SOFT3410: Concurrency for Software Developers

Mutual Exclusion

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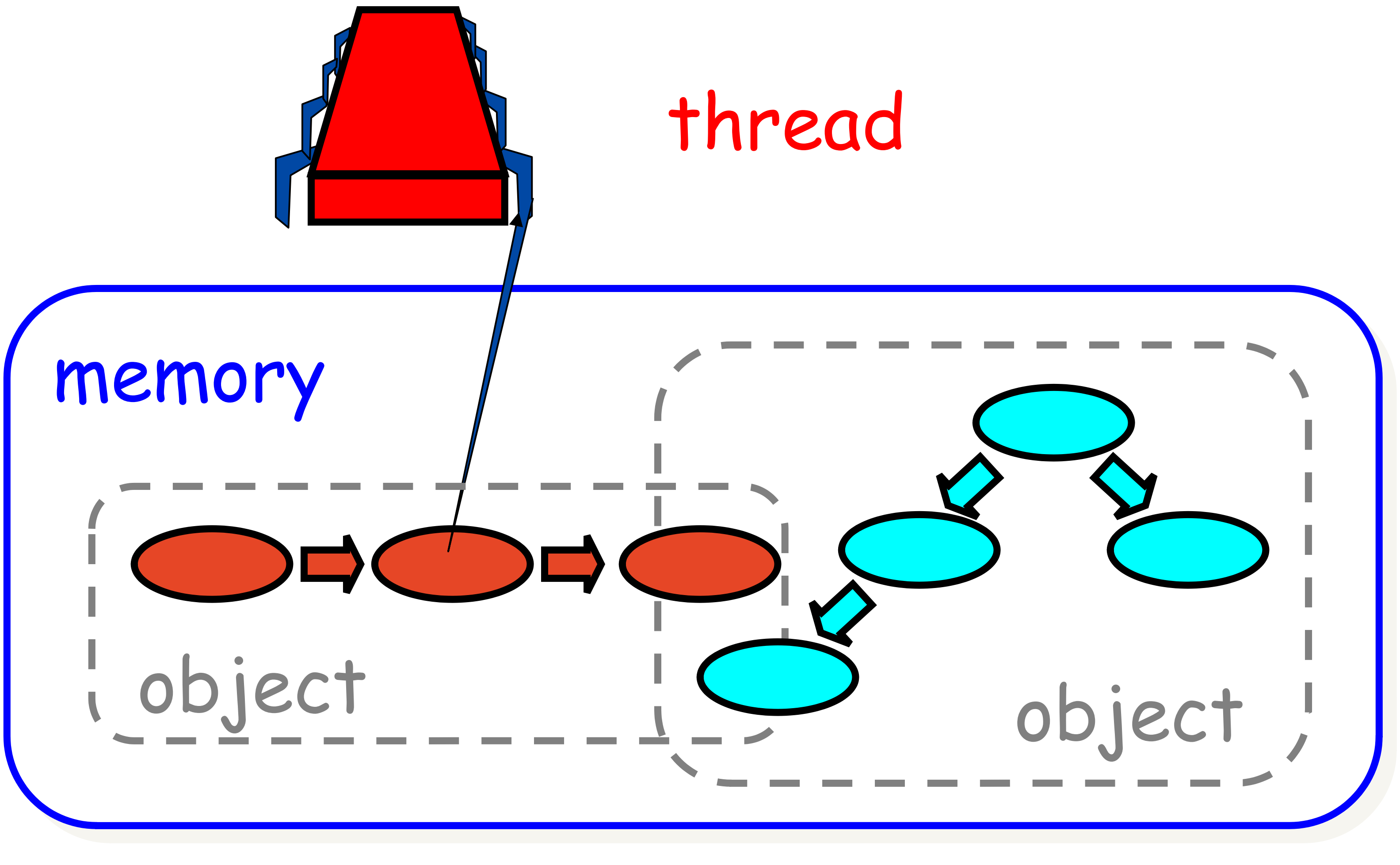
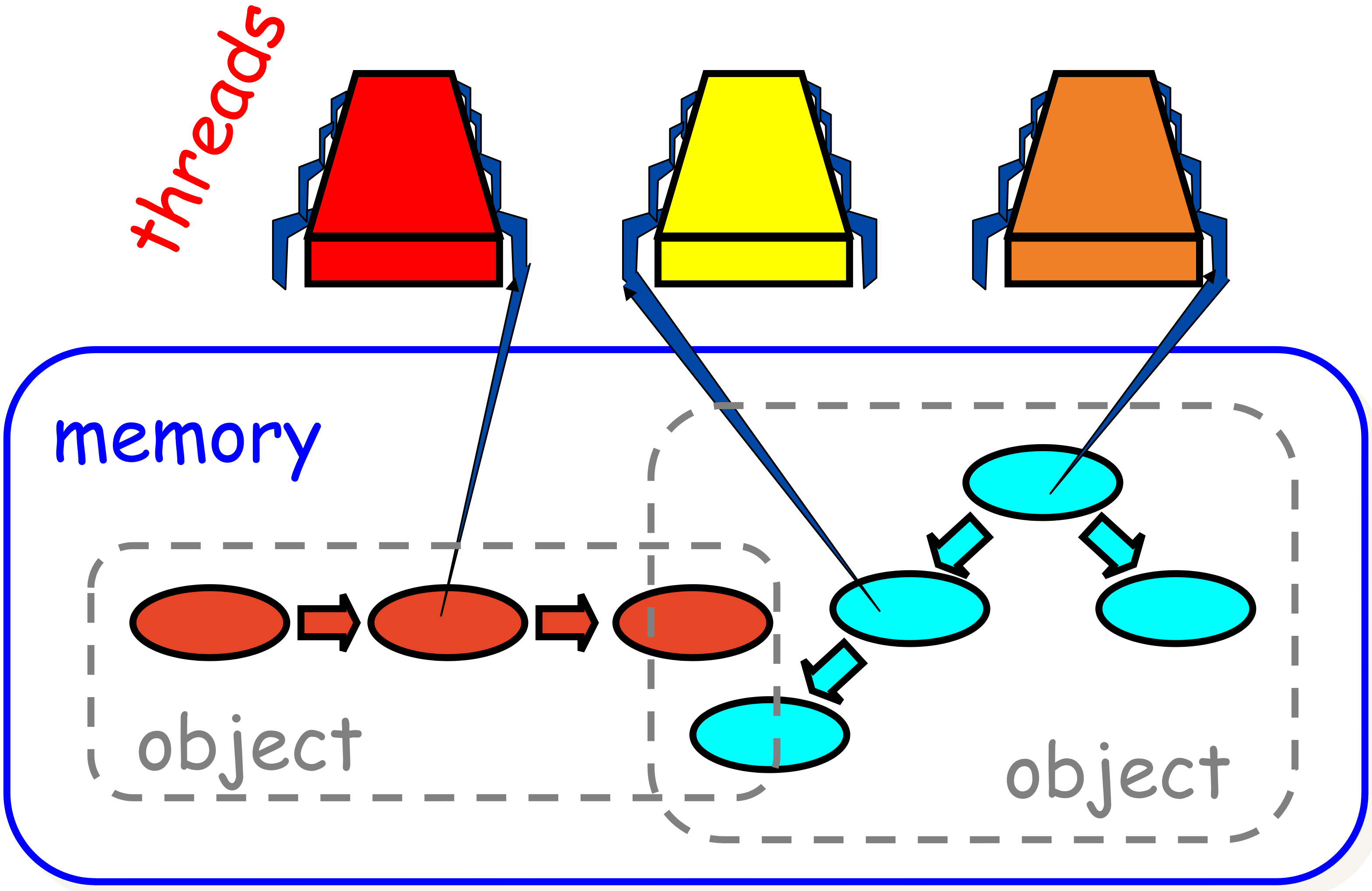
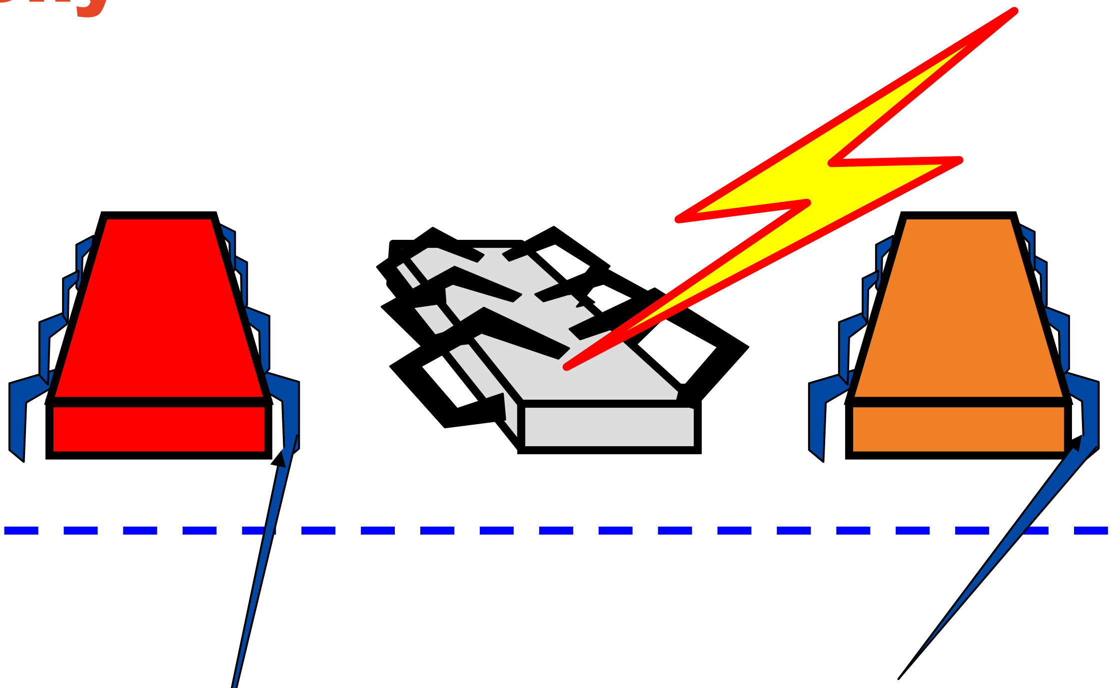
Sequential Computation



Concurrent Computation



Asynchrony



Sudden unpredictable delays

- Cache misses (*short*)
- Page faults (*long*)
- Scheduling quantum used up (*really long*)

Model Summary

- Multiple *threads*
  - Sometimes called *processes*
- Single shared *memory*
- *Objects* live in memory
- Unpredictable asynchronous delays

Road Map

- We are going to focus on principles first, then practice
  - Start with idealised models
  - Look at simplistic problems
  - Emphasize correctness over pragmatism
  - “Correctness may be theoretical, but incorrectness has practical impact”

Road Map

- We are going to focus on principles first, then practice
  - We want to understand what we can and cannot compute before we try and write code.
  - In fact, there are problems that are Turing computable but not asynchronously computable.

Concurrency Jargon

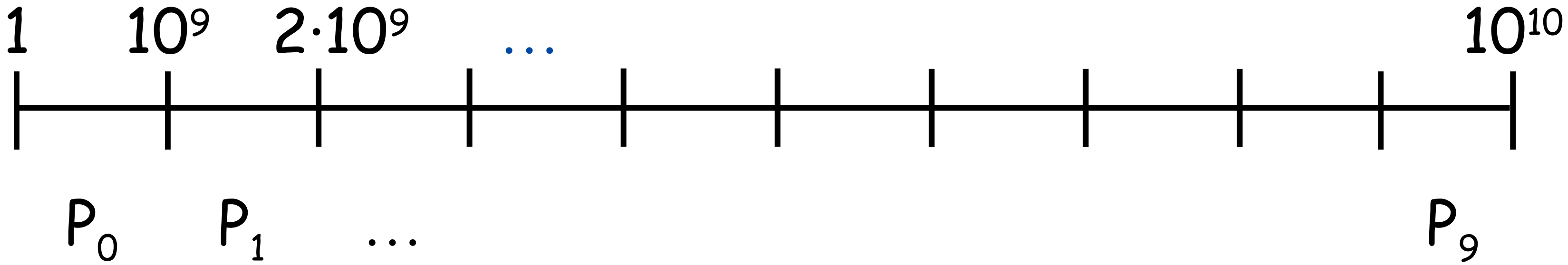
- Hardware
  - Processors
- Software
  - Threads, processes
- Sometimes OK to confuse them, sometimes not.

- We will use the terms above, even though there are also terms like strands, CPUs, chips etc

Parallel Primality Testing

- Challenge
  - Print primes from 1 to 10^{10}
- Given
  - Ten-processor multiprocessor
  - One thread per processor
- Goal
  - Get ten-fold speedup (or close)

Load Balancing



- Split the work evenly
- Each thread tests range of 10^9

Procedure for Thread *i*

```
void primePrint {
  // IDs in {0..9}
  int end = (ThreadID.get() + 1) * 10^9;
  int i = ThreadID.get() * 10^9 + 1;
  for (; i < end; i++) {
    if (isPrime(i))
      print(i);
  }
}
```

Issues

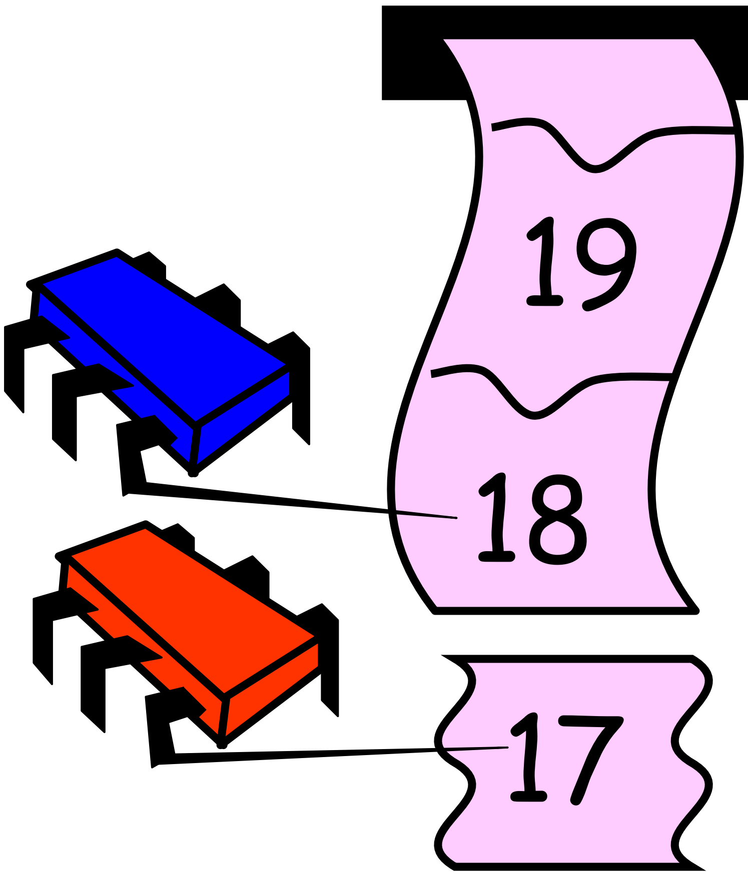
- Higher ranges have fewer primes
- Yet larger numbers harder to test
- Thread workloads
  - Uneven
  - Hard to predict

- A better design would use lower primes to test higher primes

Issues

- Higher ranges have fewer primes
- Yet larger numbers harder to test
- Thread workloads
  - Uneven
  - Hard to predict
- Need *dynamic* load balancing

Shared Counter



each thread takes a number

Procedure for Thread *i*

```
int counter = new Counter(1);

void primePrint {
  long j = 0;
  while (j < 10^10) {
    j = counter.getAndIncrement();
    if (isPrime(j))
      print(j);
  }
}
```

Procedure for Thread *i*

```
Counter counter = new Counter(1);

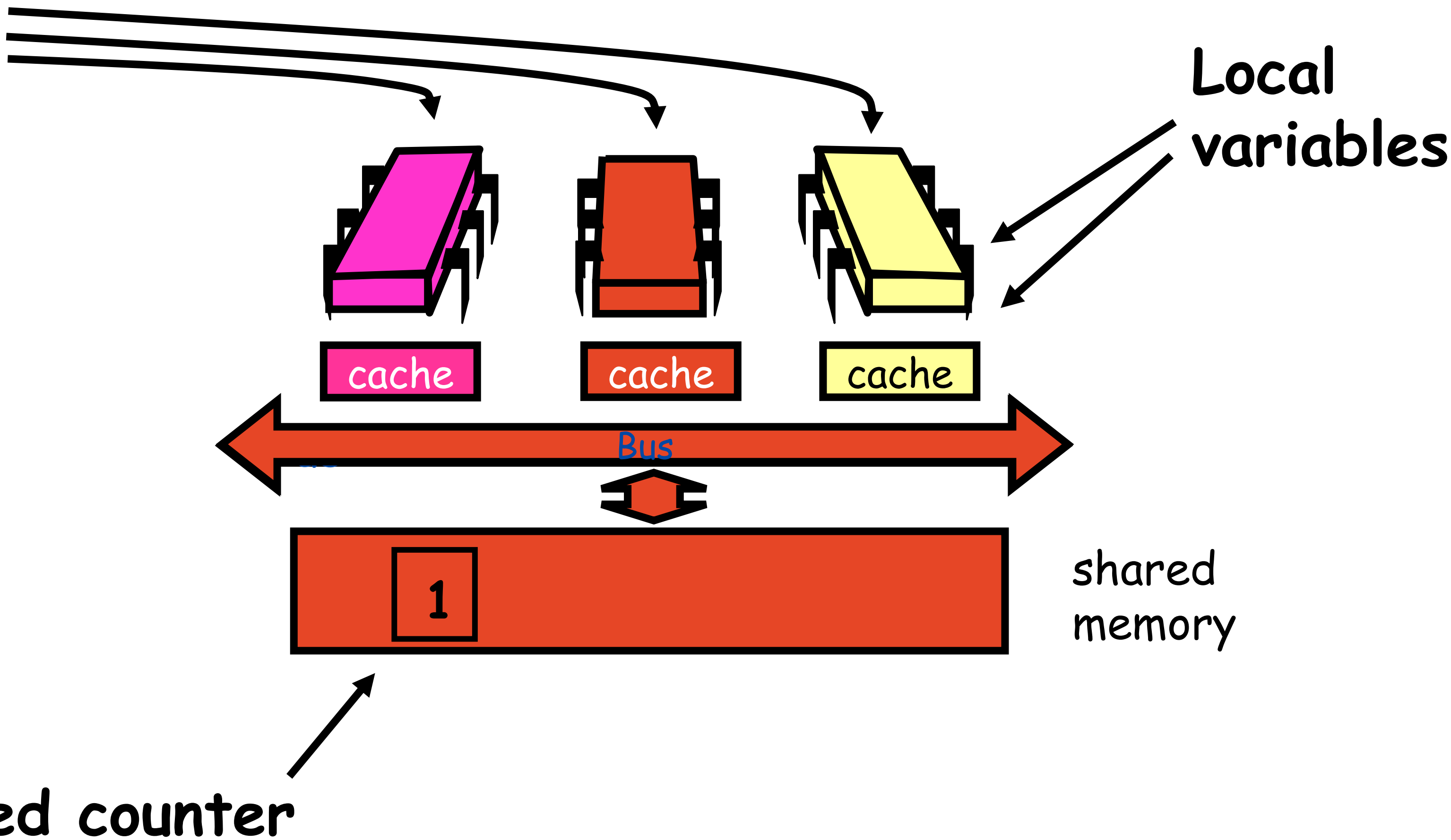
void primePrint {
  long j = 0;
  while (j < 10^10) {
    j = counter.getAndIncrement();
    if (isPrime(j))
      print(j);
  }
}
```

Shared counter object

Where Things Reside

```
void primePrint {
  int i =
ThreadID.get(); // IDs
in {0..9}
  for (j = i*10^9+1,
j<(i+1)*10^9; j++) {
    if (isPrime(j))
      print(j);
  }
}
```

code



Procedure for Thread *i*

```
Counter counter = new Counter(1);

void primePrint {
  long j = 0;
  while (j < 10^10) {
    j = counter.getAndIncrement();
    if (isPrime(j))
      print(j);
  }
}
```

Stop when every value taken

Procedure for Thread *i*

```
Counter counter = new Counter(1);

void primePrint {
  long j = 0;
  while (j < 10^10) {
    j = counter.getAndIncrement();
    if (isPrime(j))
      print(j);
  }
}
```

Increment & return each new value

Counter Implementation

```
public class Counter {
  private long value;

  public long getAndIncrement() {
    return value++;
  }
}
```

Counter Implementation

```
public class Counter {
  private long value;

  public long getAndIncrement() {
    return value++;
  }
}
```

OK for single thread,
not for concurrent threads

What It Means

```
public class Counter {
  private long value;

  public long getAndIncrement() {
    return value++;
  }
}
```

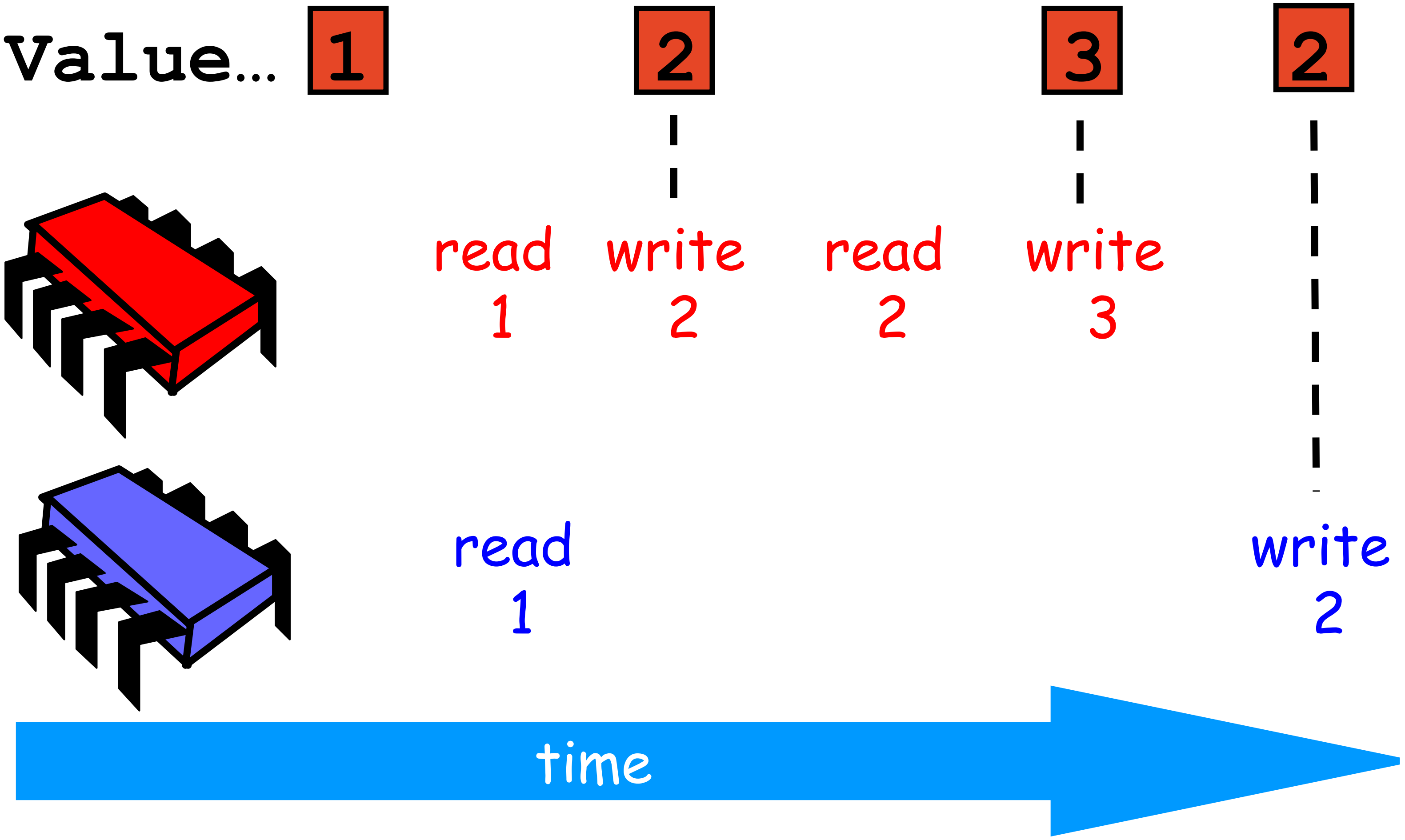
What It Means

```
public class Counter {
  private long value;

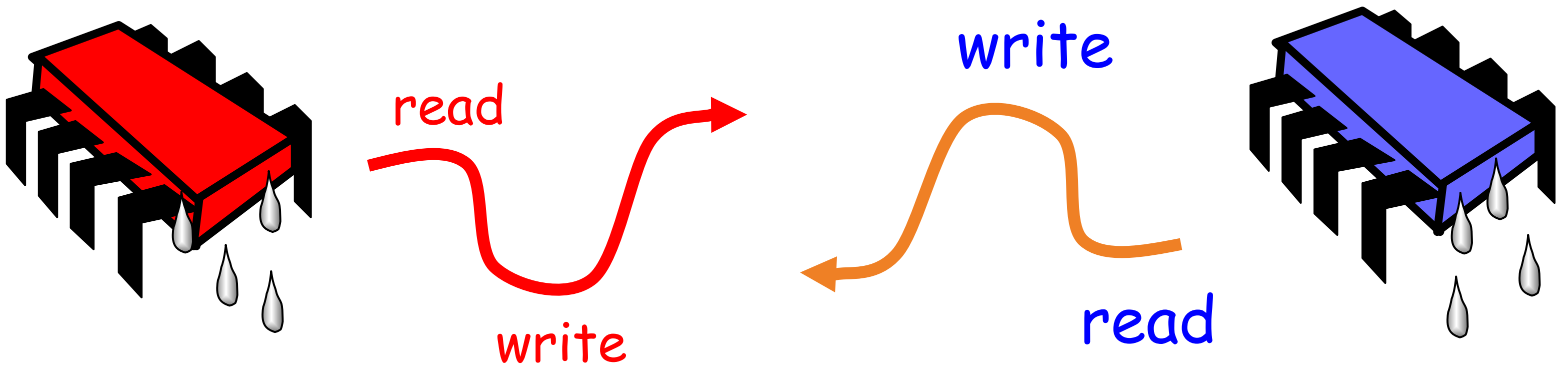
  public long getAndIncrement() {
    return value++;
  }
}
```

```
temp  = value;
value = value + 1;
return temp;
```

Not so good...



Is this problem inherent?



If we could only glue reads and writes…
(See the not-walking-into-someone problem)

Challenge

```
public class Counter {
  private long value;

  public long getAndIncrement() {
    temp  = value;
    value = temp + 1;
    return temp;
  }
}
```

Challenge

```
public class Counter {
  private long value;

  public long getAndIncrement() {
    temp  = value;
    value = temp + 1;
    return temp;
  }
}
```

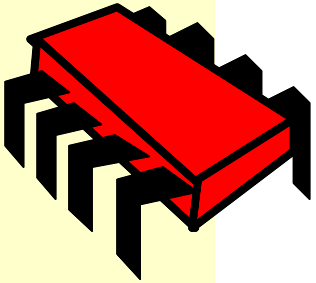
Make these steps *atomic* (indivisible)

Hardware Solution

```
public class Counter {
  private long value;

  public long getAndIncrement() {
    temp  = value;
    value = temp + 1;
    return temp;
  }
}
```

ReadModifyWrite() instruction



An Aside: Java™

```
public class Counter {
  private long value;

  public long getAndIncrement() {
    synchronized {
      temp  = value;
      value = temp + 1;
    }
    return temp;
  }
}
```

An Aside: Java™

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public class Counter {
  private long value;

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  }
}
```

Synchronised block

An Aside: Java™

```
public class Counter {
  private long value;

  public long getAndIncrement() {
    synchronized {
      temp  = value;
      value = temp + 1;
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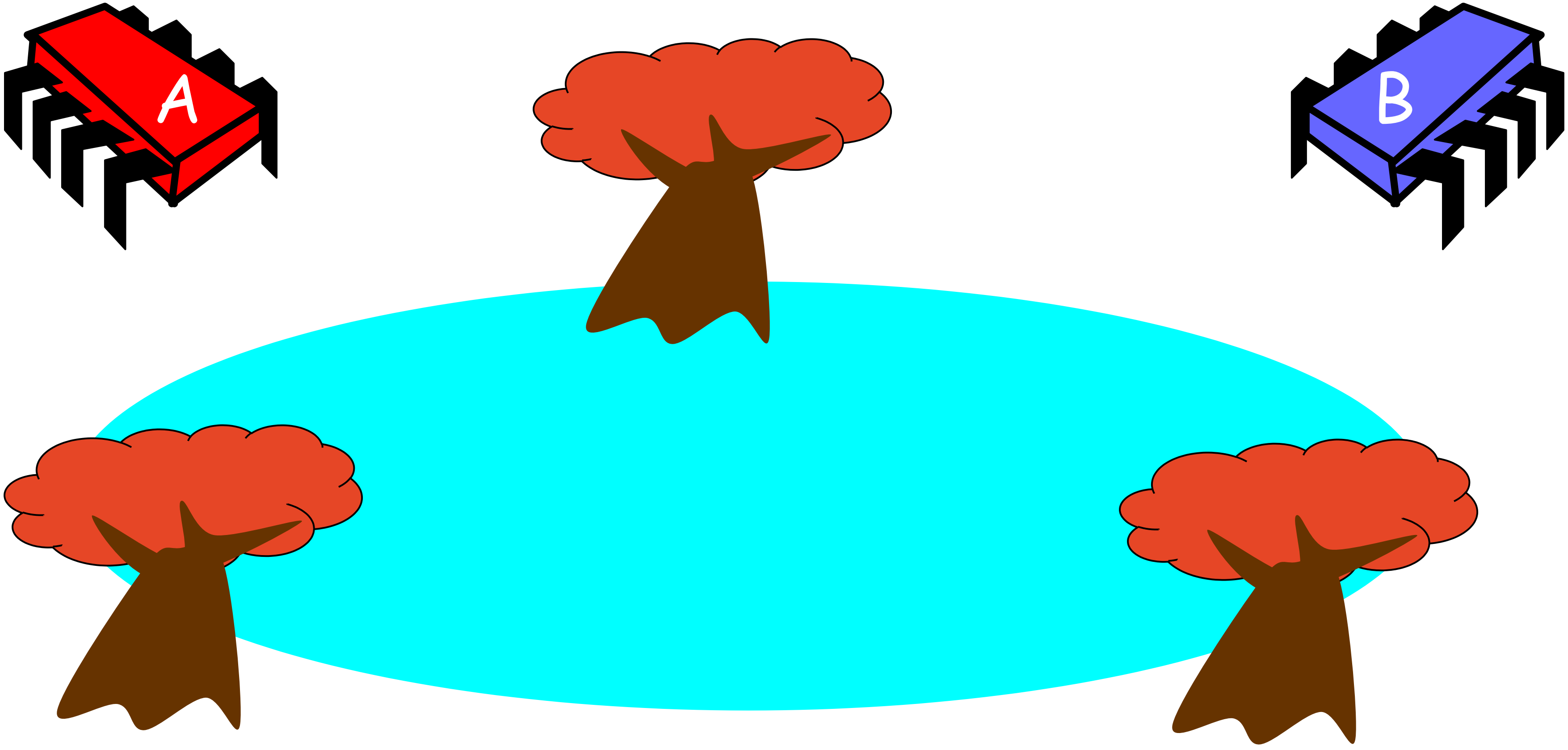
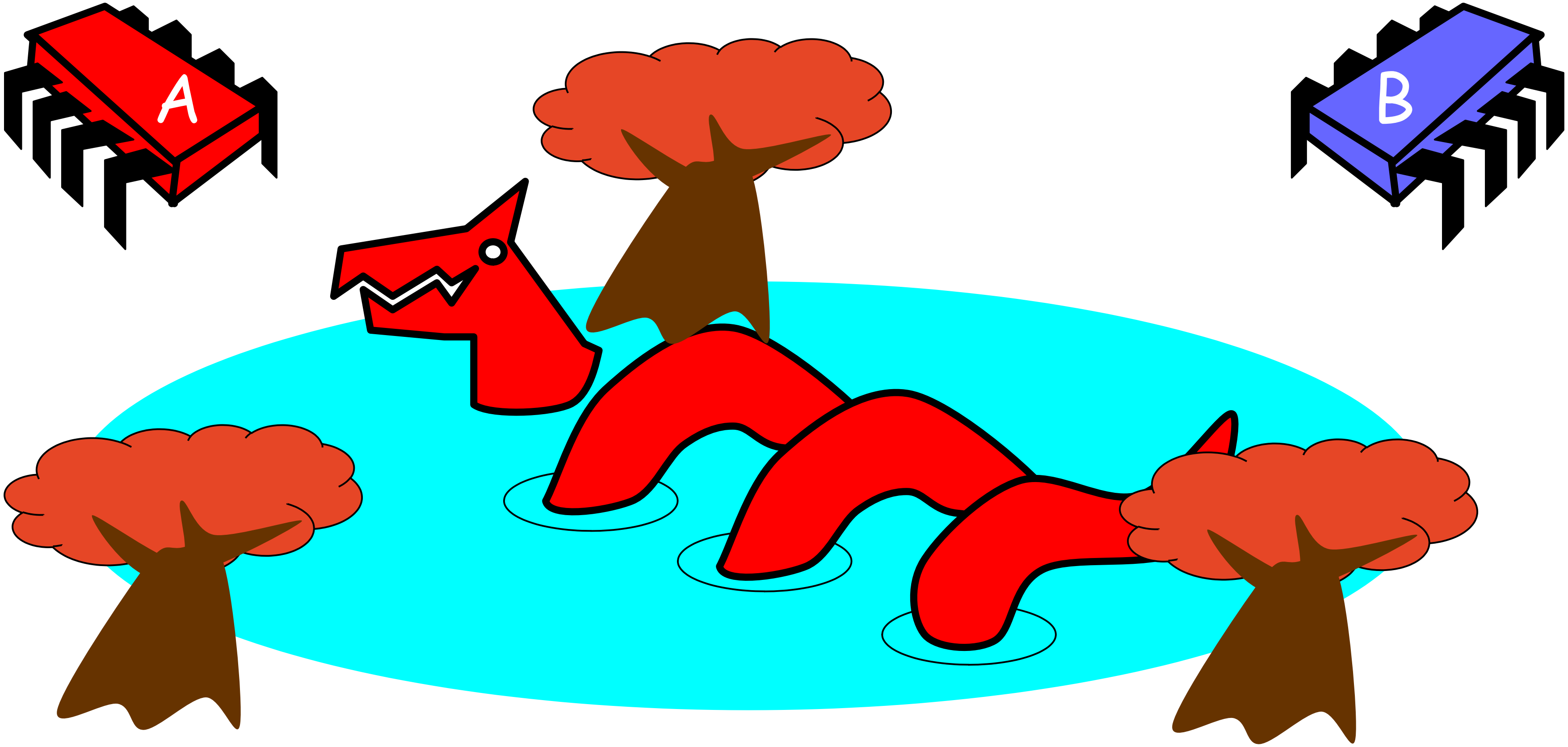
    return temp;
  }
}
```

Mutual Exclusion

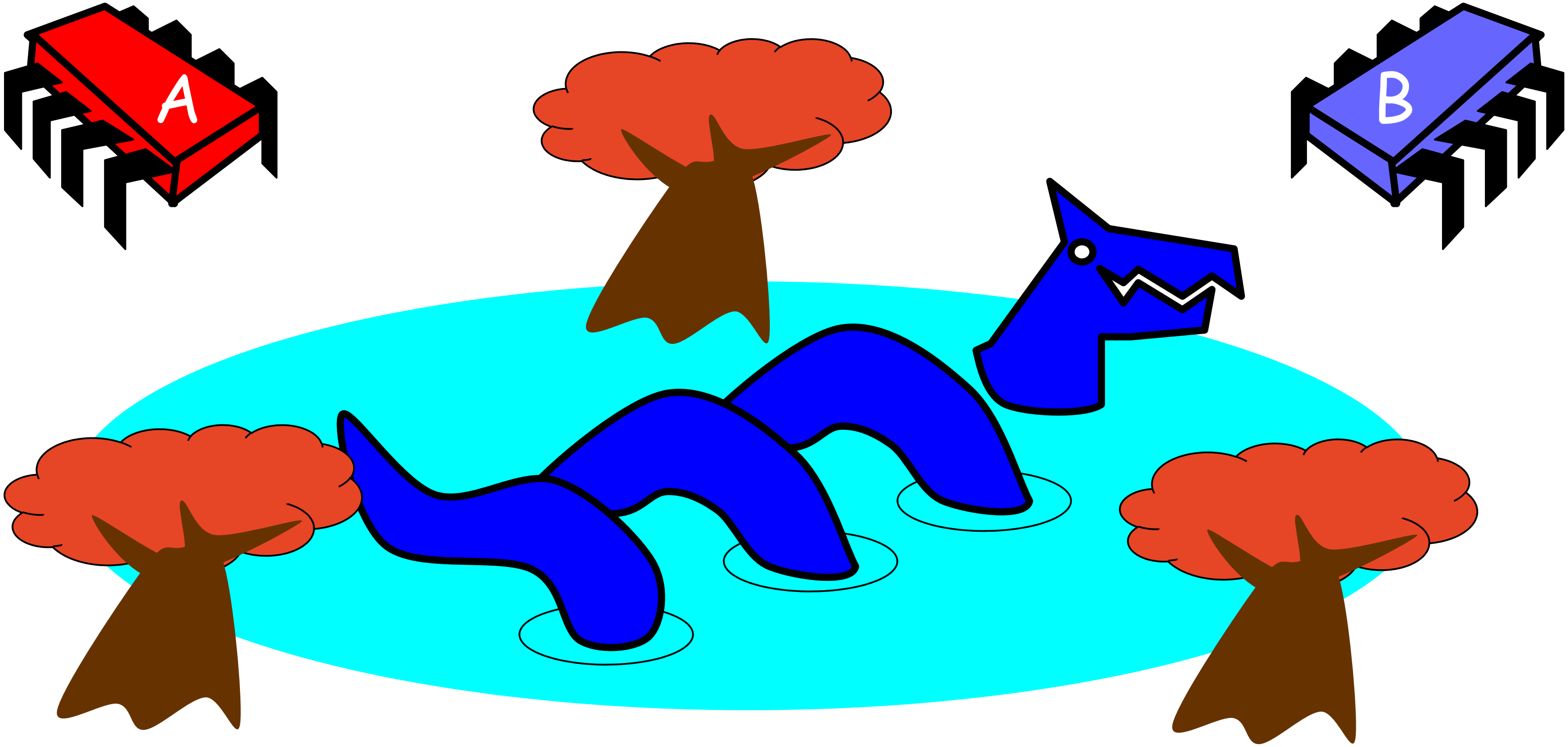
Mutual Exclusion or “Alice & Bob share a pond”



Alice has a pet



Bob has a pet



The Problem

Formalising the Problem

- Two types of formal properties in asynchronous computation:
- Safety Properties
  - Nothing bad happens ever
- Liveness Properties
  - Something good happens eventually

Formalizing our Problem

- Mutual Exclusion
  - Both pets never in pond simultaneously
  - This is a ***safety*** property
- No Deadlock
  - if only one wants in, it gets in
  - if both want in, one gets in.
  - This is a ***liveness*** property

Simple Protocol

- Idea
  - Just look at the pond
- Gotcha
  - Trees obscure the view

Interpretation

- Threads can’t “see” what other threads are doing
- Explicit communication required for coordination

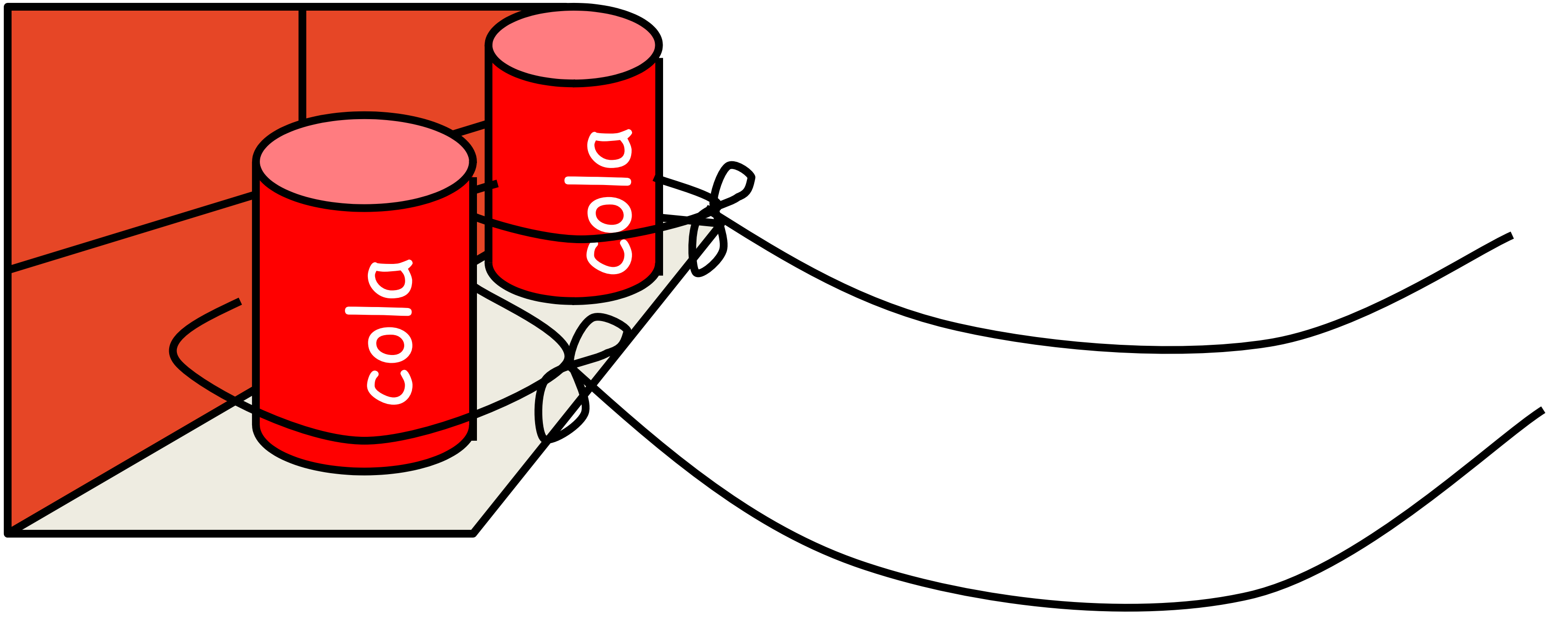
Cell Phone Protocol

- Idea
  - Bob calls Alice (or vice-versa)
- Gotcha
  - Bob takes shower
  - Alice recharges battery
  - Bob out shopping for pet food …

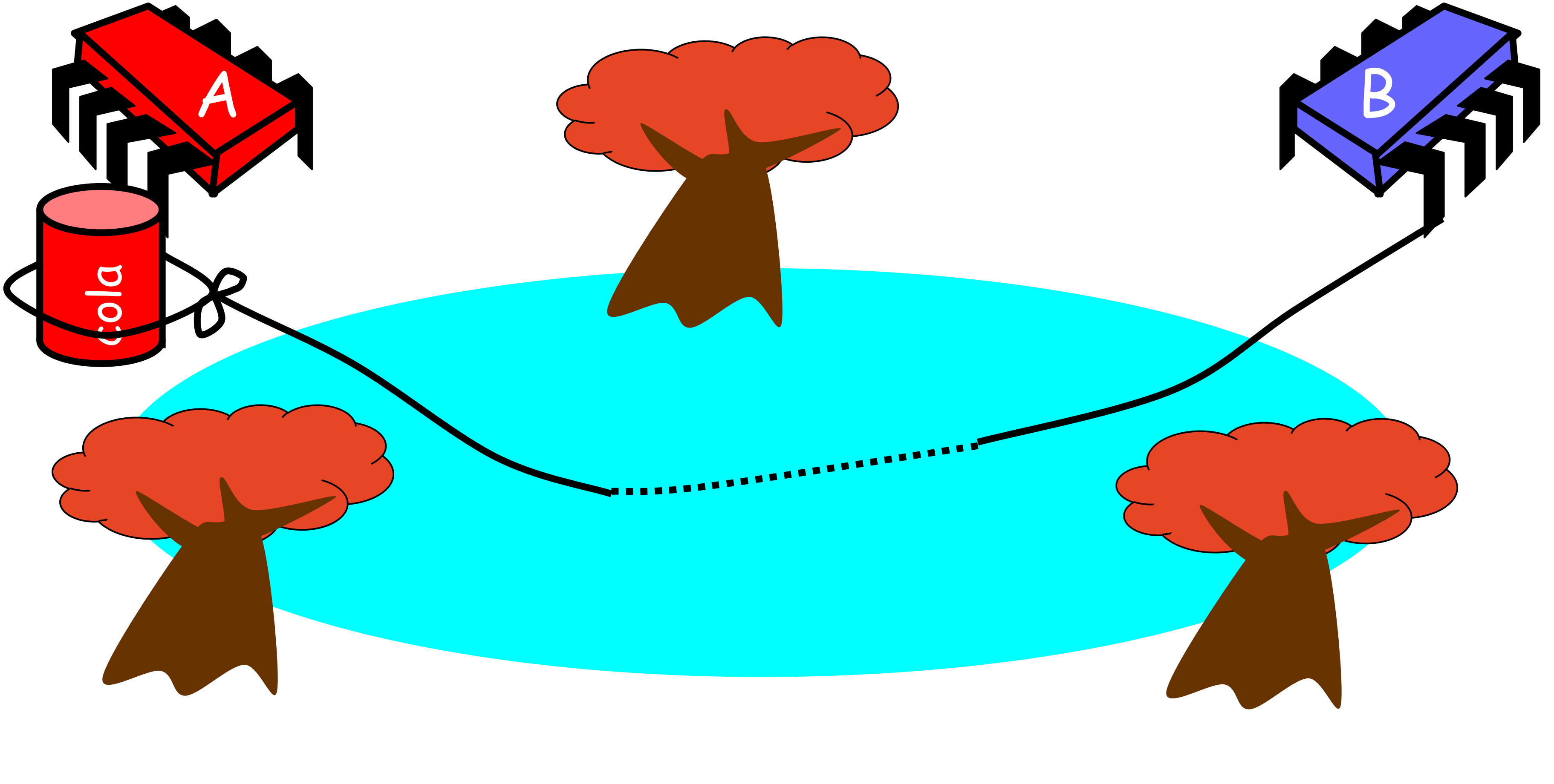
Interpretation

- Message-passing doesn't work
- Recipient might not be
  - Listening
  - There at all
- Communication must be
  - Persistent (like writing)
  - Not transient (like speaking)

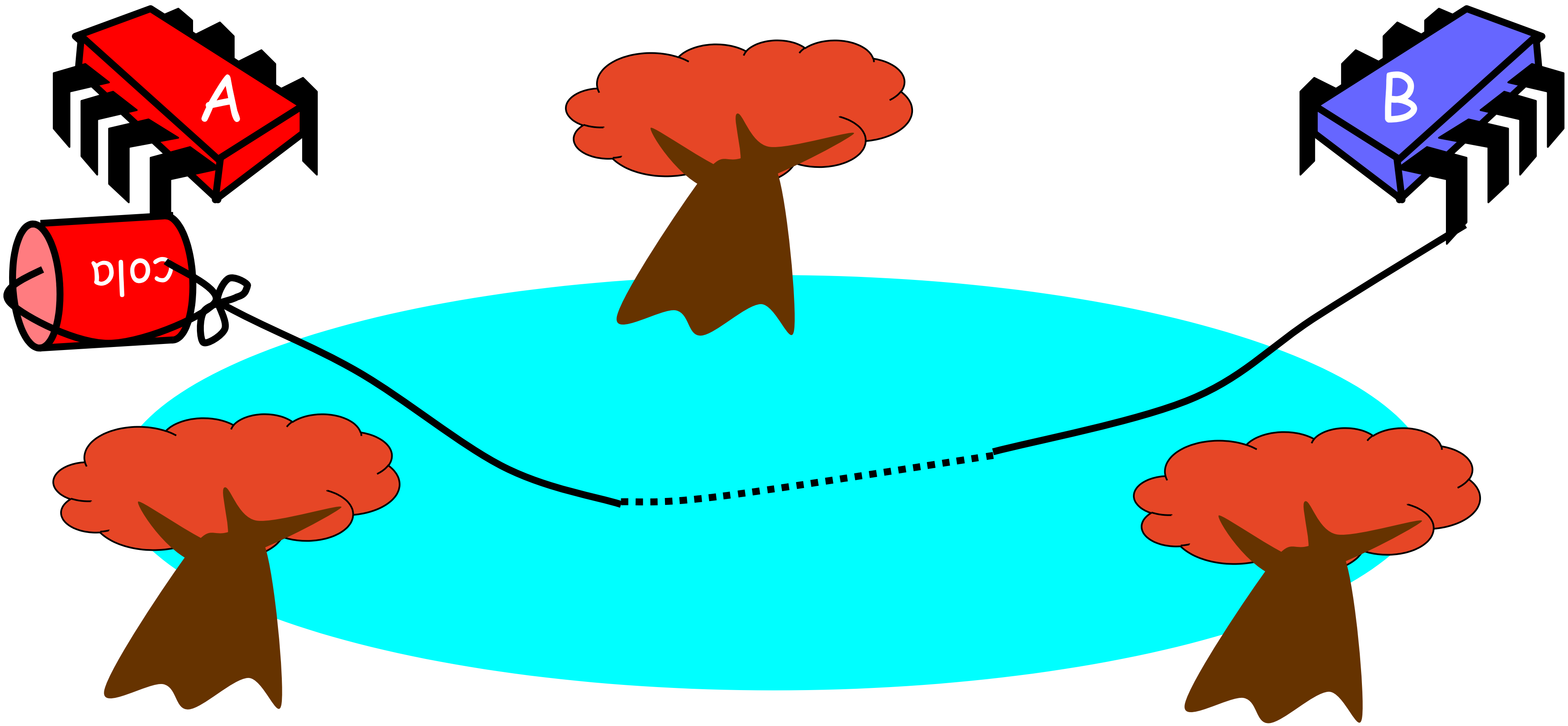
Can Protocol



Bob conveys a bit



Bob conveys a bit



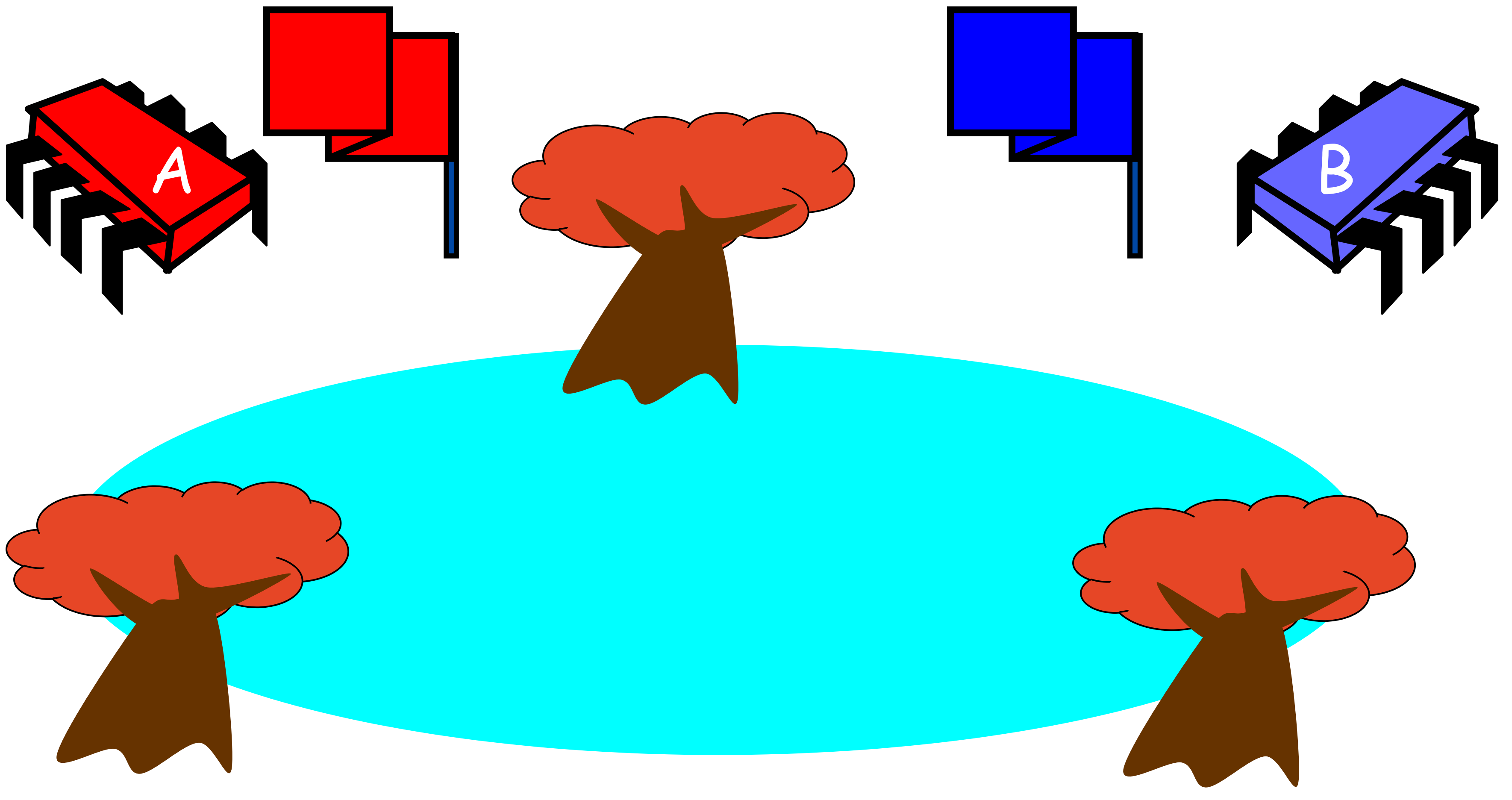
Can Protocol

- Idea
  - Cans on Alice's windowsill
  - Strings lead to Bob's house
  - Bob pulls strings, knocks over cans
- Gotcha
  - Cans cannot be reused
  - Bob runs out of cans

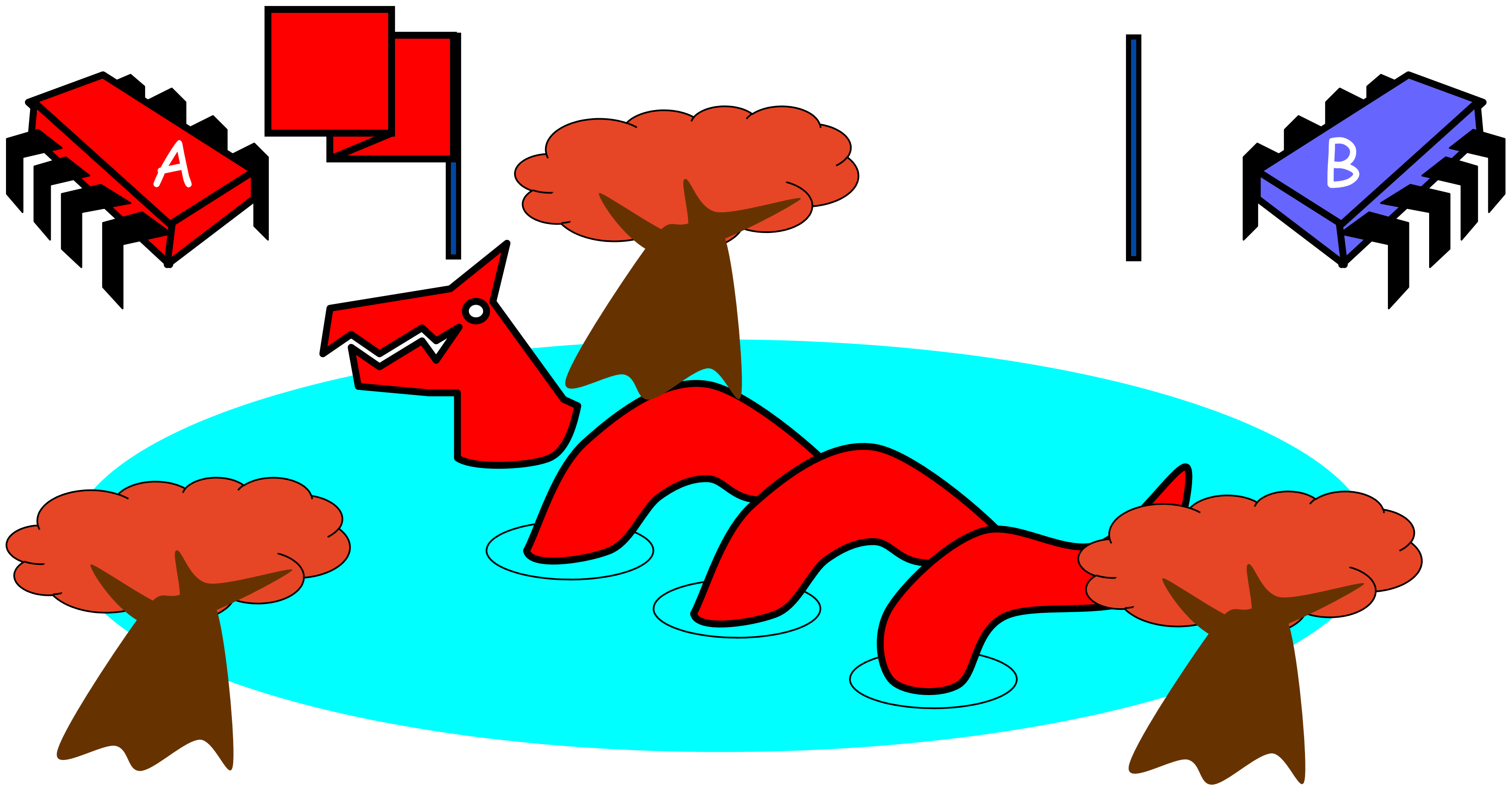
Interpretation

- Cannot solve mutual exclusion with interrupts
  - Sender sets fixed bit in receiver’s space
  - Receiver resets bit when ready
  - Requires unbounded number of interrupt bits

Flag Protocol



Alice's Protocol (sort of)



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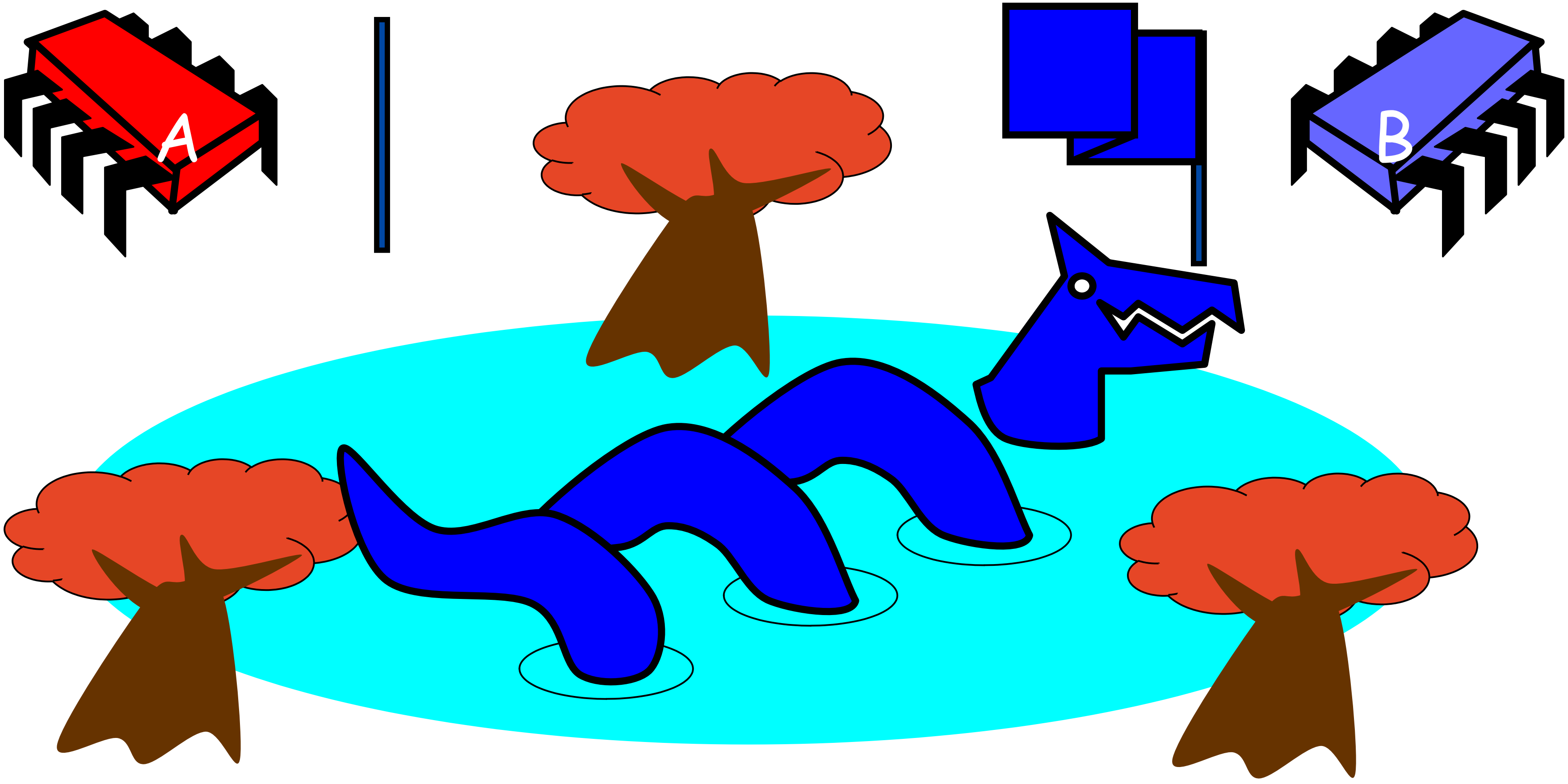


Alice’s Protocol

- Raise flag
- Wait until Bob’s flag is down
- Unleash pet
- Lower flag when pet returns

Bob's Protocol

- Raise flag
- Wait until Alice's flag is down
- Unleash pet
- Lower flag when pet returns

danger!

Bob's Protocol (2nd try)

- Raise flag
- While Alice's flag is up
  - Lower flag
  - Wait for Alice's flag to go down
  - Raise flag
- Unleash pet
- Lower flag when pet returns

Bob's Protocol

- Raise flag
- While Alice's flag is up
  - Lower flag
  - Wait for Alice's flag to go down
  - Raise flag
- Unleash pet
- Lower flag when pet returns

Bob defers to Alice

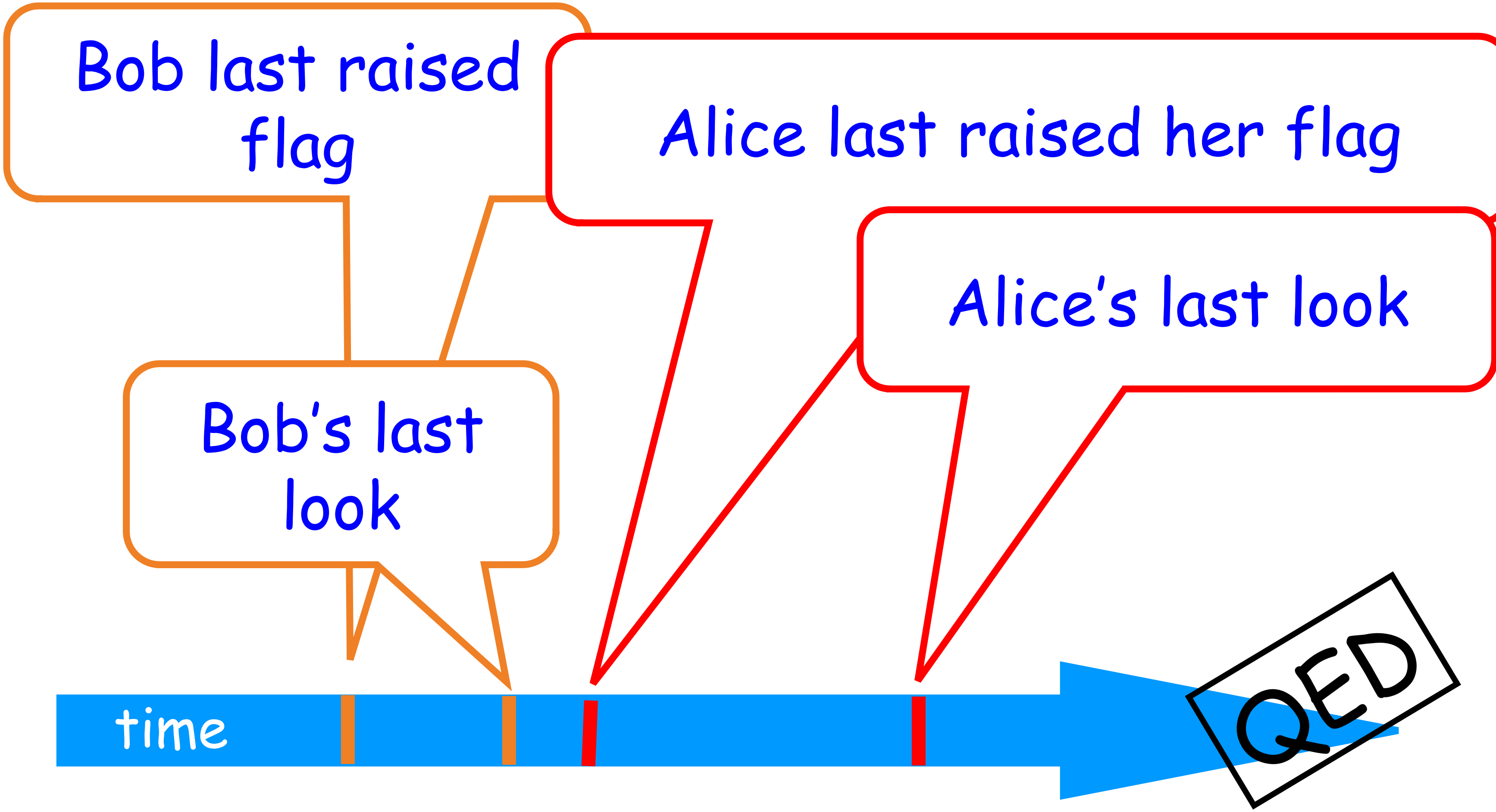
The Flag Principle

- Raise the flag
- Look at other’s flag
- Flag Principle:
  - If each raises and looks, then
  - Last to look must see both flags up

Proof of Mutual Exclusion

- Assume both pets in pond
  - Derive a contradiction
  - By reasoning backwards
- Consider the last time Alice and Bob each looked before letting the pets in
- Without loss of generality assume Alice was the last to look…

Proof



Alice must have seen Bob's Flag. A Contradiction

Proof of No Deadlock

– If only one pet wants in, it gets in.

Proof of No Deadlock

- If only one pet wants in, it gets in.
- Deadlock requires both continually trying to get in.

Proof of No Deadlock

- If only one pet wants in, it gets in.
- Deadlock requires both continually trying to get in.
- If Bob sees Alice’s flag, he gives her priority

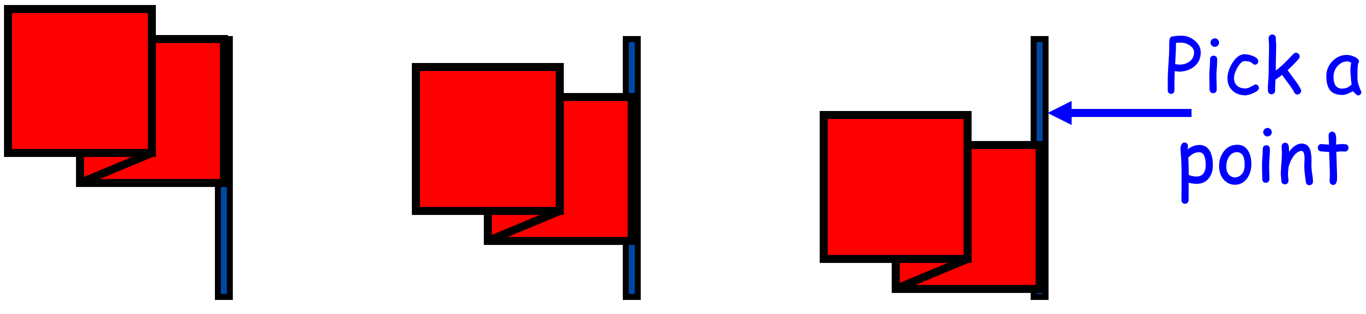
Remarks

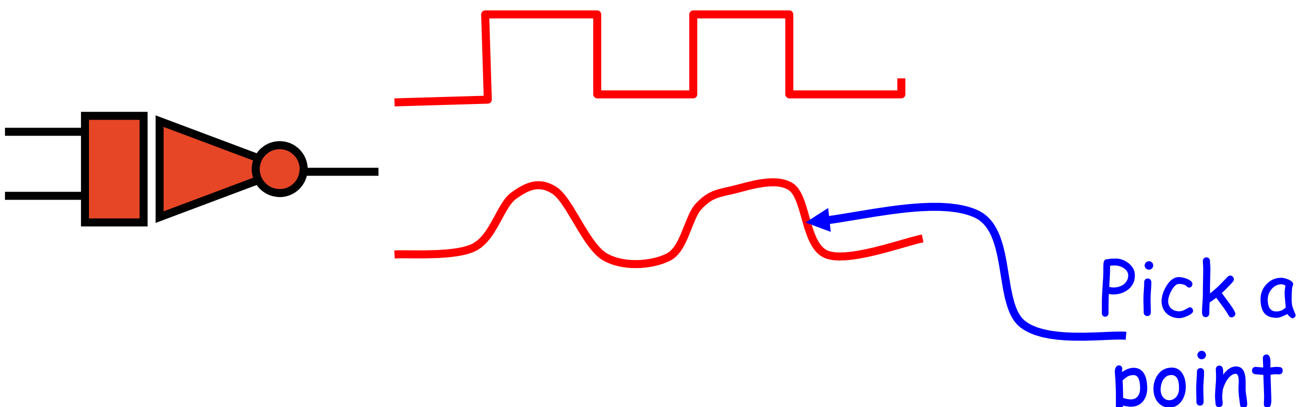
- Protocol is *unfair*
  - Bob’s pet might never get in
    - Alice’s pet may keep going in, starving Bob’s pet of pool-time
- Protocol uses *waiting*
  - If Bob is eaten by his pet, Alice’s pet might never get in

Moral of Story

- Mutual Exclusion cannot be solved by
  - transient communication (cell phones)
  - interrupts (cans)
- It can be solved by
  - one-bit shared variables
  - that can be read or written

The Arbiter Problem (an aside)





The Fable Continues

– Alice and Bob fall in love & marry

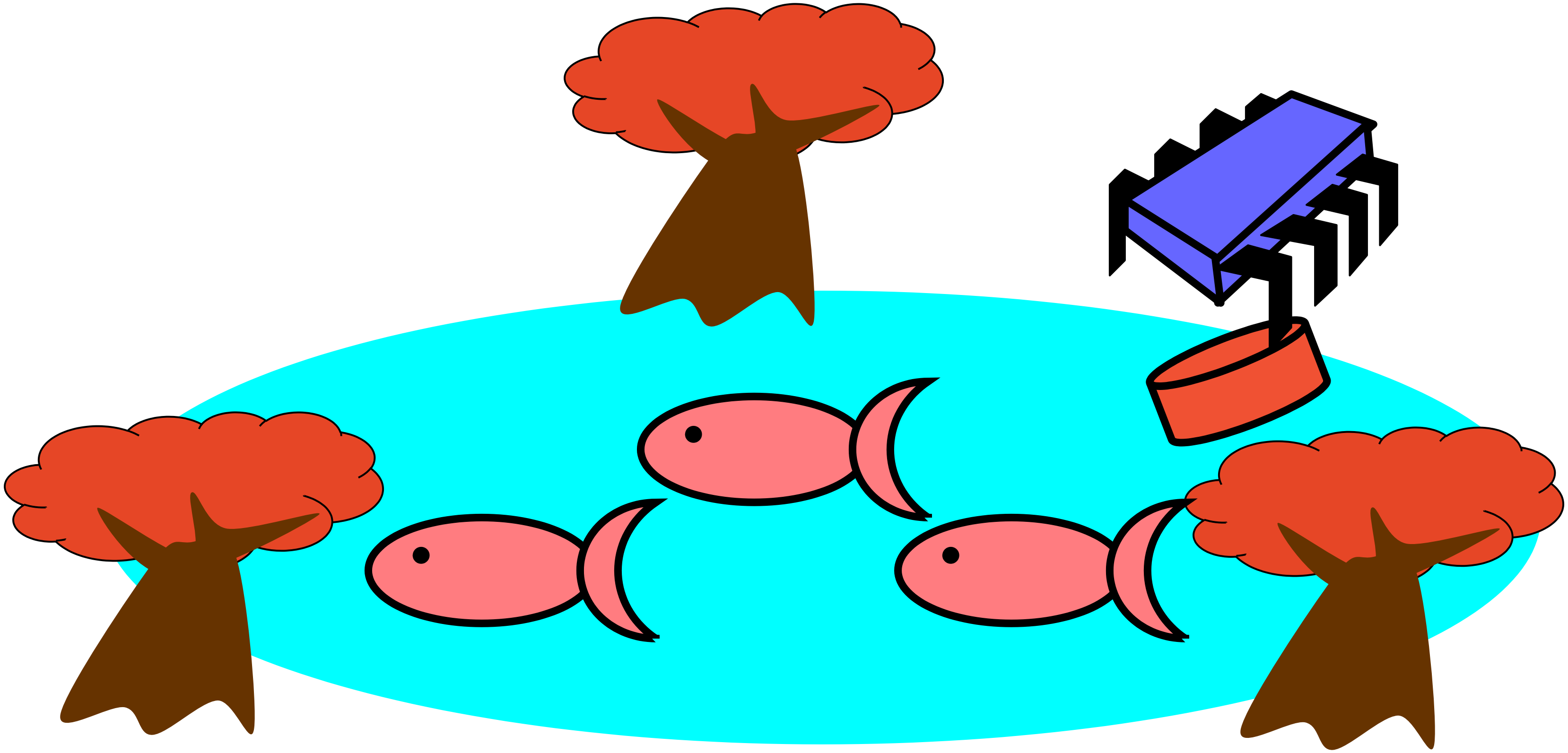
The Fable Continues

- Alice and Bob fall in love & marry
- Then they fall out of love & divorce
  - She gets the pets
  - He has to feed them

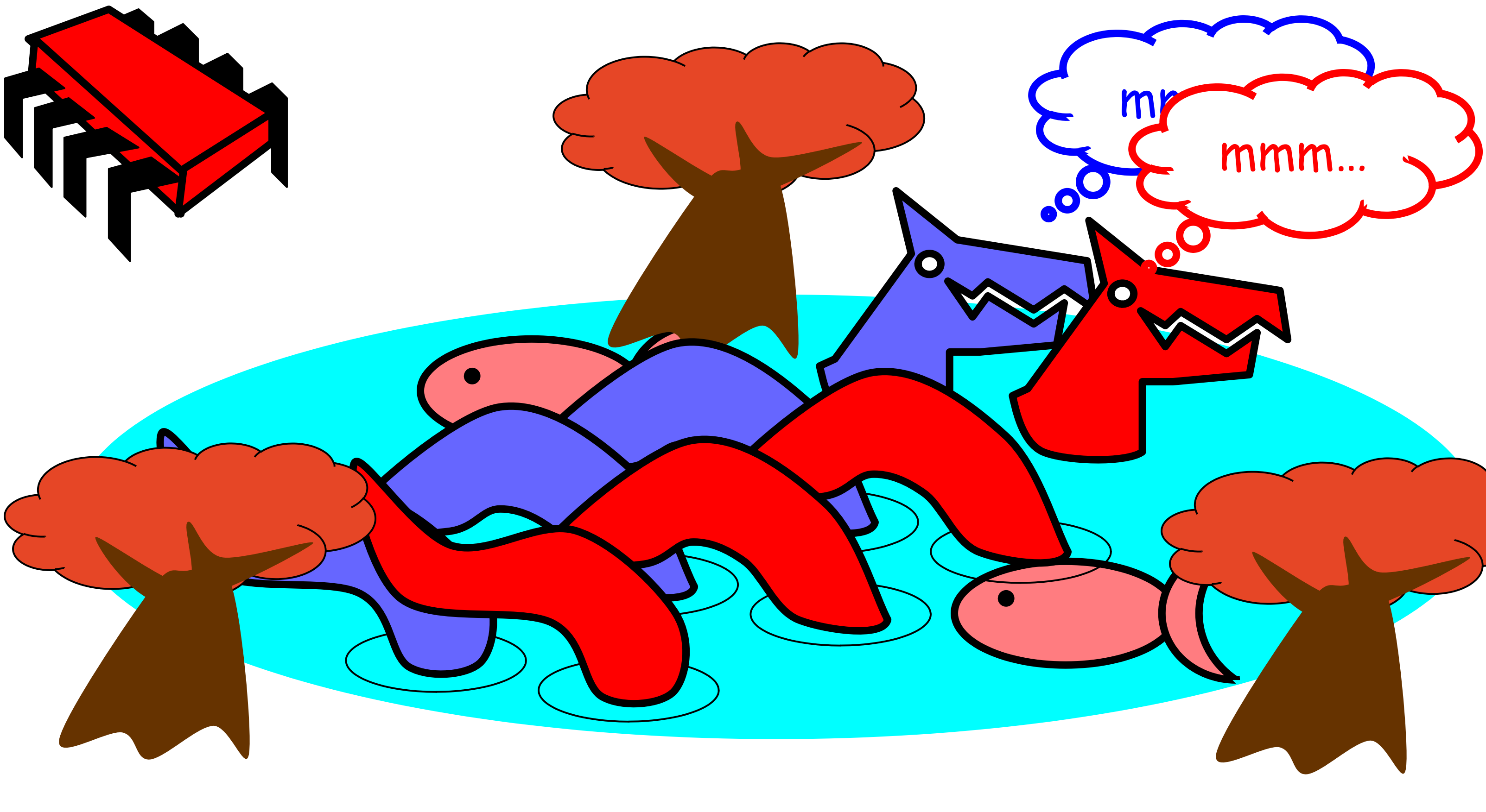
The Fable Continues

- Alice and Bob fall in love & marry
- Then they fall out of love & divorce
  - She gets the pets
  - He has to feed them
- Leading to a new coordination problem: Producer-Consumer

Bob Puts Food in the Pond



Alice releases her pets to Feed



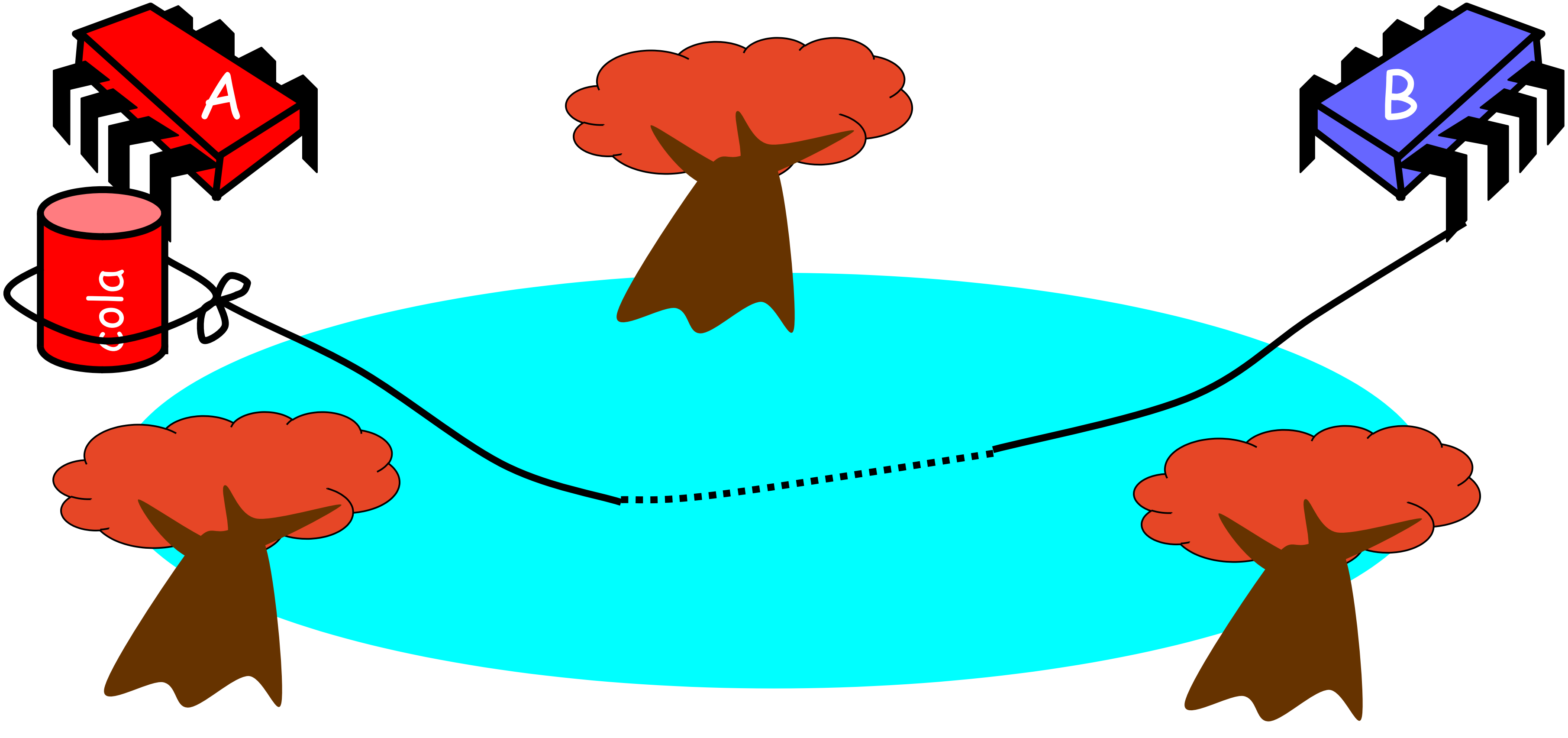
Producer/Consumer

- Alice and Bob can't meet
  - Each has restraining order on other
  - So he puts food in the pond
  - And later, she releases the pets
- Avoid
  - Releasing pets when there's no food
  - Putting out food if uneaten food remains

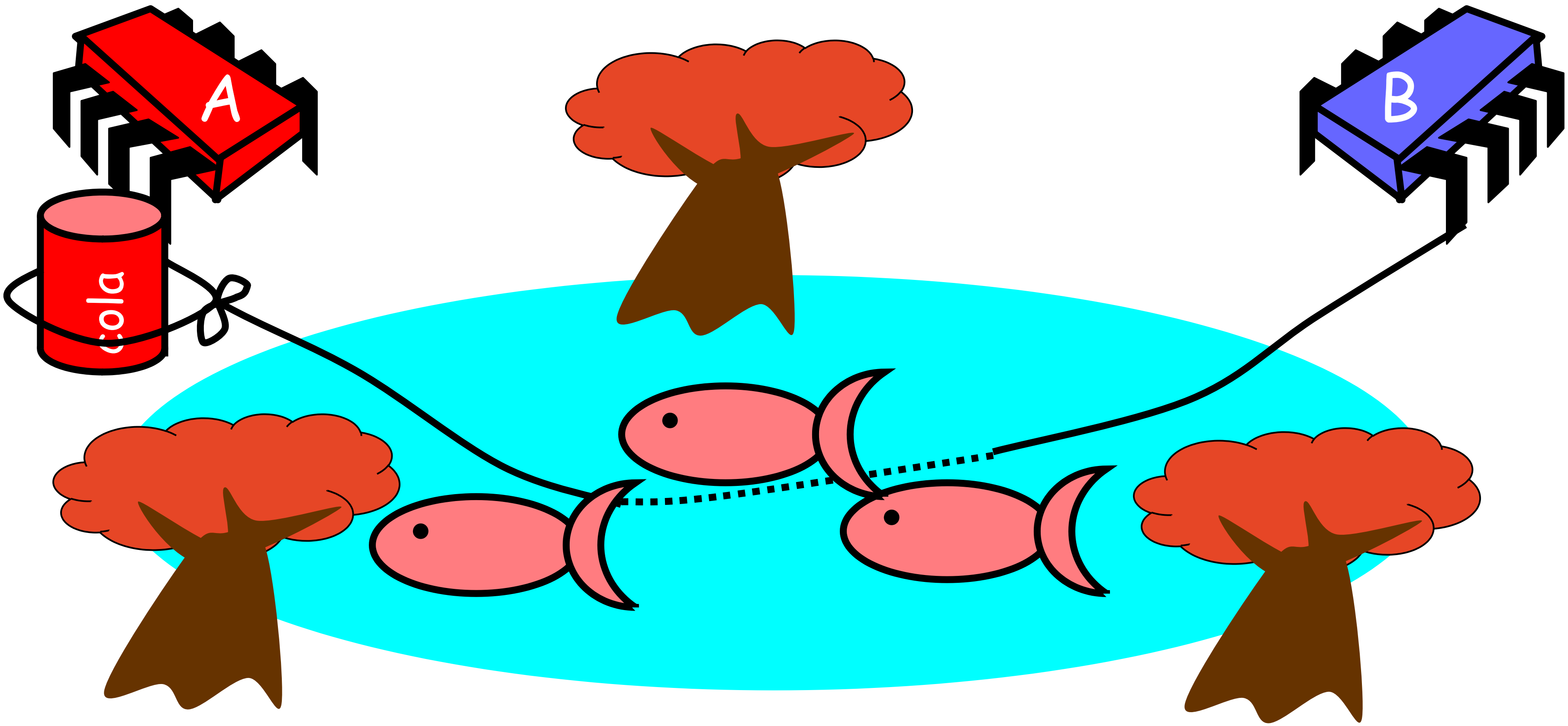
Producer/Consumer

- Need a mechanism so that
  - Bob lets Alice know when food has been put out
  - Alice lets Bob know when to put out more food

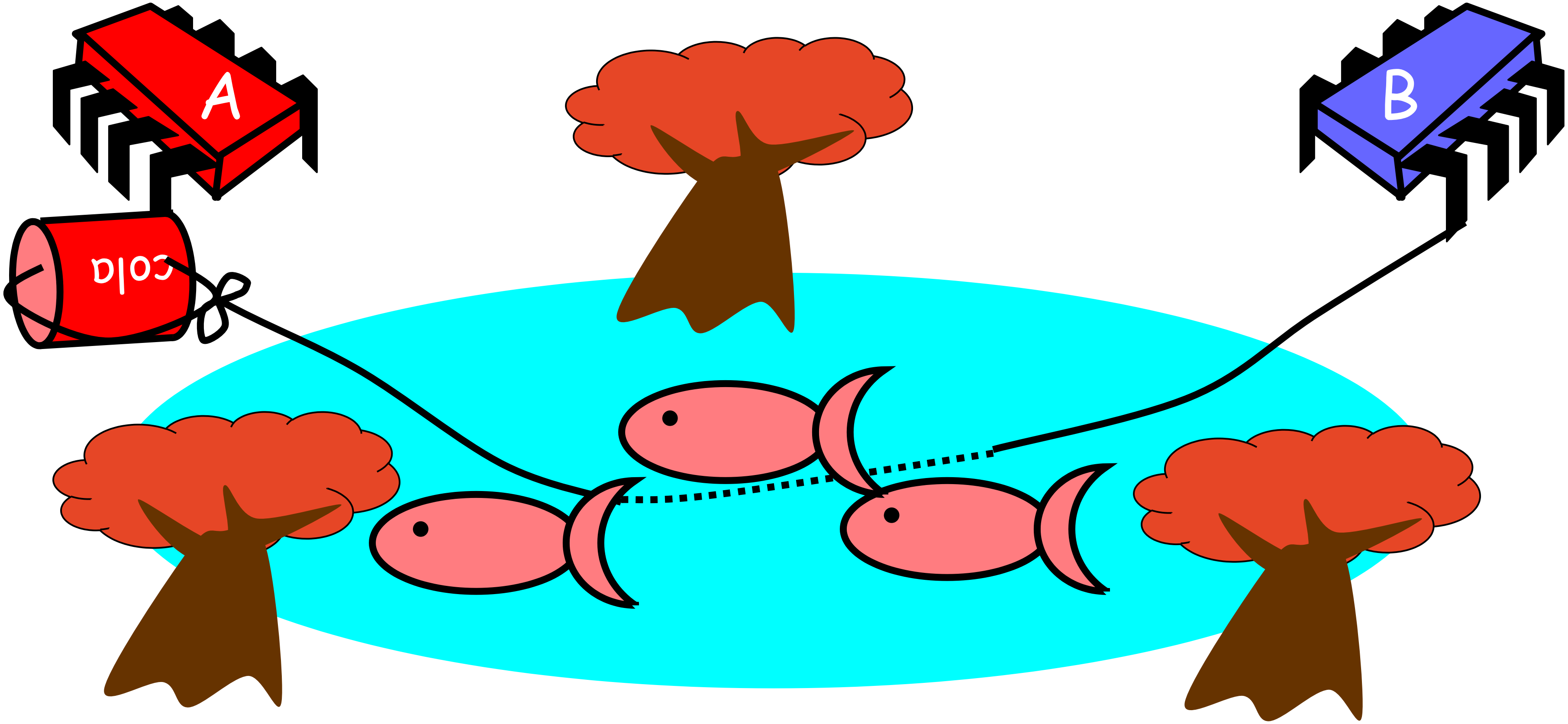
Surprise Solution



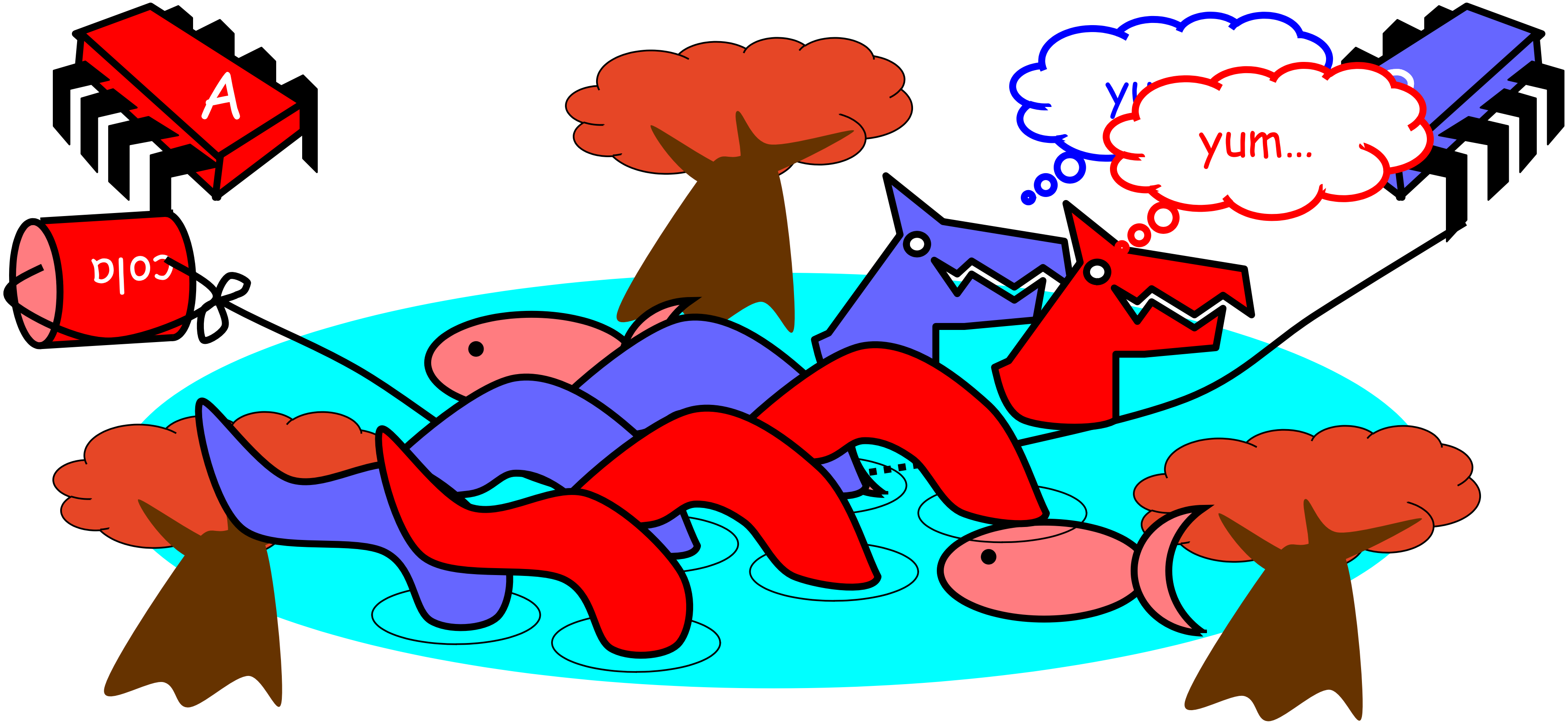
Bob puts food in Pond



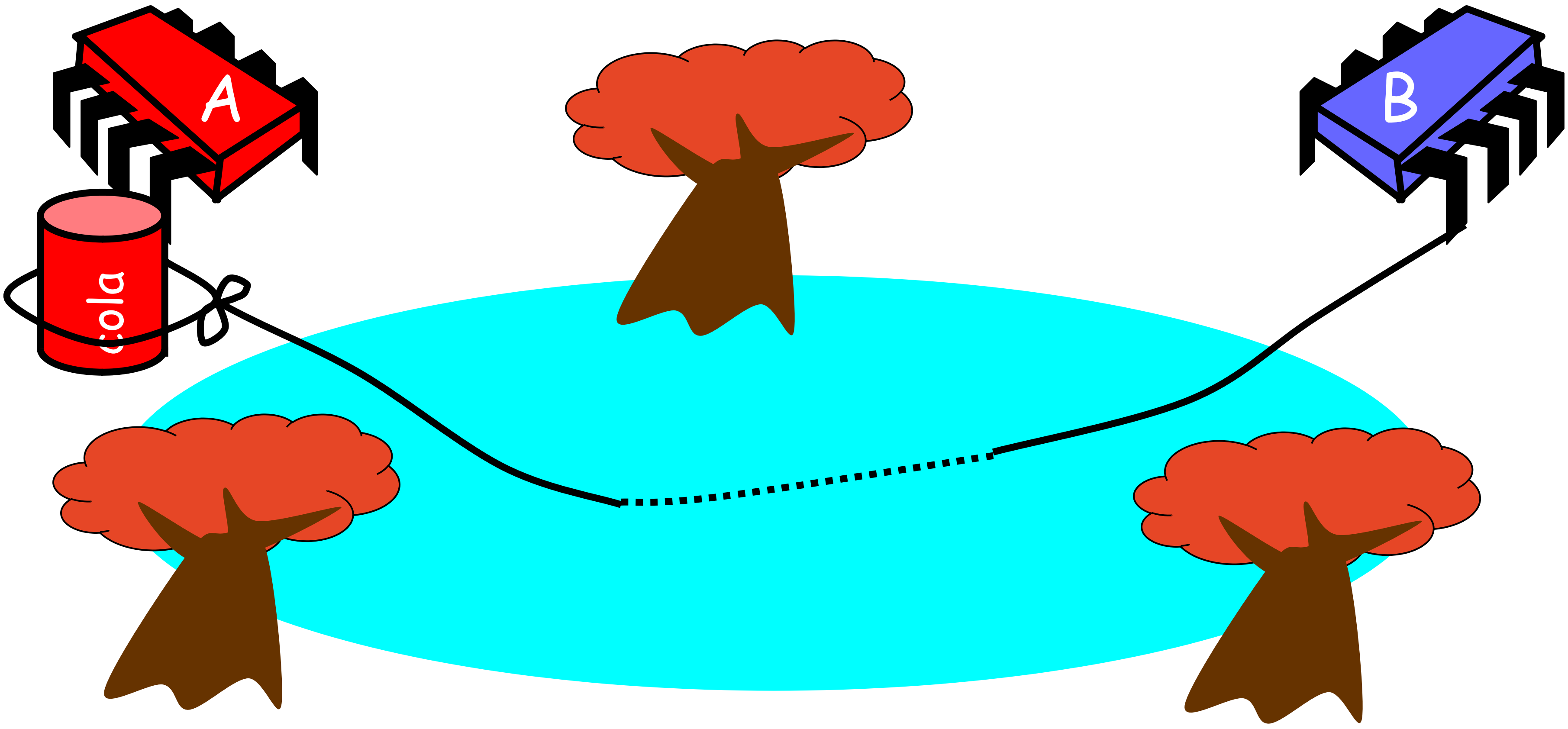
Bob knocks over Can



Alice Releases Pets



Alice Resets Can when Pets are Fed



Pseudocode

```
while (true) {
  while (can.isUp()){};
  pet.release();
  pet.recapture();
  can.reset();
}
```

Alice's code

Pseudocode

```
while (true) {
  while (can.isUp()){};
  pet.release();
  pet.recapture();
  can.reset();
}
```

Alice's code

Bob's code

```
while (true) {
  while (can.isDown()){};
  pond.stockWithFood();
  can.knockOver();
}
```

Correctness

- Mutual Exclusion
  - Pets and Bob never together in pond

Correctness

- Mutual Exclusion
  - Pets and Bob never together in pond
- No Starvation

  if Bob always willing to feed, and pets always famished, then pets eat infinitely often.

Correctness

- Mutual Exclusion safety
  - Pets and Bob never together in pond
- No Starvation liveness

  if Bob always willing to feed, and pets always famished, then pets eat infinitely often.
- Producer/Consumer safety

  The pets never enter pond unless there is food, and Bob never provides food if there is unconsumed food.

Waiting

- Note that both solutions use waiting
- Waiting is *problematic*
  - **If one participant is delayed**
  - **So is everyone else**
  - **But delays are common & unpredictable**