

Security Protocols

Computer Security

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Outline

- Designing secure protocols
- Key exchange protocols
- Common security problems in protocols

Basics of Security Protocols

- Assume (usually) that your encryption is sufficiently strong
- Given that, how do you design a message exchange to achieve a given result securely?
- Not nearly as easy as you probably think
- Many of the concepts are important in many areas of computer/network security

Security Protocols

- A series of steps involving two or more parties designed to accomplish a task with suitable security
- Sequence is important
- Cryptographic protocols use cryptography
- Different protocols assume different levels of trust between participants

Types of Security Protocols

- Arbitrated protocols
 - Involving a trusted third party
- Adjudicated protocols
 - Trusted third party, after the fact
- Self-enforcing protocols
 - No trusted third party

Participants in Security Protocols



Alice



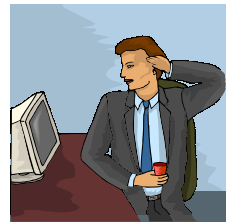
Bob

And the Bad Guys



Eve

Who only listens
passively



And sometimes
Alice or Bob
might cheat



Mallory

Who is actively
malicious

Trusted Arbitrator



Trent

A disinterested third party trusted by all legitimate participants

Arbitrators often simplify protocols, but add overhead and may limit applicability

Goals of Security Protocols

- Each protocol is intended to achieve some very particular goal
 - Like setting up a key between two parties
- Protocols may only be suitable for that particular purpose
- Important secondary goal is minimalism
 - Fewest possible messages
 - Least possible data
 - Least possible encryption

Key Exchange Protocols

- Often we want a different encryption key for each communication session
- How do we get those keys to the participants?
 - Securely
 - Quickly
 - Even if they've never communicated before

Key Exchange With Symmetric Encryption and an Arbitrator

- Alice and Bob want to talk securely with a new key
- They both trust Trent
 - Assume Alice & Bob each share a key with Trent
- How do Alice and Bob get a shared key?

Step One



K_A

Alice

*Alice
Requests
Session
Key for
Bob*



K_B

Bob

Who knows
what at this
point?



K_A

Trent

K_B

Step Two



K_A

Alice

$E_{K_A}(K_S),$
 $E_{K_B}(K_S)$



K_B

Bob

Who knows
what at this
point?

$E_{K_A}(K_S),$
 $E_{K_B}(K_S)$

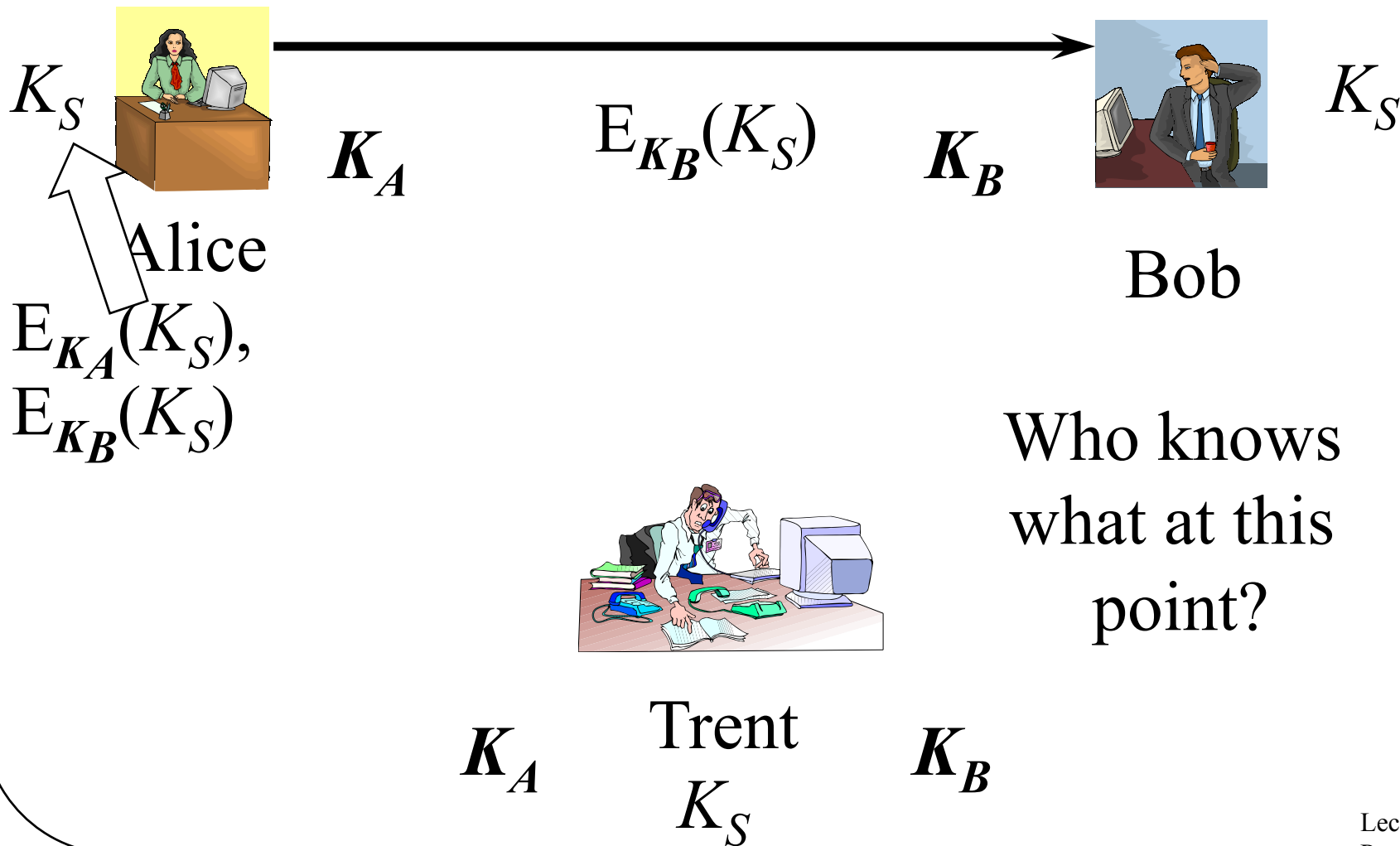


K_A

Trent
 K_S

K_B

Step Three



What Has the Protocol Achieved?

- Alice and Bob both have a new session key
- The session key was transmitted using keys known only to Alice and Bob
- Both Alice and Bob know that Trent participated
- But there are vulnerabilities

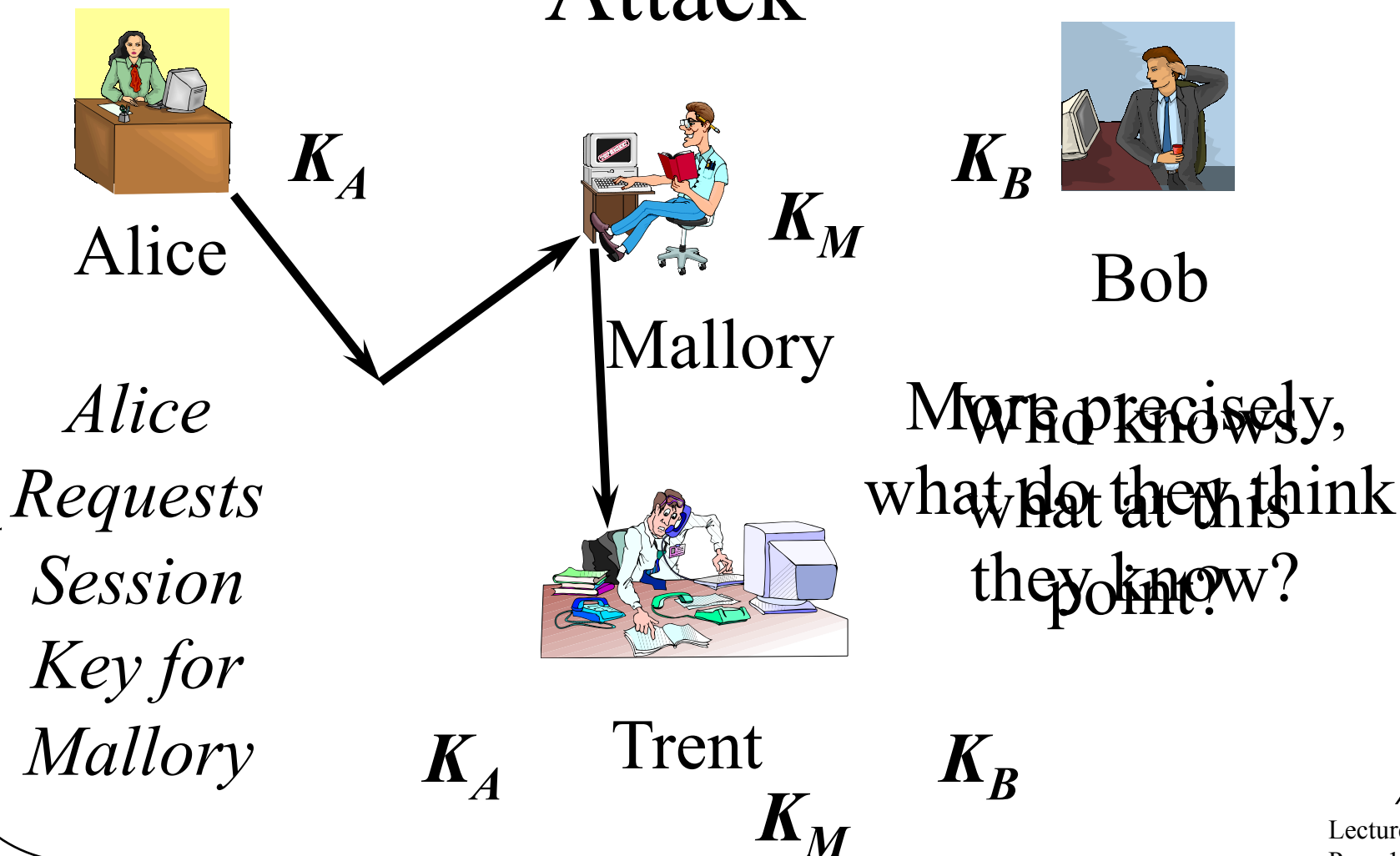
Problems With the Protocol

- What if the initial request was grabbed by Mallory?
- Could he do something bad that ends up causing us problems?
- Yes!

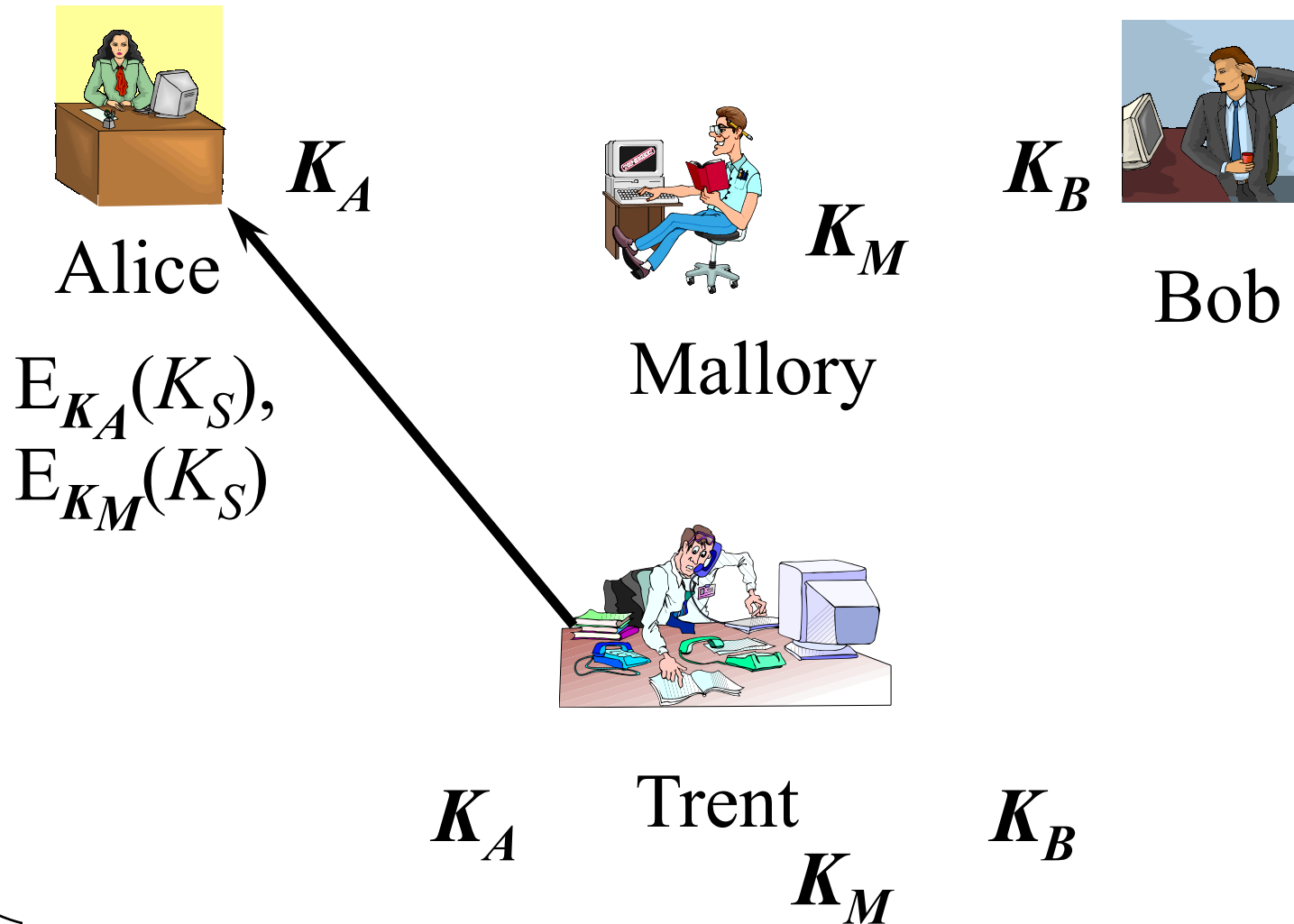
The Man-in-the-Middle Attack

- A class of attacks where an active attacker interposes himself secretly in a protocol
- Allowing alteration of the effects of the protocol
- Without necessarily attacking the encryption

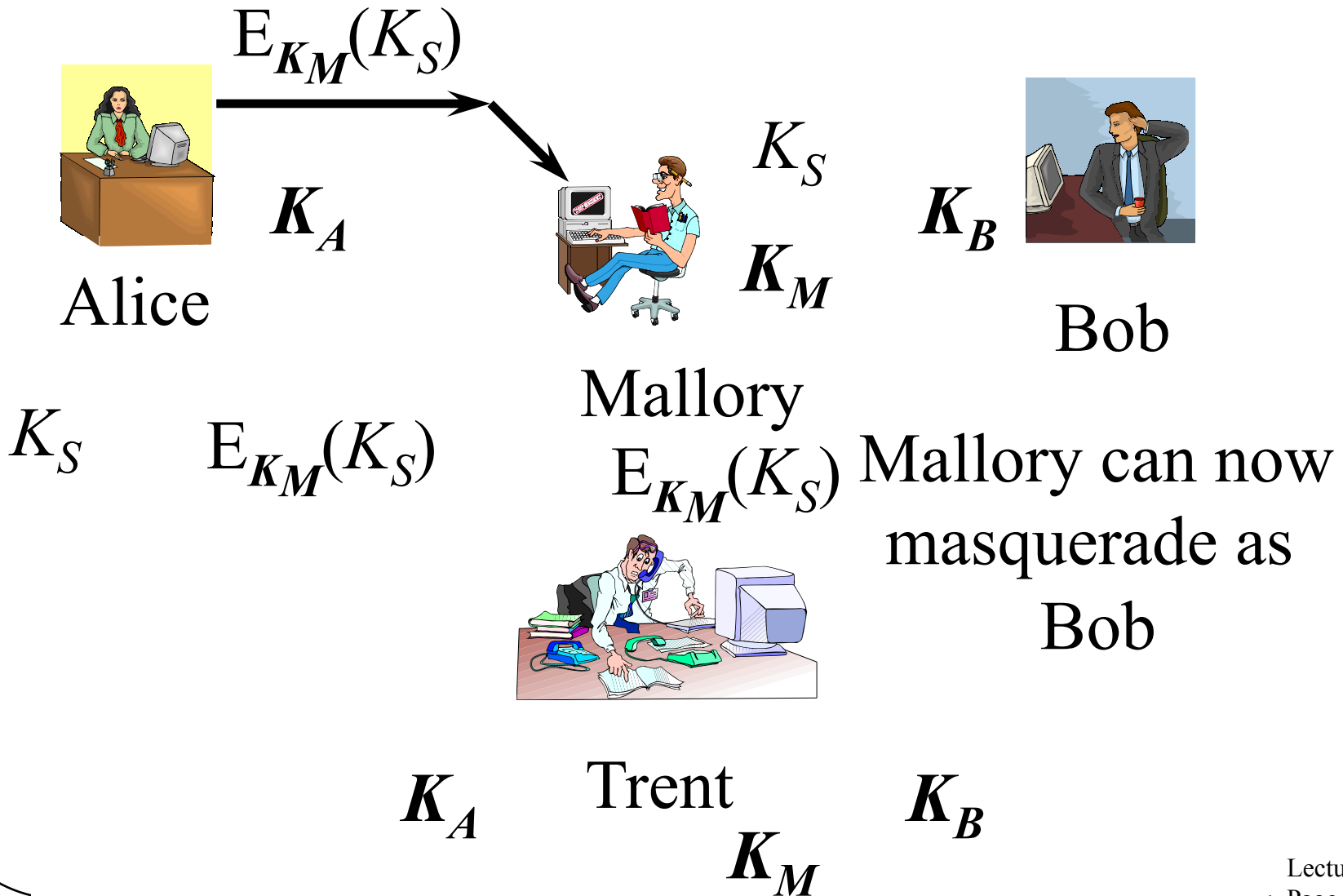
Applying the Man-in-the-Middle Attack



Trent Does His Job



Alice Gets Ready to Talk to Bob



Really Getting in the Middle



K_A

Alice

K_S



K_M

Mallory

$E_{K_M}(K_{S1})$
 $E_{K_B}(K_{S1})$

K_B



Bob

K_{S1}

$E_{K_B}(K_{S1})$



Trent

K_M

K_A

K_B

Mallory can also
ask Trent for a
key to talk to
Bob

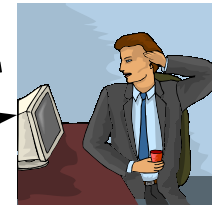
Mallory Plays Man-in-the-Middle



Alice



Mallory



Bob

K_{S1}

K_S

Alice's big secret

$E_{K_S}(\text{Alice's big secret})$

$E_{K_S}(\text{Bob's big secret})$

Bob's big secret

K_S
 K_{S1}

$E_{K_S}(\text{Alice's big secret})$

$E_{K_{S1}}(\text{Alice's big secret})$

$E_{K_{S1}}(\text{Bob's big secret})$

$E_{K_S}(\text{Bob's big secret})$

Alice's big secret

Bob's big secret

Alice's big secret

Bob's big secret

$E_{K_{S1}}(\text{Bob's big secret})$

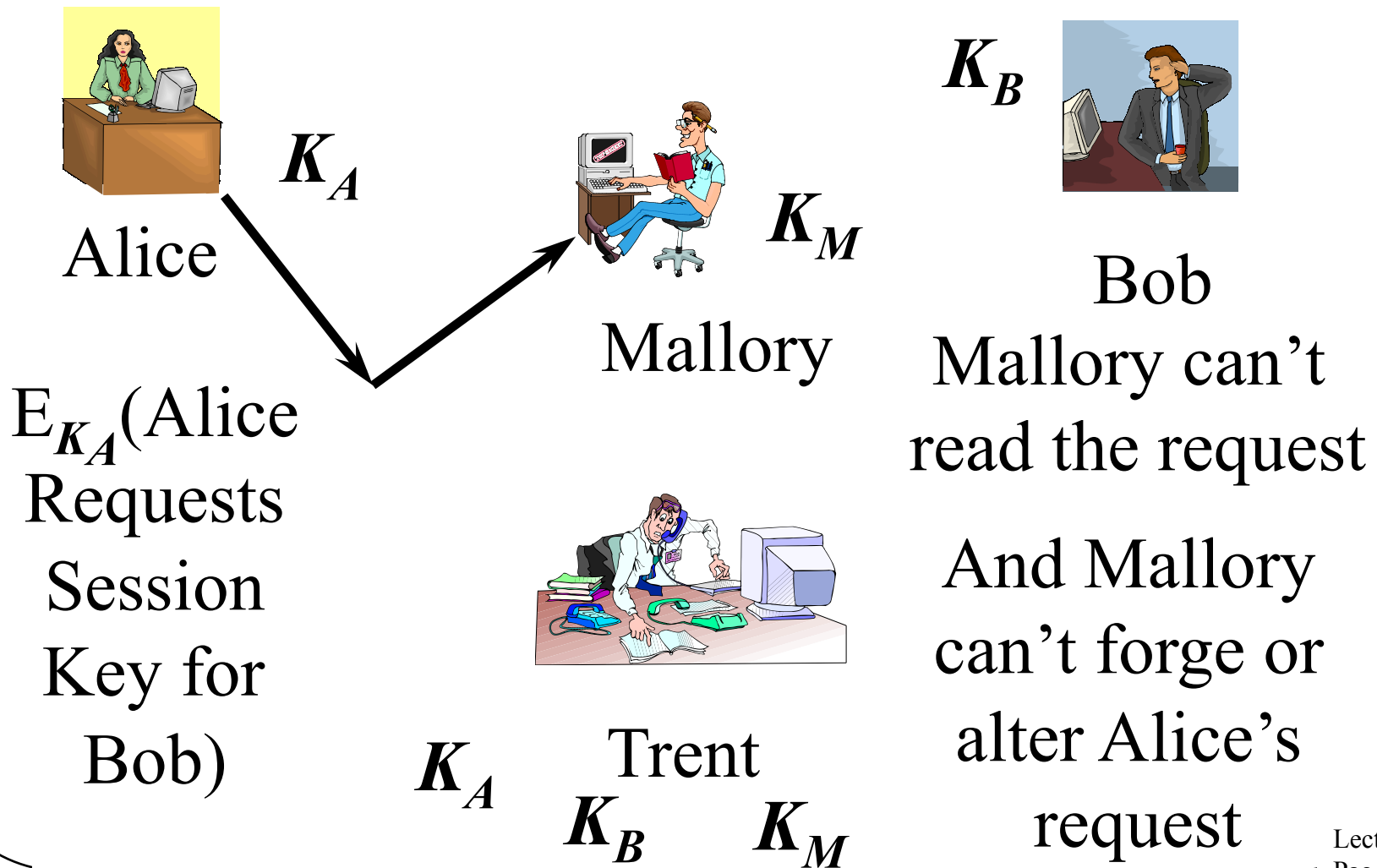
$E_{K_S}(\text{Bob's big secret})$

$E_{K_S}(\text{Bob's big secret})$

Defeating the Man In the Middle

- Problems:
 - 1). Trent doesn't really know what he's supposed to do
 - 2). Alice doesn't verify he did the right thing
- Minor changes can fix that
 - 1). Encrypt request with K_A
 - 2). Include identity of other participant in response - $E_{K_A}(K_S, \text{Bob})$

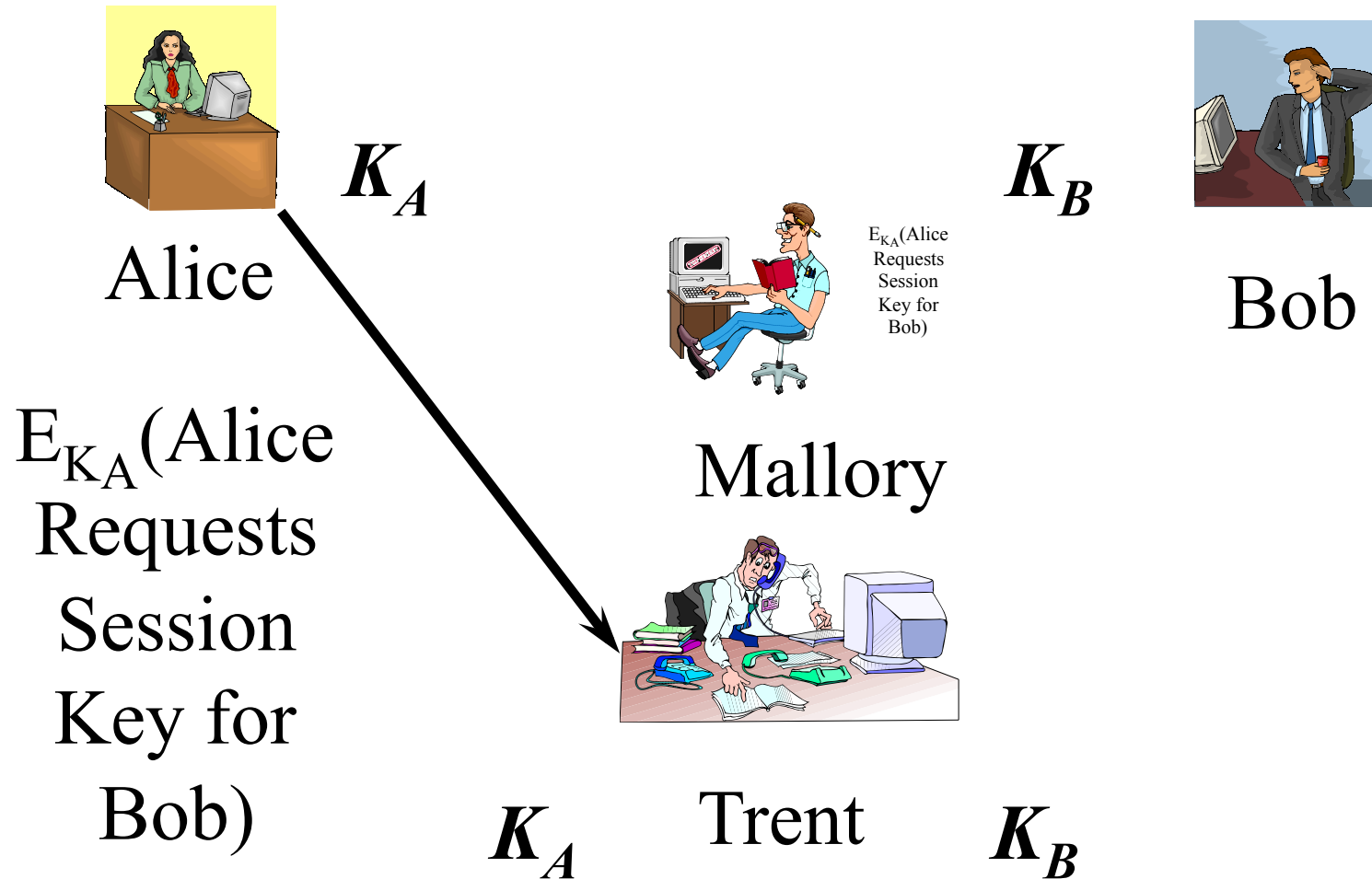
Applying the First Fix



But There's Another Problem

- A replay attack
- Replay attacks occur when Mallory copies down a bunch of protocol messages
- And then plays them again
- In some cases, this can wreak havoc
- Why does it here?

Step One



Step Two



Alice

K_A

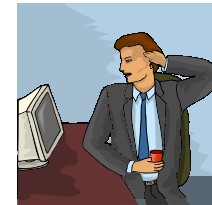
$E_{K_A}(K_S),$
 $E_{K_B}(K_S)$



Mallory

$E_{K_A}(\text{Alice Requests Session Key for Bob})$

$E_{K_A}(K_S),$
 $E_{K_B}(K_S)$



Bob

K_B

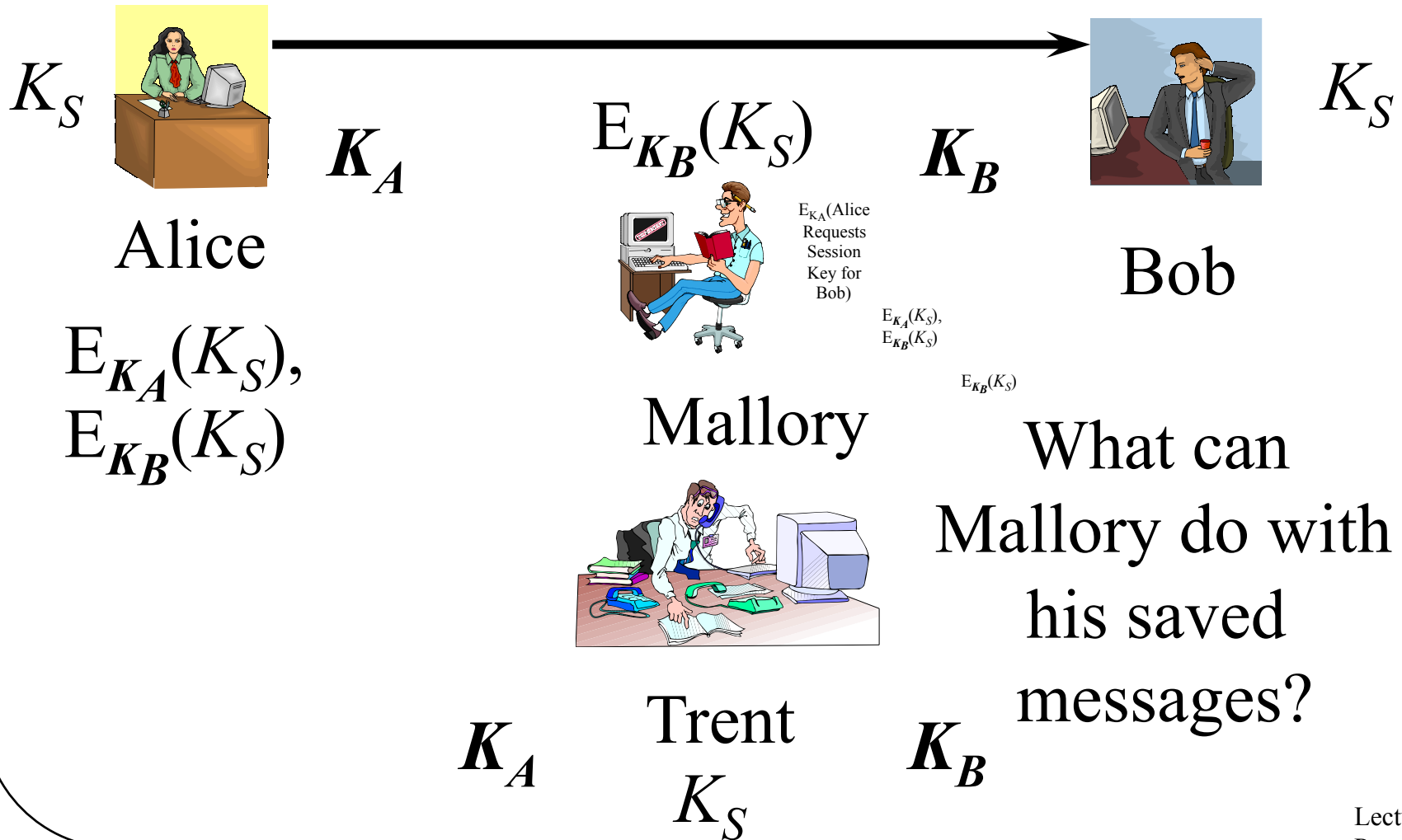


Trent
 K_S

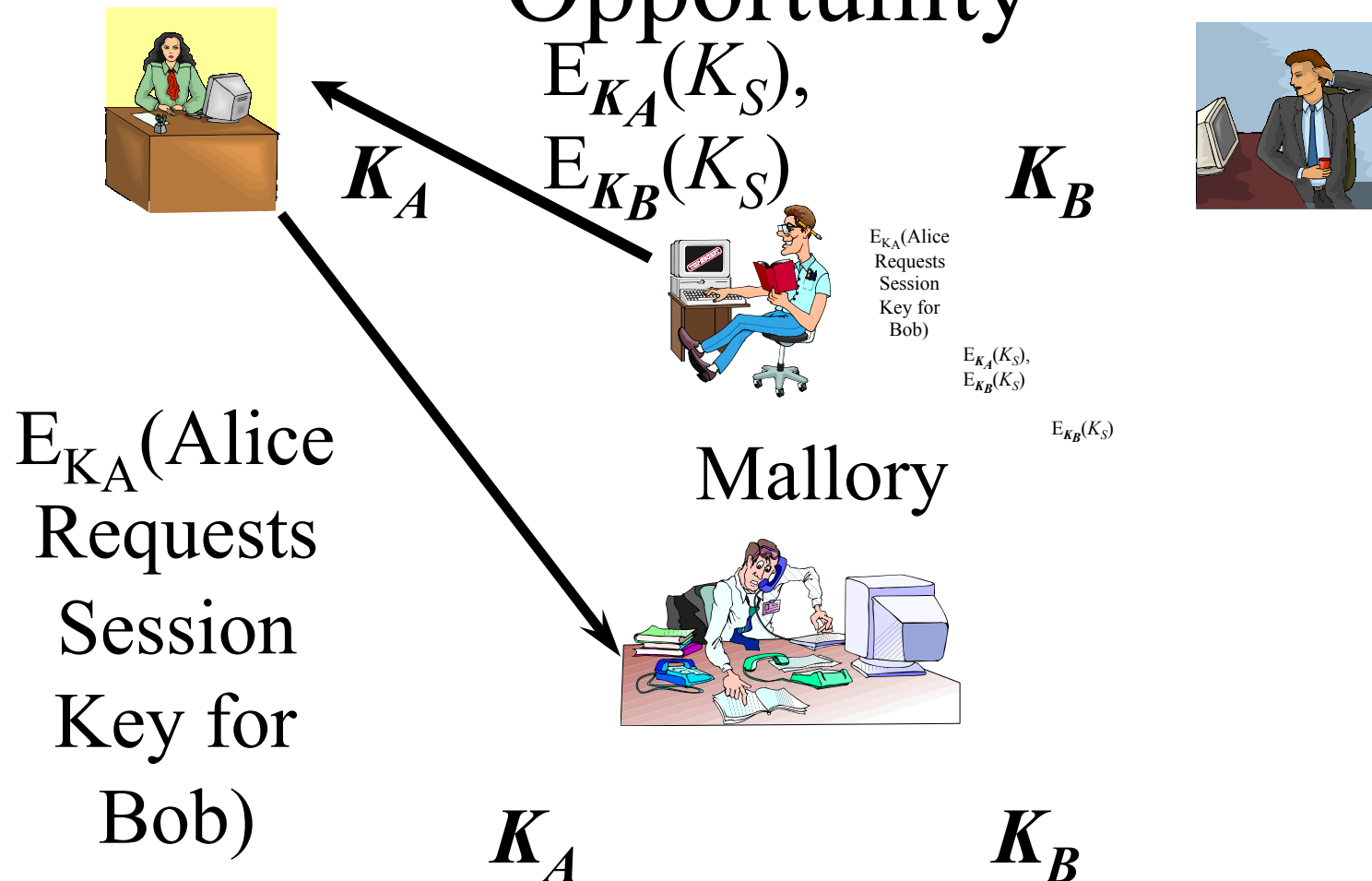
K_A

K_B

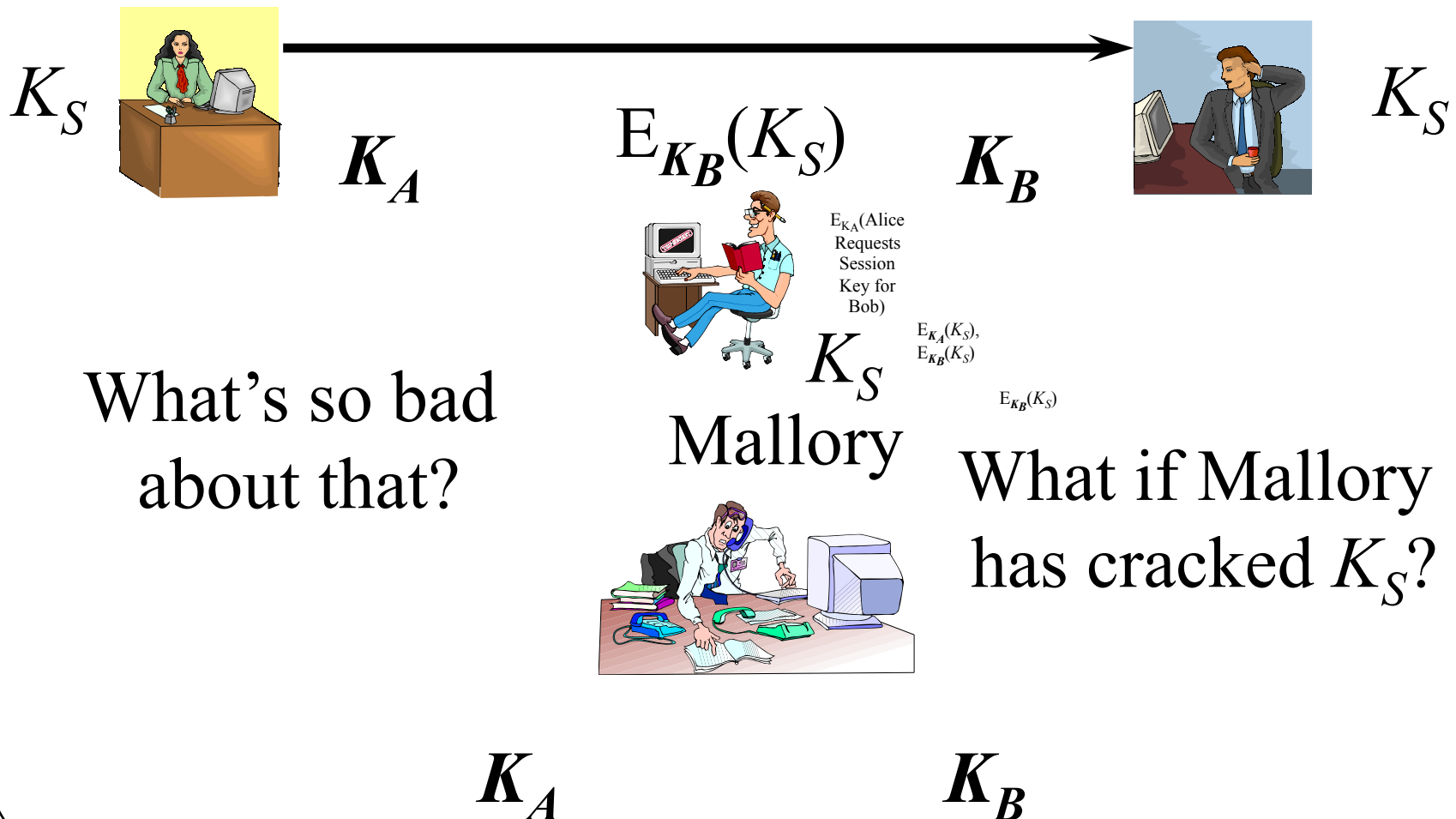
Step Three



Mallory Waits for His Opportunity



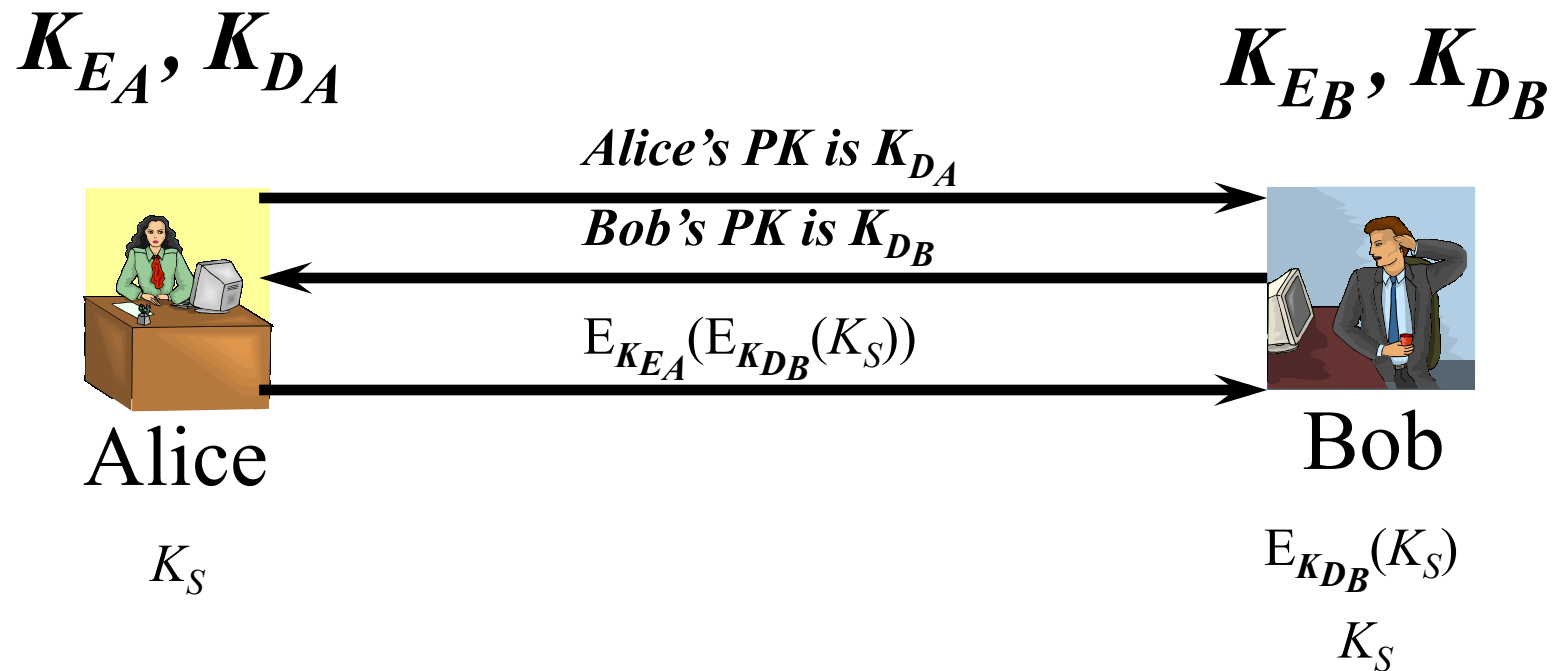
What Will Happen Next?



Key Exchange With Public Key Cryptography

- With no trusted arbitrator
- Alice sends Bob her public key
- Bob sends Alice his public key
- Alice generates a session key and sends it to Bob encrypted with his public key, signed with her private key
- Bob decrypts Alice's message with his private key
- Encrypt session with shared session key

Basic Key Exchange Using PK



Bob verifies the message came from Alice
Bob extracts the key from the message

Man-in-the-Middle With Public Keys

K_{E_A}, K_{D_A}

K_{E_M}, K_{D_M}

K_{E_B}, K_{D_B}



Alice

Alice's PK is K_{D_A}



Mallory

Alice's PK is K_{D_M}



Bob

Now Mallory can pose as Alice to Bob

And Bob Sends His Public Key

K_{E_A}, K_{D_A}

K_{E_M}, K_{D_M}

K_{E_B}, K_{D_B}



Alice

Bob's PK is K_{D_M}



Mallory

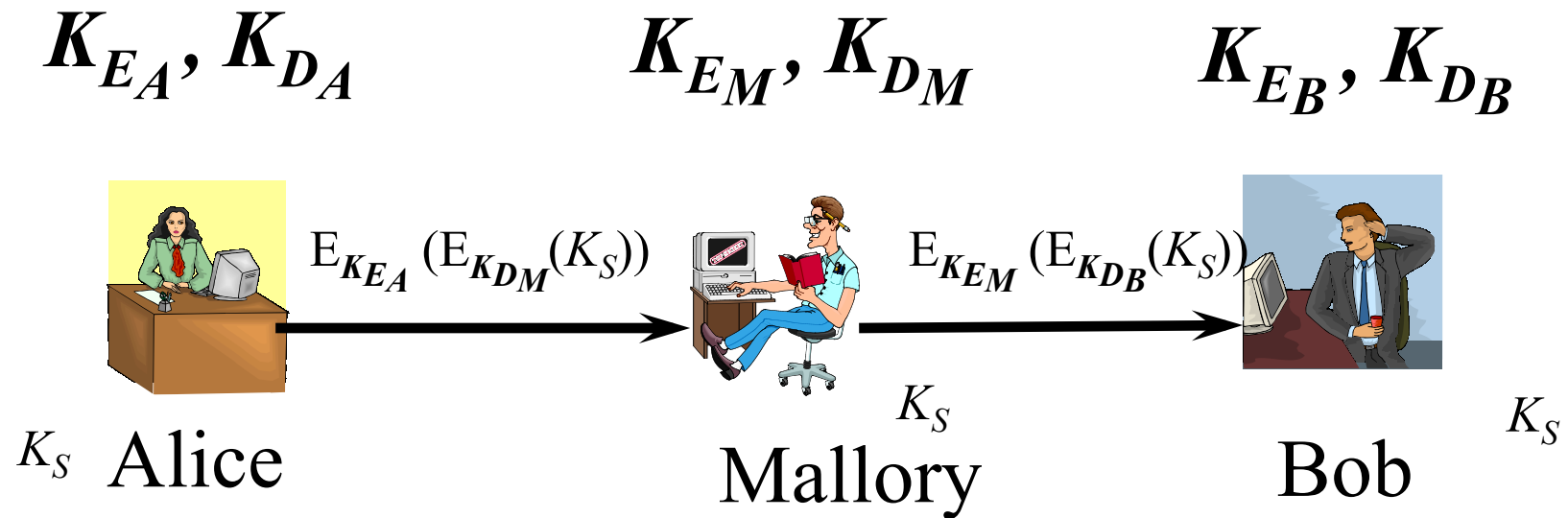
Bob's PK is K_{D_B}



Bob

Now Mallory can pose as Bob to Alice

Alice Chooses a Session Key



Bob and Alice are sharing a session key

Unfortunately, they're also sharing it
with Mallory

Combined Key Distribution and Authentication

- Usually the first requires the second
 - Not much good to be sure the key is a secret if you don't know who you're sharing it with
- How can we achieve both goals?
 - In a single protocol
 - With relatively few messages

Needham-Schroeder Key Exchange

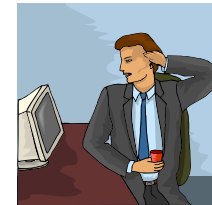
- Uses symmetric cryptography
- Requires a trusted authority
 - Who takes care of generating the new key
- More complicated than some protocols we've seen

Needham-Schroeder, Step 1



K_A

R_A Alice



K_B

Bob

Alice, Bob, R_A



Trent

K_A K_B

What's the Point of R_A ?

- R_A is random number chosen by Alice for this invocation of the protocol
 - Not used as a key, so quality of Alice's random number generator not too important
- Helps defend against replay attacks
- This kind of random number is sometimes called a *nonce*

Needham-Schroeder, Step 2



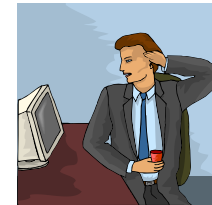
K_A

R_A Alice

Including R_A prevents replay

Including Bob prevents

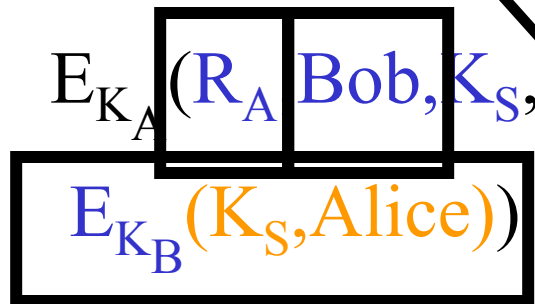
attacker from replacing Bob's identity



K_B

Bob

Including the encrypted message for Bob ensures Bob's message can't be replaced



Trent

R_A

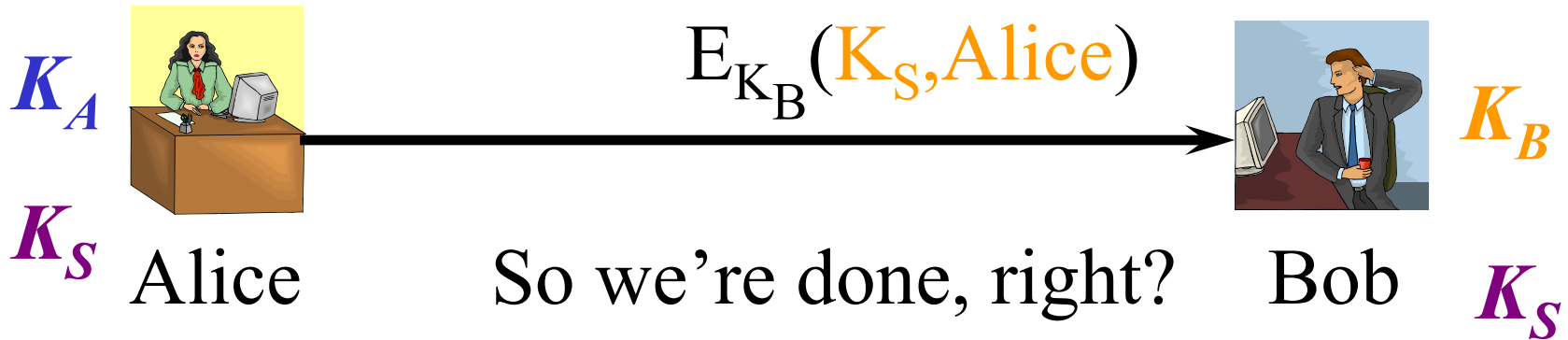
K_S

K_A

K_B

What's all this stuff for?

Needham-Schroeder, Step 3



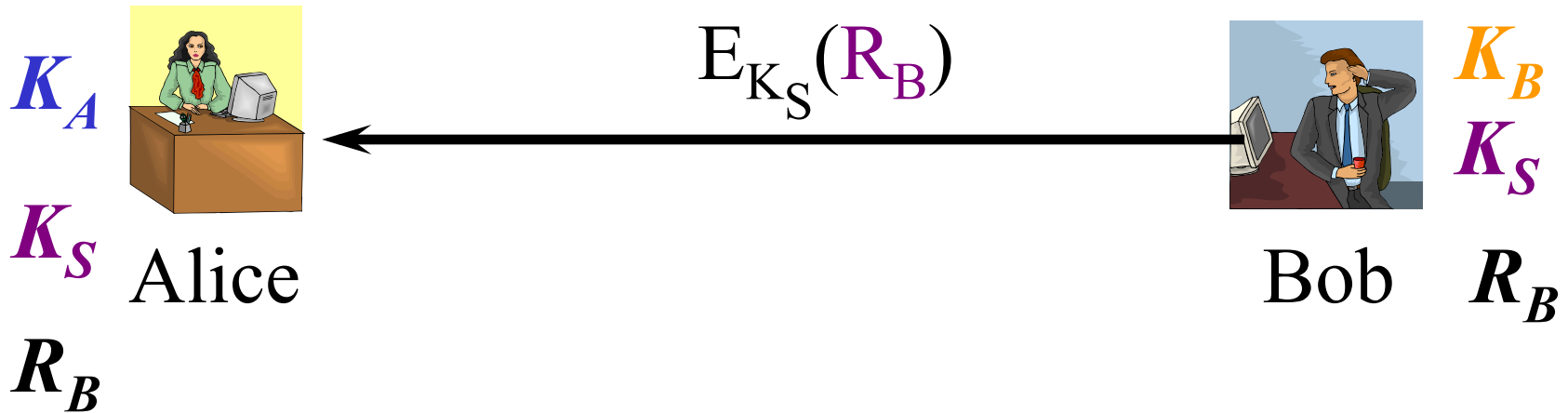
Wrong!



Trent

K_A K_B

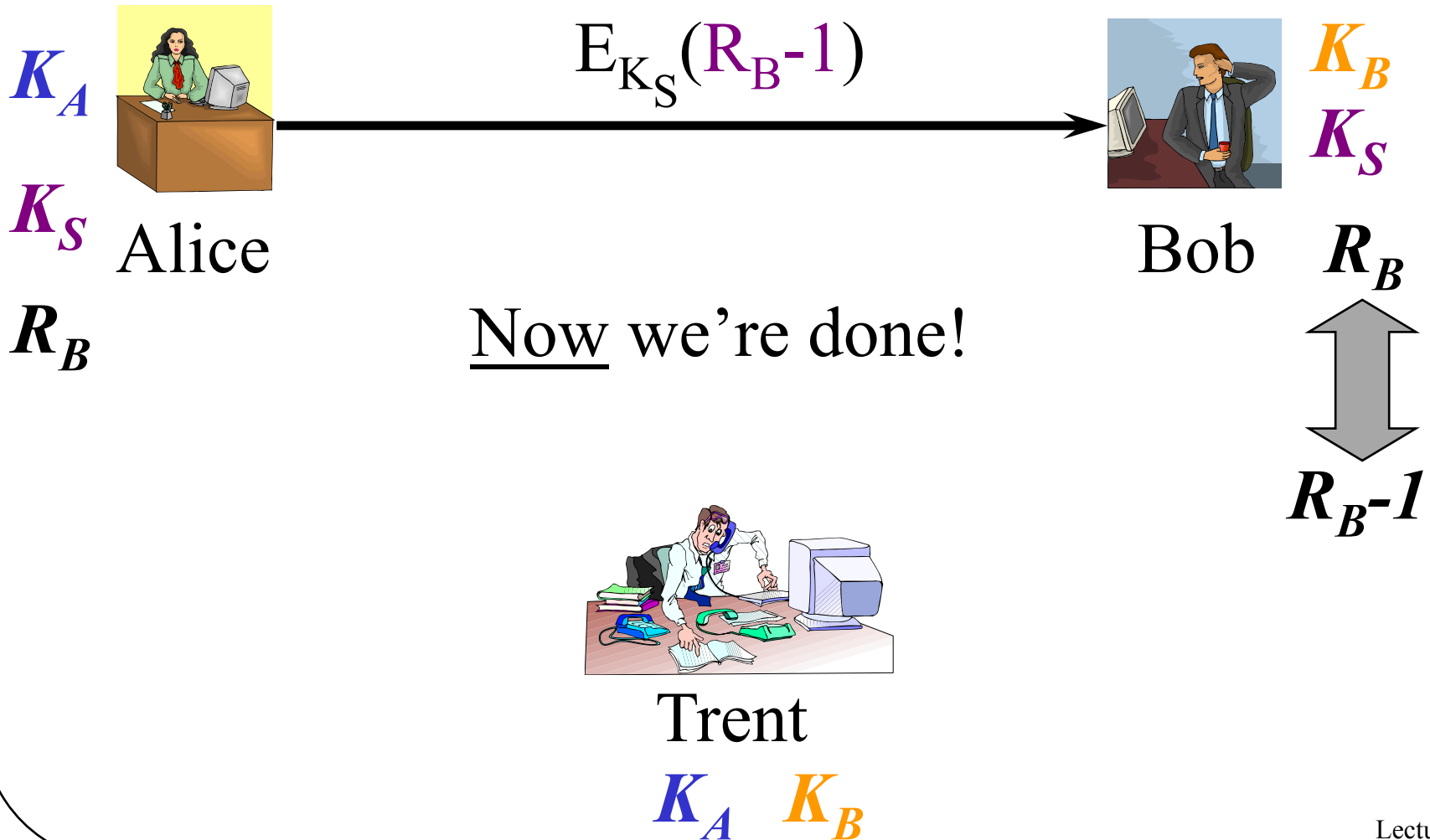
Needham-Schroeder, Step 4



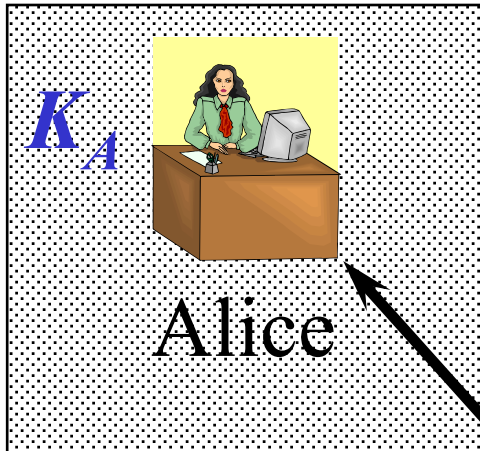
Trent

K_A K_B

Needham-Schroeder, Step 5



What's All This Extra Stuff For?



Alice knows she's
talking to Bob



Trent said she was

Can Mallory
jump in later?

$E_{K_A}(R_A, \text{Bob}, K_S,$

$E_{K_B}(K_S, \text{Alice}))$



No, only Bob
could read the
key package
Trent created

What's All This Extra Stuff For?

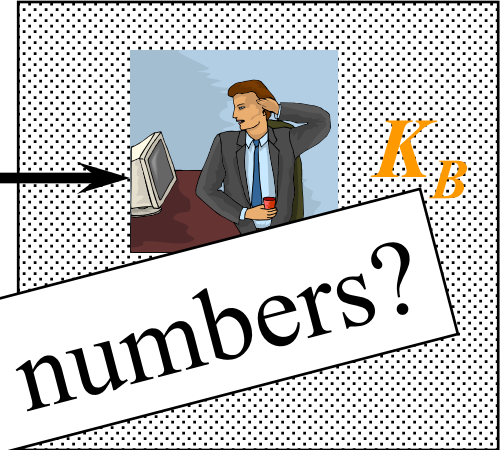


K_A

K_S

Alice

$E_{K_B}(K_S, \text{Alice})$



K_B

What about those random numbers?

Can Mallory
jump in?

Can later
messages will use
 K_S , which Mallory
doesn't know

Bob knows
he's talking
to Alice



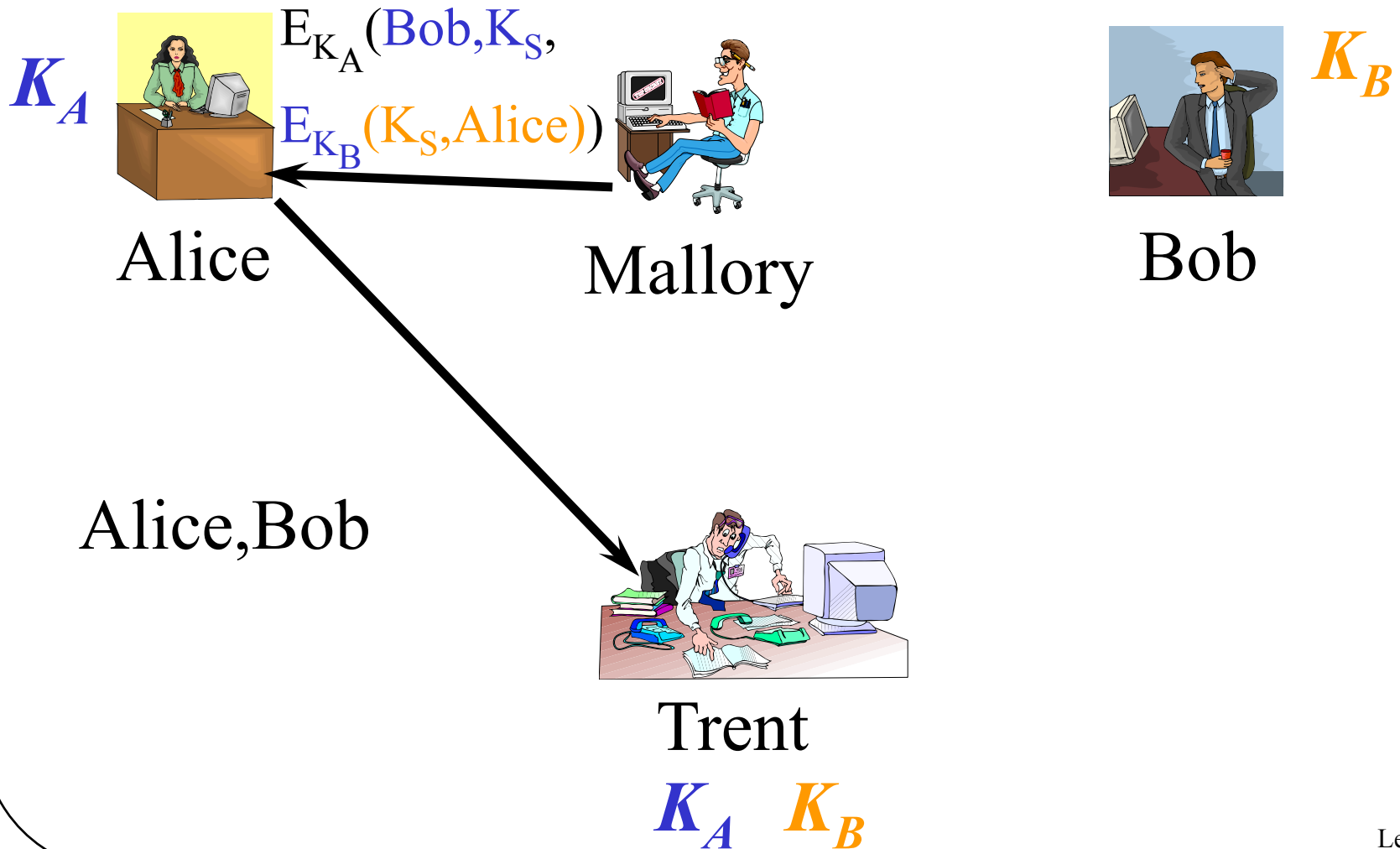
Trent

K_A K_B

Mallory Causes Problems

- Alice and Bob do something Mallory likes
- Mallory watches the messages they send to do so
- Mallory wants to make them do it again
- Can Mallory replay the conversation?
 - Let's try it without the random numbers

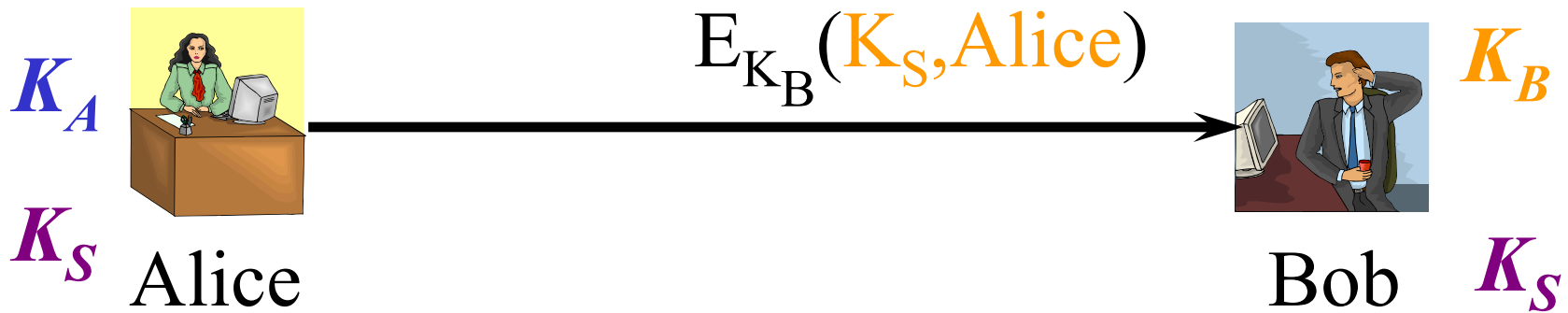
Mallory Waits For His Chance



What Will Alice Do Now?

- The message could only have been created by Trent
- It properly indicates she wants to talk to Bob
- It contains a perfectly plausible key
- Alice will probably go ahead with the protocol

The Protocol Continues



Mallory steps
aside for a bit

With no nonces,
we're done



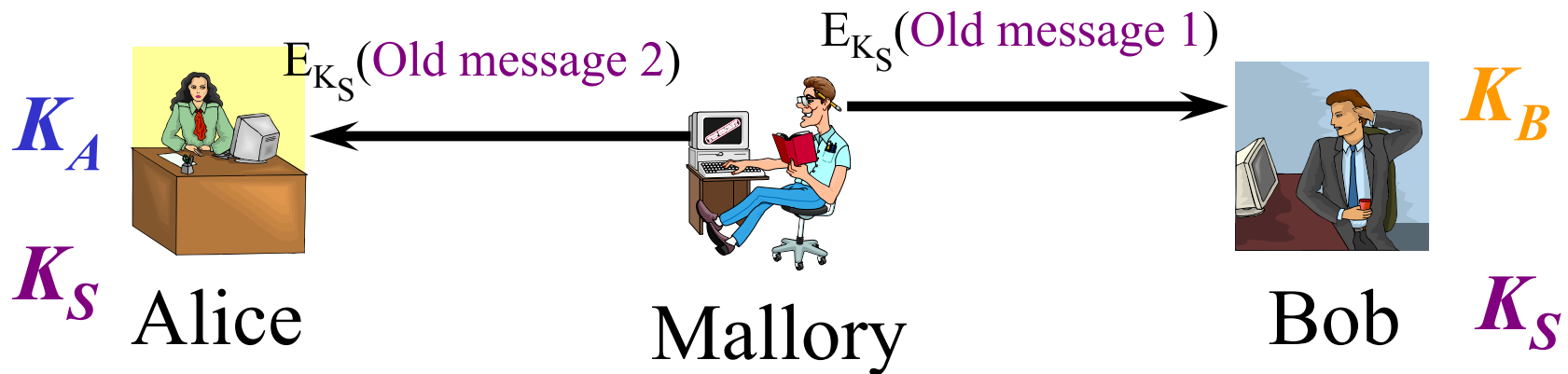
Trent

K_A K_B

So What's the Problem?

- Alice and Bob agree K_S is their key
 - They both know the key
 - Trent definitely created the key for them
 - Nobody else has the key
- But . . .

Mallory Steps Back Into the Picture



Mallory can
replay Alice and
Bob's old
conversation



Trent

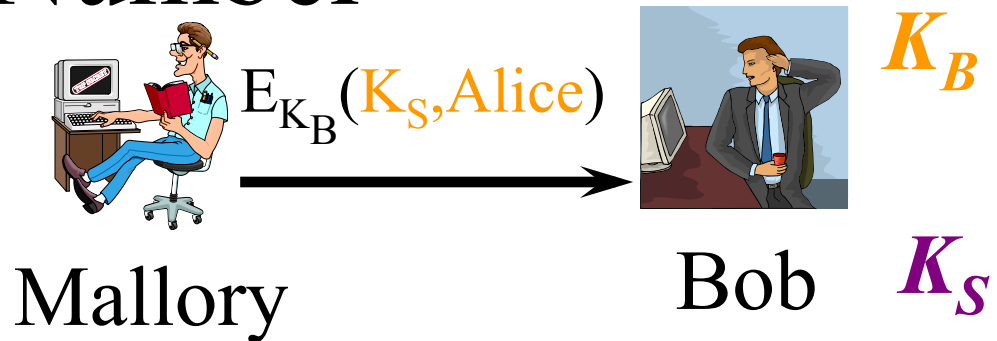
K_A K_B

It's using the
current key, so
Alice and Bob
will accept it

How Do the Random Numbers Help?

- Alice's random number assures her that the reply from Trent is fresh
- But why does Bob need another random number?

Why Bob Also Needs a Random Number



Let's say Alice doesn't want to talk to Bob



Trent

K_A K_B

But Mallory wants Bob to think Alice wants to talk

So What?



Mallory can now play back an old message from Alice to Bob

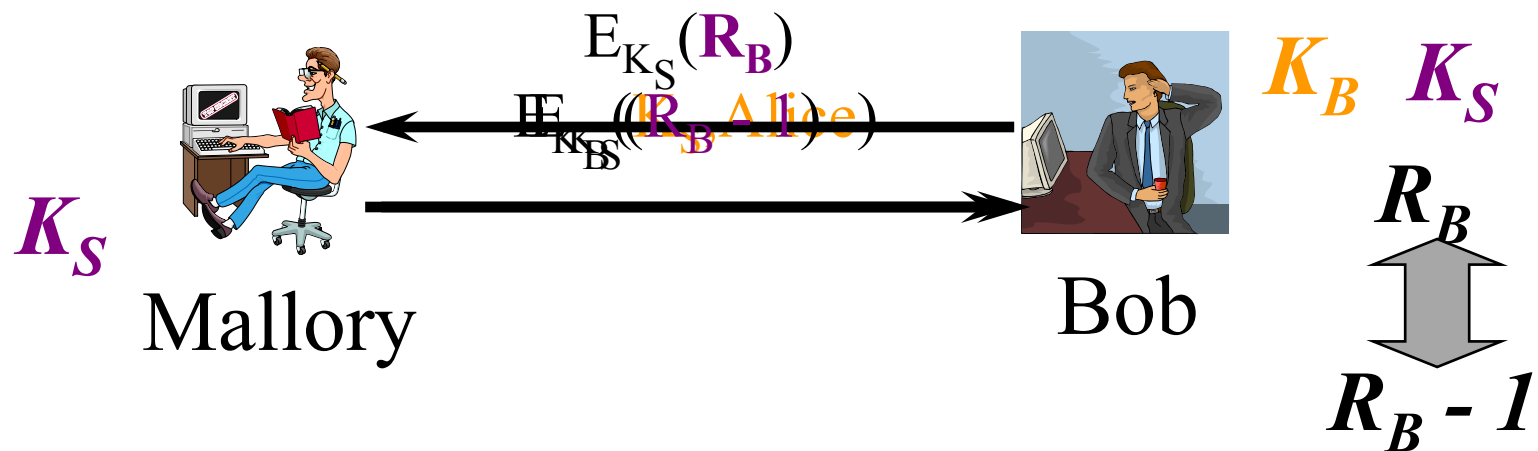
And Bob will have no reason to be suspicious

Bob's random number exchange assures him that Alice really wanted to talk

So, Everything's Fine, Right?

- Not if any key K_S ever gets divulged
- Once K_S is divulged, Mallory can forge Alice's response to Bob's challenge
- And convince Bob that he's talking to Alice when he's really talking to Mallory

Mallory Cracks an Old Key



Mallory compromises 10,000 computers belonging to 10,000 grandmothers to crack K_S

Unfortunately, Mallory knows K_S

So Mallory can answer Bob's challenge

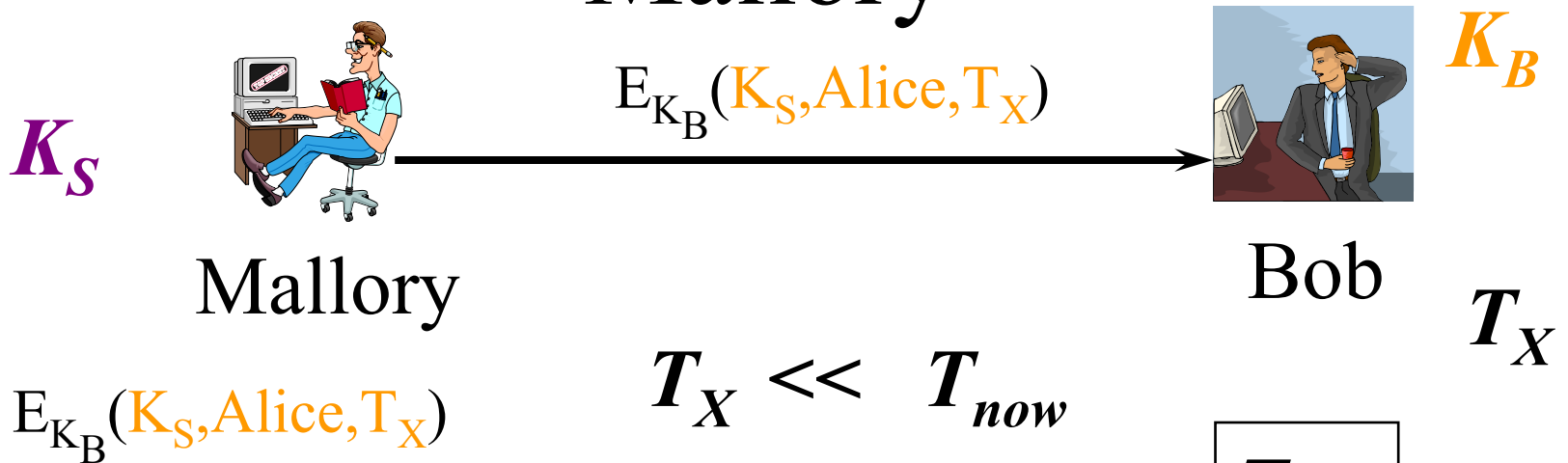
Timestamps in Security Protocols

- One method of handling this kind of problem is timestamps
- Proper use of timestamps can limit the time during which an exposed key is dangerous
- But timestamps have their own problems

Using Timestamps in the Needham-Schroeder Protocol

- The trusted authority includes timestamps in his encrypted messages to Alice and Bob
- Based on a global clock
- When Alice or Bob decrypts, if the timestamp is too old, abort the protocol

Using Timestamps to Defeat Mallory



Now Bob checks T_X against his clock

So Bob, fearing replay, discards K_S

And Mallory's attack is foiled

Problems With Using Timestamps

- They require a globally synchronized set of clocks
 - Hard to obtain, often
 - Attacks on clocks become important
- They leave a window of vulnerability

The Suppress-Replay Attack

- Assume two participants in a security protocol
 - Using timestamps to avoid replay problems
- If the sender's clock is ahead of the receiver's, attacker can intercept message
 - And replay later, when receiver's clock still allows it

Handling Clock Problems

- 1). Rely on clocks that are fairly synchronized and hard to tamper with
 - Perhaps GPS signals
- 2). Make all comparisons against the same clock
 - So no two clocks need to be synchronized

Is This Overkill?

- Some of these attacks are pretty specialized
 - Requiring special access or information
- Some can only achieve certain limited effects
- Do we really care?

Why Should We Care?

- Bad guys are very clever
- Apparently irrelevant vulnerabilities give them room to show that
- Changes in how you use protocols can make vulnerabilities more relevant
- A protocol without a vulnerability is always better
 - Even if you currently don't care

Something to Bear in Mind

- These vulnerabilities aren't specific to just these protocols
- They are common and pop up all over
 - Even in cases where you aren't thinking about a “protocol”
- Important to understand them at a high conceptual level