on 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 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 time the company has more employees. This is the case with amusement park, it has a skeleton crew. The word crew just refers to a group of people. The work 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 work temp is sort 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 sort 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 any work for me and they would send to jobs 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 employee 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 object up in the air and keeping them up in the air. We refer to someone who does this 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 that 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 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 something. So for example if you want to be a doctor you have to study for of 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 not don’t be mind 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 it a lot. I’d like a better job, one with **benefits** and a reliable **salary**. Benefits-b-e-n-e-f-i-t-s-refer to thing 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’re talking about salary, we’re talking about money you get regardless of how many hours you work. There are two kinds of ways of getting pay, one is by the hour when you get pay a certain amount of money for every hour you work. Another way of getting pay is by salary when you’re getting pay 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 afford to go back to school, he doesn’t have enough money to go back to school because in addition to paying 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 stories, stories that we tell children. Usually involving a woman who has some sort of magical power. 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 let’s listen to the dialog this time at a normal speed.