

the lid of the hole and commenting on it, as if to say something was broken about it, though the hinge seemed sturdy and the wood thick.

Trying to instigate them a little further, I cleared my throat and said, “So why do all of you look like Steve Jobs?”

They paid no notice to me and I tried saying again, “Steve Jobs, right? Steve Jobs?” Trying to say it in a French way even, to try and coax some recognition out of them, but they made no connection and went right on motioning at the door and flipping its lid up.

I tried a bit of my own French at this point, wondering if that might catch them. “Qu’est ce que vous ferez... vous fais?” I said, not too sure. But I was basically trying to say, “What are you guys doing?”

They looked around and one of them hummed a little and said, “C’est que faites-vous?” Which I didn’t understand and which didn’t even seem like correct French to me.

I tried again. “Qu’est ce que... err, how would you say, ‘What’s going on?’ Uhh... ça va?” I said, which I knew meant, “How’s it going.”

The man speaking to me stood up. He repeated “ça va” as if he didn’t understand and said something else in French that seemed to mean, “What are you going?” I asked him if he spoke English and he said something like, “Do you speak French?” but he used the term “Franchais” for “French”.

I tried some numbers with him and said, “Un. Deux. Trois.” He said, “Oui. Un. Deux. Trois.” I did the next few numbers and he understood those. Then I said, “Seven.” And he didn’t know that one. I said “sept” again, maybe I had pronounced it wrong. He said, “Non.” I said, “There are seven men here.” He said, “No, there are eleven (onze) men here.” I looked around, to be sure, but there were only seven. I said, “Seven.” And then he flashed his fingers at me to count them out and I saw that he only had three fingers on each hand.