



Talking to Jay

CHIPPY and Jay are in a school playing field during break time. They are talking about their holidays.

CHIPPY: It's got to change Jay...this constant going to France. Mum's got it really bad — this love affair with France. Dad says she ought to have married a Frenchman, but then I wouldn't be me — would I?

She's now talking about buying something over there, but Dad says the inheritance laws are complicated in France and I don't know what he means by that! No sooner do we get back, but Mum's going through another self-catering brochure looking for another rental. I tell you Jay it's what you call a fixation, it's as if no other country exists. She says (*Mimicking Mum*) 'I'm doing it for you, with a foreign language you can get a top job.' I mean, a 'top job'? I don't even know what sort of job I want!

Yeah! I agree with you Jay, it's better for the job market to learn Mandarin or Japanese, especially if you want to be in the business world. I wish we were next door to China instead of France across the Channel...

(Jay interrupts CHIPPY and CHIPPY looks in surprise at what Jay says)

So your mum wants you to train to be a doctor- that's not for me. I'd have to cut up things, like humans wouldn't I? To find out about their insides? Ugh, what a thought.

So your mum doesn't like France, you're lucky, honestly my mum makes me speak French, makes me, she forces me to do it. The big laugh is that when she gets there, actually in France, she's too scared to speak French herself, although she learned it in school. It's their (*Mimicking Mum*) 'country accent' and she only knows 'Paris French', honestly it just winds me up. There was this day, see, she wanted ham for lunch and I knew the word for it is 'jambon'.

Yes Jay I know that's a good start. So in we go and I say 'Je voudrais', which is 'I would like'. But then I get my numbers all mixed up — I say 'treize' instead of 'huit' and ask for thirteen slices of ham instead of eight. And she has to pay for thirteen, although

we only need the eight, then outside the shop she goes ballistic

- well I can't help it if I get my numbers wrong. I'm sure I'm sort of numbers dyslexic, they ought to have me tested.

I think my fate is a cottage in Brittany next summer for two weeks of French.

What, Jay, you don't mean it? I could come with you and your mum and dad to Cornwall? You think they'll let me? Hang on, what will my mum say? My mum can be really stubborn.

(The school bell rings to signify end of break)

Hey that's the bell, we'd better get a move on, it's maths lesson next and I really have to concentrate!

By Jeffrey Grenfell-Hill