

The Clock Stopped at the Exam

**Byron**   
**the Bard**



This is a *Tales from the Loop* Mystery set in Lake Geneva [Boulder City] in 1985. The adventure introduces the Kids to a fantastic device able to show the future. The Kids will find out how to use it to their advantage, but at the same time they will also discover a terrible truth about the coming future. This Mystery is meant as a first installment in a longer campaign during which the Kids will have to prevent the foretold future from becoming reality.

"There is no way anyone could pass this test..." - sighed Sandra looking through the window towards the track field flooded with the warm air of summer. In her mind, the test handed over her summer holidays like a guillotine over her neck. Flunking it would mean having to spend the entirety of August reviewing and preparing for a re-sit at the end of the summer. No running. No swimming. No hiking. "If only I could take a peek at the questions" - she thought looking at the new student sitting at her side...

## The Mystery at a Glance

It's May and the Kids are eagerly looking forward to their holidays. However two big surprises stand between them and the freedom of summer: the stern history teacher MR LANGSWORTH, who has set a surprise history exam for the coming Friday; and, a new shy and mysterious student with a foreign accent, JIM RUSSEL, who has just joined their class. Alone in the new school, and soon targeted by MOSES BARTER, JIM tries get close to the Kids and, in order to win their friendship, he will share with them a secret: he knows the answers to the history exam!

However, as the Kids will soon realize, accessing that secret is not so easy. The answer have been recorded on a special VHS produced by the *chronovisor*, an experimental TV-like device built by Jim's father, VICTOR RUSSEL, to watch into the future.

Unfortunately, VICTOR had recently been arrested by DART and the Kids will have to recover the *chronovisor* from JIM's house and put together a new *exaphase plug* to power the TV using the energies of the Loop. Searching through the notes, the Kids will find the answers they are looking for, but among the chrono-VHSes they will also find a more ominous recording...

## The Truth of the Mystery

### THE INVENTION OF THE CHRONOVISOR

During the last year, VIKTOR SHTRUM, a Soviet scientist, had at last finalized the details of his

greatest invention: a device allowing a man to gaze directly into the future. The machine, aptly named the *chronovisor*, required large amounts of energy to be tested, and thus attracted the attention of the authorities. The local Party functionaries, pressured by a few scientists envious of VIKTOR's results, ordered the research to be put on hold.

### The chronovisor

The chronovisor is a device invented by VIKTOR SHTRUM allowing a viewer to gaze into the future. It resembles a standard cathodic-ray TV, with a thick power cable coming out of its back and a strangely shaped antenna with sixteen prods. In Lake Geneva [Boulder City], the power cable requires a special *exaphase adapter* to be connected to the experimental high-energy power infrastructure built by DART. The antenna is a *four-dimensional receiver* meant to span the four dimensions of time and space and collect signals from it. There is no remote, just seven dials and a red button on the front (see Figure 3). Once a date and place in the future have been selected through the dials, the red *on/off* button starts the machine; slowly a coarse-grained, black-and-white image takes shape on the screen, showing the desired location in the future. Time and place are however subject to noise, and the shown image may not correspond exactly to the requested details. A projection on the chronovisor lasts until the red button is pressed again, or until power is available; the Lake Geneva [Boulder City] Loop can sustain up to a minute of viewing. Consumption of energy is so large that VIKTOR has run the device only at nighttime and has been careful to stop the projection early, although a few times he has been so taken by what he was seeing that he has caused a nightly blackout.

### THE FLIGHT TO AMERICA

The spike in energy consumption caused by the chronovisor was detected also by agents of the CIA. The American secret service, scared that the Soviet might have devised some new weapon system, decided to get in touch with VIKTOR.

Realizing that the scientist was very dissatisfied with how his work had been received, the agents decided to put forward an offer: a passport for him and his son ILYA to the US; and, there, the energies of the Loop of Lake Geneva [Boulder City] at his disposal. VIKTOR accepted and the extraction operation happened shortly afterward; father and son disappeared in the premises of the South African embassy in Moscow, and after a month, in late February 1985, they reappeared in Lake Geneva [Boulder City] with a new identity and new documents, as VICTOR and JIM RUSSEL. DART provided them with housing in the residential district of Como [Hemenway Pass] by the Loop.

### THE CONTRACT WITH DART

In March 1985, VICTOR officially signed a contract with DART. He was allowed to carry on his research on the chronovisor on the side of his official job, but under strict conditions: all experiments had to be reported and at least two American scientists had to be involved in the research. Unhappy with this requirement, VICTOR decided to continue his research independently at home, hoping to involve JIM, who had not been enrolled in the school yet. VICTOR quickly realized the possibility of tapping into the high energy cables of the Loop and, as long as he run few short experiments, he could fly under the radar of DART.

#### The exaphase plug

The neighborhood of Como [Hemenway Pass] near the Lake Geneva [Boulder City] Loop is laced with high-energy experimental cables bringing power to and from the reactors. VICTOR realized he could tap into this source of energy through a custom-designed *exaphase plug*. This plug has six connectors and a heavy black transformer, which, when operating reaches quickly a very high temperature.

### THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE CHRONORECORDER

As running the chronovisor required so much energy, VICTOR conceived the idea of a *chronorecorder*, a device to be connected to the chronovisor which could save the images produced by the chronovisor. In April, VICTOR and JIM successfully built the recording machine and started archiving their nightly recordings among the other VHSes in the basement of their apartment. Among these recordings, there was also a video of the coming history exam on May 24th.

#### The chronorecorder

The chronorecorder is an additional device for the chronovisor developed by VICTOR and his son JIM to save the projections of the chronovisor in order to review or study them later. The chronorecorder is hardly distinguishable from a standard VHS player and it can be connected to the chronovisor through a normal data cable. A *recording* button instructs the device to copy on tape whatever is shown on the screen of the chronovisor. The recording supports for the chronorecorder have the same shape of a normal VHS, but, if opened, their tapes have an unnatural red luminescence to them. The chrono-VHS can be read only with the chronorecorder; if played by a normal VHS player, only white noise will be shown on the screen.

### THE ARREST

On the night of May 9th, VICTOR observed a very disturbing event meant to happen in Lake Geneva [Boulder City] in three months. Upset by what he saw, he scrambled to check the future at different locations, but in doing so he caused a significant spike in energy consumption. The DART security department detected the activity and tracked him down. Believing that VICTOR had been running secret experiments for the Soviets, the DART agents rushed to his home before dawn.

#### July 9th viewing

When VICTOR SHTRUM tuned the chronovisor on Lake Geneva [Boulder City] on July 9th a hellish footage of a nuclear explosion blasting the town appeared on screen. A video of the recording to show to the kids is available at <https://youtu.be/8ctXkJJ2sIA>. Terrified by the discovery he tried to find confirmation or, hopefully, a denial of such an event by probing the future at slightly different times (earlier and later) and in different places (Washington, New York, Los Angeles, Seattle, Moscow). Tragically all the recordings revealed nightmarish post-apocalyptic images.

Hearing the cars of DART stopping outside his place, VICTOR quickly hid the chronovisor and disposed of the exaphase plug. A few moments later, a terrified VICTOR was escorted out of his house and brought onto the premises of the Loop, where he could be kept in custody and interrogated by other scientists.

### THE RELOCATION

After the arrest, the DART personnel sealed the

house, leaving all the materials inside for future examination. A scared JIM was taken in custody by the sheriff for a few hours, before being given into the foster care of ANN PARKER. Without being able to collect any of his own belonging, JIM was made to move from Como [Hemenway Park] to the area of Conant Street [Oasis Park]. Shortly thereafter, he was also registered at Eastview Elementary School [Mitchell Elementary School] with Monday May 20th being his first day at the new school.

## Introducing the Kids

It is Monday May 20th, and in the warm morning of the late spring of Winsconsin [Colorado], Kids are streaming towards Eastview Elementary School [Mitchell Elementary School]. Everyone is enjoying the perfect weather, dreaming about the end of the school year, and looking forward to a summer of freedom. The school year is almost over, but there are still few weeks to suffer through.

### Eastview Elementary School

Eastview Elementary School [Mitchell Elementary School] is the main public elementary in the center of Lake Geneva [Boulder City] attended by most of the kids living in town. In this Mystery, the playing Kids are expected to belong to the same class. Kids could still be different ages, but have the players justify how they ended up in the same grade.

The Kids have the opportunity to meet together on the school lawn and talk about their previous evening adventures and discuss their plans for the afternoon. Fun plans and great expectations for the coming holidays abound, but sadly there also homeworks and exams still hanging over them. The ring of the bell signalling the beginning of the school day mark the end of their fantasies and the moment to head towards their classroom.

## Introducing the Mystery

### THE NEW STUDENT

In the classroom, the Kids' day opens with an unexpected news. Despite the late time in the year, a new student will join the class. During

the first period MR LANGSWORTH, the history teacher, enters the class together with a small and frail-looking kid, and introduces the newcomer to the class:

*"Let us welcome Jim, Jim Russel" - he says looking at the boy who seems not to answer to his prompt. "His family has just moved to Lake Geneva [Boulder City], so let's welcome him in our ranks!"*

JIM says just a couple of shy sentences to introduce himself, speaking with a foreign accent. After that, he is directed by MR LANGSWORTH to take a place next to one of the Kids.

### THE LAST EXAM

Announcements are not over yet. MR LANGSWORTH soon shares another, less pleasant, surprise

*"Also, the final history exam will take place on Friday. We will cover the War of Independence - and, remember, I will not accept failures, for this the foundation of our country! Jim too will take the exam. I want you all to admire his earnestness and take example from him. Be all prepared, because Friday's test is going to be the last one!"*

After remarking the importance of the exam, MR LANGSWORTH resumes his class, reviewing the content of the exam. MR LANGSWORTH makes no effort to suggest that the exam will be easy; instead, he adds details and explanations aimed at scaring the students. The class should enhance the feeling that the Kids have little chances of getting a good grade by simply studying in the next few days; and failure is hardly acceptable since it would compromise their freedom during the coming summer.

### CHATTING WITH JIM

During the history class or just after it, the Kids have the opportunity to chat up with the new student. JIM is very shy and reserved, but he tags along the Kids, unless they were to behave meanly towards him. He is is upset by the arrest of his father, does not like his foster carer ANN PARKER, finds school boring and, actually, does not care at all for the exam; but he is really keen of striking friendship with some of the local kids.

If the discussion topics shifts onto the upcoming exam, JIM does not hide that he knows close to nothing about American History; pressed on the reasons why is he taking the test even if he has just joined the course, he hints at the fact that he "knows about the test", but he does not add much more until he feels he can trust the Kids. Talking to him, or a successful roll in LEAD, helps building trust.

### THE RECESS AND MOSES

During the recess, an older boy, MOSES BARTER, breaks loudly through the crowd, followed by a couple of his comrades, Nick Hudson and Bruno Roman, until he stands firmly in front of JIM. Moses is well-known among the students as a bully and the leader of a group of kids from the rough neighborhood around South Lake Shore Drive [Nevada Highway], calling themselves the *Pitbulls*.

Looking down at JIM, and picking at his accent, MOSES taunts him:

*So... so... Haven't we got here a small RED spy?*

JIM, on his side, looks downward and avoids confronting the bully. The Kids can intervene in support JIM; if so, Moses and his buddies also provokes them by insinuating they must be communist. MOSES does not want to start a fight (yet) as he doesn't want to get in trouble with the school authorities, but he might well threaten the Kids to meet them after school.

The event leaves JIM shaken but it is also an opportunity to strengthen the relationship between him and the Kids. In particular, he might be afraid of meeting MOSES alone and he might try to group together with the Kids even more closely.

#### THE ANSWERS TO THE EXAM

At the end of the day, the foster carer ANN PARKER comes to fetch JIM and drive him home. Before this, if it has not already happened, JIM approaches the Kids and reveals to them he has a way to get the answers for the history test on Friday:

*You know... I somehow have the answers for the history test somewhere... Maybe we could get them together, if you want?*

JIM is very shy and he is very vague at the beginning: he would like to be friends with the Kids, but he is also scared that he might end in trouble for cheating on the exam or revealing the existence of chronovisor. If necessary, he might even promise the answer for the history exam in exchange for help dealing with the bully MOSES.

In any case, even if the Kids accept to join forces, JIM remains very restrained in talking about his father's experiment, and does not voluntarily make mention of the chronovisor unless strictly necessary.

## Solving the Mystery

From the end of the school day of Monday May 20th to the dreaded morning of Friday May 24th,

the Kids have time to follow JIM's leads in order to find out the answers to the coming history test. While a significant chunk of their time has to be spent at Eastview Elementary School [Mitchell Elementary School], they also have the opportunity to explore other locations across town.

### Location: Eastview Elementary School [Mitchell Elementary School]

Good part of the day of the Kids is inevitably spent in the classrooms and the corridors of Eastview Elementary School [Mitchell Elementary School]. This is an opportunity to develop new plot lines, introduce new challenges for the Kids, or simply play out their everyday life. Some possible events are listed below:

- **Classes:** Kids attend classes in the morning and, possibly, early afternoon. This is an opportunity to face Kids with more school challenges and interact with teachers who might either help or hinder them in solving the current Mystery.
- **Recesses:** breaks are excellent moments to have Kids meet with other pupils, develop relationships and learn about what is going on at school or in town. They could learn about the new CDs just released at the Wail Music Store, about new records being set at the Electric State Arcade or about sightings over the lake. It is also a good time to pick up rumors related to the Mystery.
- **Bullies:** The Kids might stumble in MOSES and his buddies across the corridors and the halls of the school. The bullies might like to create problems for JIM and the Kids both at school and outside.

The corridors of the school are also a good location to catch wind of rumors related to the Mystery:

- **VICTOR's arrest:** some students may have heard or even witnessed a large operation carried out by the security of DART in Como [Hemenway Pass] leading to the arrest of a man. Although the identity of the man is likely unknown to the students, the Kids may come to connect the arrest with JIM's father and unveil part of the past of their new friend.
- **Blackout:** another topic still discussed during the recess is the big blackout that happened on the night of May 10th. The Kids may be able to connect this blackout to the arrest of VICTOR and understand that overconsumption of energy was one of the reason that led DART to intervene.

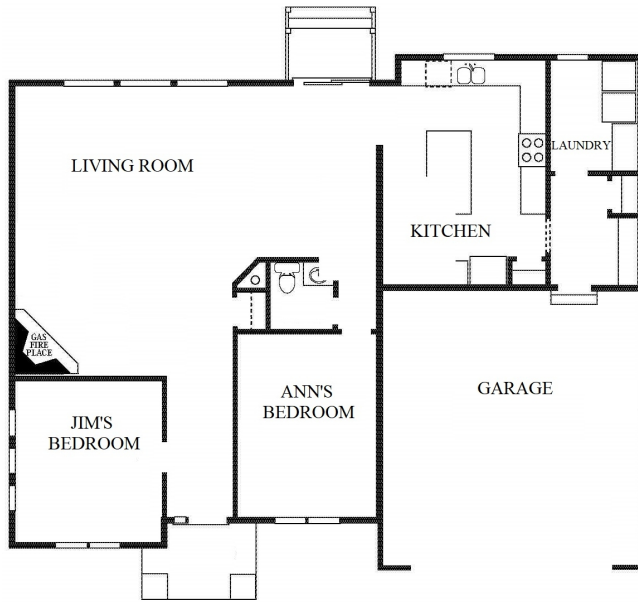
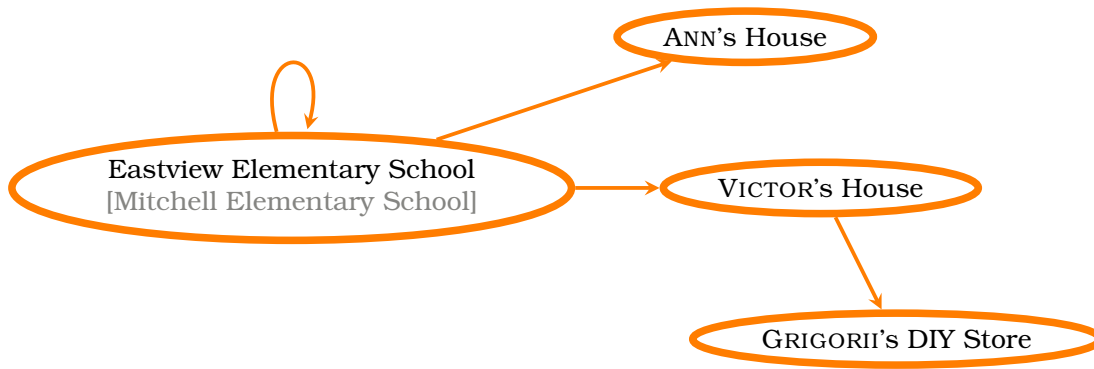


Figure 1: ANN's house.

## Location: ANN's House

At the end of the school day, ANN meets JIM outside the school and drive his home. In order to interact with JIM after school, the Kids have to travel to ANN's house in Conant Street [Oasis Park].

### TALKING TO JIM

ANN is a well-meaning, although strict, carer who believes that the best guidance for JIM in his situation is a strict schedule and good work discipline. For this reason, she does not want JIM to hang out with the Kids, and instead keeps him home so that he can focus on his homeworks and prepare for the Friday exam. The Kids have to find a way around her in order to talk to JIM.

Realizing that he is stuck home, JIM asks the Kids to go and retrieve the answer to the history exam from his old house in Como [Hemenway Park]. He tells the Kids they have to retrieve the chronovisor and the box of recordings made with it. At first, JIM is very vague about the

chronovisor, trying to provide as little details as possible, and just explaining that it is a tool that allows a person to look in the future. If pressed for further information, JIM can provide more leads according to his own knowledge as in the Box What JIM knows.

### TALKING TO ANN

ANN would normally be tight-lipped about the past of JIM, but if the Kids convince her that they could help and be a good influence, or if they collect successes in CHARM, she might be willing to tell them more about JIM. In particular, she can tell the Kids more about the identity of JIM's father, his recent arrival in Lake Geneva [Boulder City], his job at the Loop and his arrest. However, she does not know where VICTOR is coming from, nor she has any detail about his work or the reasons for his arrest.

## Location: VICTOR's House

The house provided to VICTOR by DART as soon as he moved to America is located in Como [Hemenway Park], a rich sub-urban area inhabited by the employees of the nearby Loop and their families. Reaching Como [Hemenway Park] from the center of Lake Geneva [Boulder City] may require a bus journey or a long bike ride. VICTOR's house is a stand-alone single-storey house with a large manicured garden and parking space for multiple cars.

### THE POLICE

Since the arrest, the house has been cordoned off by DART for future possible investigations. All entrances are blocked by red-and-white tape with the seal of DART.

Furthermore, DART has requested the local police to keep surveillance around the house in order to prevent anyone from entering. Thus, a car of the Lake Geneva [Boulder City] Police Department is stationed in front of the house. Since DART is very secretive, the two policemen in the vehicle have received no explanations about their task and are grumbling about "being used" by DART. The Kids can manage to sneak

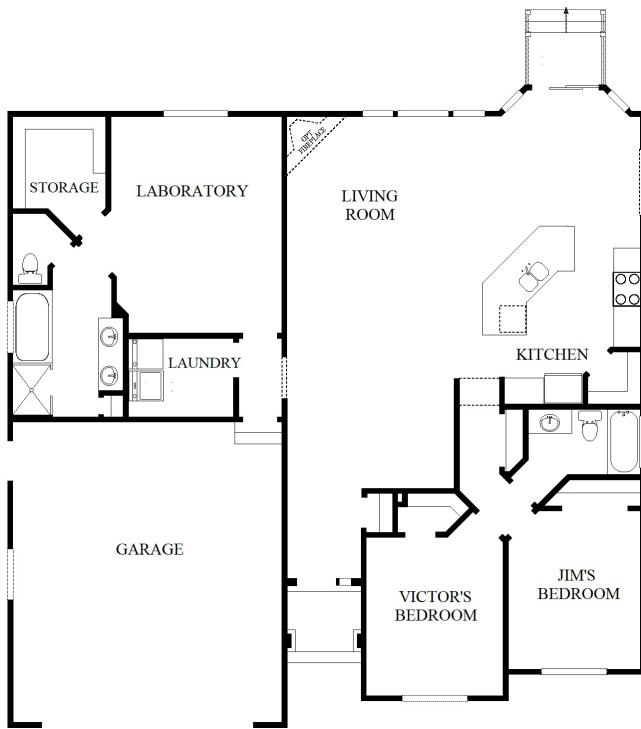


Figure 2: VICTOR's house.

by with the help of darkness or by succeeding in a **STEALTH** roll.

### THE HOUSE

The house of VICTOR has been laying abandoned for almost ten days now - no one has entered since DART sealed the building on May 10th. Because of the sudden arrest in the late night, most of the windows are shut and on the dinner table leftovers are tainting the air in the apartment.

Several clues can be found across the rooms of the house. The Kids are expected to retrieve the chronovisor (from the lab) and the box of chronorecordings (in the secret basement). However, some challenges will surface in putting these pieces together: the Kids need to locate the right chronorecording among all the VHSes and they need to build a new exaphase plug for the chronovisor using the blueprints in JIM's room. If the Kids are struggling, they can go back to ANN's house to ask more directions to JIM; he can answer their question according to his own knowledge as in the Box **What JIM knows**.

### What JIM knows

Jim has some hints about the location of the objects of interest in VICTOR's house, but, due to his shyness and concerns, he does not volunteer details about his life. According to the trust and the questioning of the Kids, he might provide these pieces of information at different times:

- **Chronovisor:**
  - His father used to manage the device.
  - They watched the chronovisor in the lab together.
  - He is not aware of the current location of the device.
- **Chronorecordings:**
  - They hid chronorecordings with other VHSes.
  - The VHSes are kept in the basement.
  - There is an access to the basement in the laundry.
- **Exaphase Plug:**
  - He designed the exaphase plug with his father.
  - He is not aware of what happened to the plug.
  - He had a design for the plug in his room.
- **VICTOR's arrest:**
  - DART agents have burst in the house and taken his father away.
  - His father seemed particularly upset.
  - His father had been awake the whole night, probably working.
- **C-ODIN:**
  - There was a robot helping his father sometimes.
  - His father might have brought the robot to the US from the Soviet Union.
  - He does not know how to operate it.

- **Garage:** the parking area is taken over by a dark blue Ford Escort car; if the Kids were to track down the license plate, they would discover that the car belongs to the Lake Geneva [Boulder City] Loop. The walls of the garage are lined by shelves and boxes. A search easily leads the Kids to discover a large box containing an old looking robot, C-ODIN. The creature have been off for some time, but a roll in **TINKER** allows the Kids to start the robot.
- **Jim's bedroom:** Jim's room is littered with Russian electronics magazines (brought from the Soviet Union), Lego constructions, and hand-drawn drafts and sketches of electronic circuits; on the wall hangs a long poster with a coastal landscape and the writing *Visit Cornwall* (Jim's mother was originally from Cornwall). Among the papers on the ground



lies also the design of the exaphase plug (see Figure 4). The Kids need a roll on *INVESTIGATE* to identify it; alternatively, they can collect all the sketches and bring them to Jim for identification.

- **VICTOR's bedroom:** contrasted to the rest of the house, this room is very tidy and clean. The bed is neatly made; the closet contains a set of identical ironed formal black suits; on the bedside table stands a single frame with the photo of a woman (JIM's mother). Behind the door hangs a coat; inside it, the Kids can find VICTOR's wallet, containing a few American dollars and Soviet rubles, and his DART ID card to access the Lake Geneva [Boulder City] Loop.
- **Laboratory:** this large room where VICTOR performed his experiments is occupied by a couple of desks piled up with books, notes, circuit sketches, electronic components, soldering tools, oscilloscopes, cables and plugs. The room is a real mess, hard to tread through. An adjacent storage room is lined with bookshelves filled with boxes and old electronic stuff. A roll on *INVESTIGATE* allows the Kids to spot on a lower shelf a non-descriptive CR-TV like device: the chronovisor!
- **Laundry:** a small dark room with limited illumination contains a heavy-duty washing machine and a dryer. Basket of dry clothes are left on the ground, used to hide a set of cable snaking through the room and disappearing under the washing machine. A trapdoor leading to the basement is hidden under the washing machine. It takes a roll on *FORCE* to move the appliance in order to open the way to the basement.
- **Basement:** the cramped and damp basement of the house can be accessed through a wooden ladder. No light has been installed, so the Kids need a flashlight or another source of light. The various cables coming down from the laundry gather into a single thick cord connected to a large electric box: this is the connection point of the house to the high-energy grid of the Loop. In a corner of the room a cardboard box contains a bunch of VHSes, among which are hidden a few chronorecordings.

### THE CHRONOVISOR

The chronovisor in VICTOR's room is controlled through a control panel with seven dials, as in Figure 3. The first four dials allow the user to adjust *year* (label *Y*), *month* (label *M* - the two leg strokes of *M* disappeared), *day* (label *d* - the back stroke of *d* disappeared), *hour* (no label) respectively; the fifth dial is meant to adjust

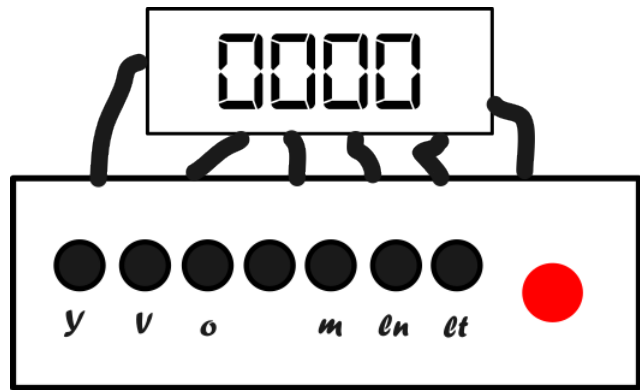


Figure 3: The control panel of the chronovisor.

*minutes* (label *m*), but it has never been configured. All time adjustments are added in reference to the present; thus, it is not possible to select a past date. The next two dials are used to select a place in terms of *longitude* (label *ln*) and *latitude* (label *lt*). Once all the parameters have been set, the red button is used to turn on the chronovisor.

Before hiding, VICTOR disposed of the exaphase adapter necessary to connect the chronovisor to the high-voltage electric grid of the Lake Geneva [Boulder City] Loop. Before being able to turn on the chronovisor, the Kids will then have to replace the exaphase plug.

### THE EXAPHASE PLUG

VICTOR has taken the exaphase plug with him and disposed of it during his journey to the DART premises. The only chance for the Kids to reactivate the chronovisor is therefore to reassemble a new exaphase plug. To do this, they can rely on the blueprint in JIM's room in Figure 4. A roll in *CALCULATE* allows the Kids to conclude that the sketch has all the details necessary to rebuild it. VICTOR has also left a few hand-written notes in Russian in the lower part: "I need six connectors!" together with the code "W-32L".

The exaphase plug can be almost completely rebuilt in VICTOR's laboratory with a roll on *TINKER*. However, the Kids will soon realize that a few key parts, the actual pins of the plug, are missing. These are the "W-32L" components highlighted on the sketch. Questioning some electronics hobbyist, or rolling on *CONTACTS*, brings up the suggestion to try Grigorii's DIY Store in South Lake Shore Drive [Nevada Highway].

### THE CHRONORECORDINGS

The chronorecordings are stored in a cardboard box alongside classic VHSes like *Karate Kid* or *E.T.* The actual chronorecordings are distinguishable because of a red luminescence

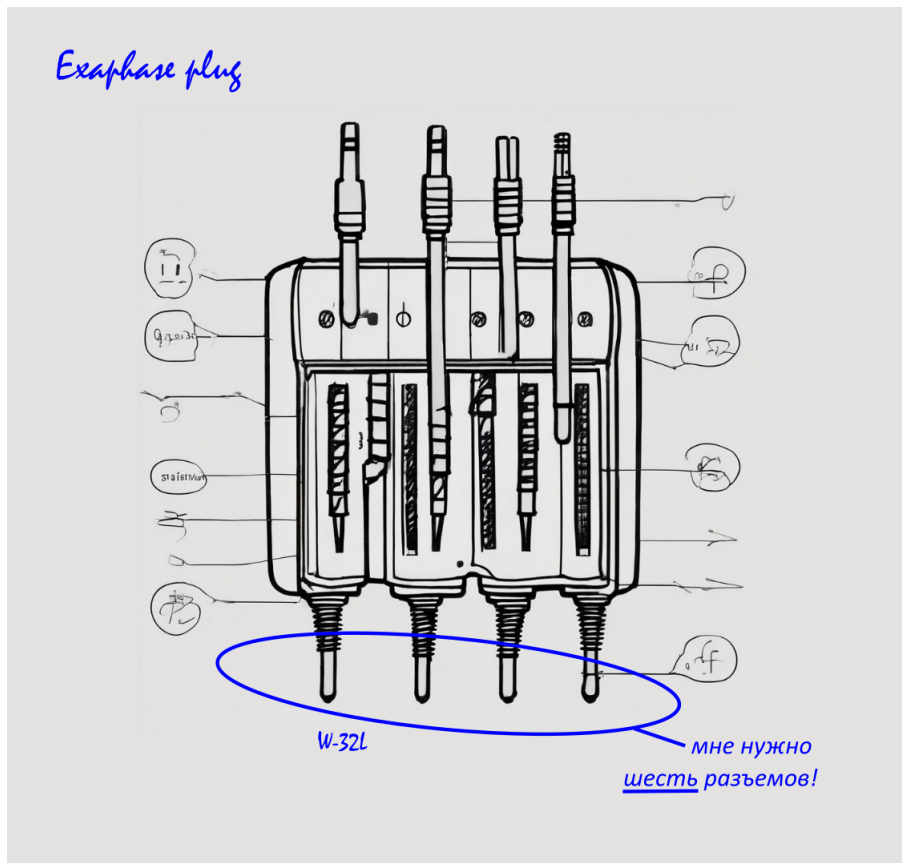


Figure 4: Sketch of the exaphase adapter plug.

they emit, and they are labeled with dates. A sheet of paper inserted in the box lists the chronorecordings (see Figure 5). The first three columns of the record report the time of the experiments run by VICTOR and reference the labels on the actual cassettes. The following seven columns are the parameters VICTOR set on the chronovisor. The recording of April 13th contains the projection of the history exam on May 24th; the recording highlighted in orange contains the recording of July 9th; all the recordings made on May 9th contains apocalyptic images, while the remaining ones show inconsequential scenes of everyday life in Lake Geneva [Boulder City].

### Location:GRIGORII's DIY Store

Located in South Lake Shore Drive [Nevada Highway], GRIGORII's DIY is the favorite shop of all the electronics aficionados in Lake Geneva [Boulder City], and probably the only store selling the unusual and exotic "W32-L" pin. Although not as far from the center like Como [Hemenway Park], reaching the neighborhood will require a bus journey or a long bike ride.

### THE TURF OF THE PITBULLS

It turns out that South Lake Shore Drive

[Nevada Highway] is also home to MOSES and his gang of bullies, the *Pitbulls*. This might be the occasion for a stealth sortie for the Kids, or the opportunity for a chase or a confrontation with the bullies. Members of the group might roam around the streets and notice the presence of the newcomer Kids. In case of an encounter, the bullies act territorially, and MOSES, in particular, behaves more aggressively than at school, since he is not restrained by any authority; he tries to intimidate the interlopers to leave and to scare them into never returning to his turf.

### THE STORE

An apparently run down building with a single window and a faded sign constitutes the entrance to GRIGORII's DIY store. The window itself is quite small, dusty and behind it a large cardboard advertises "Buy here your Macintosh 128K!"

Inside, chaos reigns supreme. Narrow and dark corridors are delimited by tall shelves loaded with any possible imaginable electronic component. Finding anything is a quest in itself, only the owner knows the arcane organization of the store. GRIGORII, a middle-aged short man with big brown moustaches, sits behind a counter transformed into a soldering table, where he is working on assembling a circuit.

## Observations and Experiments

			Y	M	D	H	M	L	L
Apr	2	23:58	0	0	1	12	-	42353399	88260487
Apr	4	23:34	0	0	2	10	-	42353300	88260487
Apr	5	23:38	0	0	15	8	-	42353352	88260487
Apr	8	23:42	0	0	15	8	-	42353316	88260485
Apr	12	23:57	0	1	0	10	-	42353328	88260486
Apr	13	23:44	0	1	11	10	-	42353321	88260487
Apr	15	23:20	0	1	0	10	-	42353321	88260488
Apr	16	23:45	0	1	5	13	-	42353321	88260489
Apr	18	23:34	0	0	10	8	-	42353321	88260490
Apr	22	23:45	0	0	6	8	-	42353321	88260491
Apr	26	23:56	0	0	3	8	-	42353325	88260485
Apr	27	23:55	0	0	2	8	-	42353335	88260470
Apr	29	23:49	0	1	10	8	-	42353421	88260483
May	1	23:55	0	1	8	8	-	42353621	88260488
May	2	23:47	0	1	7	8	-	42353350	88260487
May	3	23:50	0	1	6	8	-	42353355	88260486
May	5	23:51	0	1	4	8	-	42353330	88260477
May	8	23:44	1	0	0	10	-	42353332	88260500
May	9	23:42	0	8	0	10	-	42353324	88260486
		23:47	0	6	0	10	-	42353324	88260486
		23:52	0	4	0	10	-	42353324	88260486
		23:57	0	2	0	10	-	42353321	88260487
		00:02	0	2	0	11	-	42353321	88260487
		00:07	0	2	0	9	-	42353321	88260487
		00:12	0	2	0	10	-	42353321	88260487
		00:17	0	2	0	10	-	42353321	88260487
		00:12	0	2	0	10	-	40712700	74005900
		00:17	0	2	0	10	-	38541700	77005900
		00:22	0	2	0	10	-	34030000	118150000
		00:27	0	2	0	10	-	47363500	122195900
		00:32	0	2	0	10	-	54452100	37370200

Figure 5: Record of the experiments run by VICTOR with the chronovisor.

GRIGORII is happy to help young customers and potential electronics hobbyists, but he is also a tough negotiator. He has the six “W-32L” pins that the Kids are looking for, but, since they are rare out-of-production components, he sets the lofty price of 20\$ each. The Kid can then decide if they can afford this price, if they need to find more cash, or if they want to try to bargain.

### Countdown

During the Mystery a few external events may work as soft countdowns or obstacles motivating the Kids to act:

- **History exam:** the exam on Friday is the main deadline hanging over the head of the Kids. MR LANGSWORTH or other characters may be used to underline the importance of this test and remark the need for the Kids to acquire the answers.
- **Jim:** their new young friend might have an interest in recovering the chronovisor not only for getting the answer to the history exam, but also to learn more about the arrest of his father. He might therefore plead with the Kids to help him with his search.
- **The Pitbulls:** the group of bullies may constitute the main antagonist in the Mystery. They can at the same time act as a hindrance at school or in town, but they may also push the Kids towards the goal of acquiring the chronovisor as MOSES himself may take a personal interest in the possibility of cheating for its own sake.
- **Eastview Elementary School [Mitchell Elementary School]:** life at school might also offer countdowns and challenges for the Kids; MR LANGSWORTH or other teachers might request the Kids to take care of special tasks or set homeworks getting in the way of their plans.

## Finale

On the morning of Friday May 24th, the Kids will face the dreaded history exam. For some of them, the only way to pass the exam is by having obtained access to the questions and answers through the chronovisor.

To successfully view the future, the Kids must have retrieved the chronovisor in Victor’s lab, fixed the exaphase plug after buying the necessary six pins from GRIGORII’s DIY shop, and identified the correct chronorecording. Connecting the chronovisor to the high-energy grid in VICTOR’s home and inserting the correct

chronorecording allows the Kids to replay the future they want to observe.

### VIEWING MAY 24TH

Inserting the recording made on April 13th allows the Kids to view events on the morning of May 24th. The grainy black-and-white image on the screen shows the interior of a classroom in Eastview Elementary School [Mitchell Elementary School]. The camera slowly moves through the aisle in the room. Students are too blurry to be recognized, although some of the Kids may believe they see themselves there. Finally, the camera hovers over one of the desks and, suddenly in focus, it shows the content of the history exam. The Kids can easily take note of the questions and find the answers they need.

### HISTORY EXAM

On Friday May 24th, MR LANGSWORTH enters the classroom with a defiant smile, and starts handing out the tests. In his military fashion, he keeps a close eye on the students for the entire duration of the test; a very good roll on SNEAK is necessary if the Kids want to cheat in conventional ways.

If the Kids successfully viewed the chronorecording for May 24th, they immediately realize the exam is exactly what they have seen in the recording of the chronovisor! With that knowledge, they can score a perfect test, with no hint of cheating, to the utter surprise of MR LANGSWORTH!

## Aftermath

While using the chronovisor may have helped the Kids solve the practical problem of passing the history exam, the possibility of peeking into the future may lead the Kids to a disturbing discovery.

### VIEWING JULY 9TH

If the Kids decide to watch one of the chronorecordings from May 9th they will be confronted with apocalyptic images of a post-nuclear world; in particular, the chronorecording highlighted on the notes of VICTOR shows an atomic explosion taking place over Lake Geneva [Boulder City]. This will certainly cause a shock among the Kids - especially in light of the correct display of the history exam. The fateful event shown by the chronovisor can be the departing point for more mysteries in a longer campaign aimed at preventing the obliteration of the Kids’ hometown.

# NPC and Creatures

## ILYA SHTRUM / JIM RUSSEL

Born in the Soviet Union, Ilya Shtrum is the son of the Soviet scientist Viktor and Rebecca Waterstone, a British Foreign Office official who sadly died when Ilya was five. Ilya proved to be a gifted child, who inherited from his father an uncommon talent for the sciences. At six, he was selected to be sent to a special school for gifted children, but because of the recent trauma of the loss of the mother and because of his shyness, he failed to integrate and to thrive. In less than a year, his father took him out of the special school. After that experience, Viktor tried, without success, to send the son to different public schools, but at the end he spent most of the time homeschooling.

When the CIA exfiltrated Viktor's family to Lake Geneva [Boulder City], Ilya was given the new identity of JIM RUSSELL. His father suggested to him that this was the time to start a new life, and, dazzled by the life in the new American town, Jim too thought at the beginning that a new chapter could have been starting. He tried to socialize with his peers, but he was made fun by his peers because of his accent and foreign manners, and so he ended up shutting himself up at home, assisting his father in his experiments.

Things changed dramatically as his father got arrested by DART in May and he was given to the foster care of Ann Parker. The new caretaker believed that the solution to any character issue Jim might have had was through an orderly and common life. She therefore registered Jim at the local school and forced him to go there and try to integrate.

Jim has entered Eastview Elementary School [Mitchell Elementary School] with a mixture of anxiety and resignation. He does not like the idea of being at school with other mean kids, but, having lost both of his parents, he also does not feel like caring about what happens too much.

In the deep, though, he hopes to find some friends who could really relate to. Knowing about the upcoming history exam, and having access to the answers of the test through the chronovisor, he believes he may share this knowledge to earn some friends. Still, Jim is afraid to expose himself and his feelings, and will thus open very slowly to the Kids and reveal only what is strictly necessary. He might avoid answer some questions or lie about his past, not

to deceive the Kids, but because he might be afraid of being judged as an exam cheater, a Soviet immigrant, the son of an arrested criminal or just the owner of an incredible device.

## VIKTOR SHTRUM / VICTOR RUSSEL

Viktor Shtrum was one of the most brilliant physicists and scientists in the Soviet Union. During his private research, he devised a machine able to gaze directly into the future. He named the device the chronovisor, and he presented it to a few other colleagues. Unfortunately, instead of winning their recognition, his success engendered jealousy and enmity, and soon his work was censored by the Party. American infiltrates, recognizing the talent of Viktor, took advantage of his fall from grace to offer him and his family refuge in the US.

In Lake Geneva [Boulder City], Viktor Shtrum changed his identity to Victor Russel and was hired by DART to pursue his studies, although under strict conditions. These restraints led him to continue his tests on the chronovisor at home, tapping into the power of the Loop and running his experiments at night.

Despite his dedication to work, Victor cares enormously for Jim: he spends time with his son, he tries to nurture his talent and tries to help him cope with the new environment. The development of the chronorecorder, in particular, was a joint project that brought the two closer together.

## ANN PARKER

Ann Parker is a forty-something employee of the Lake Geneva [Boulder City] Town Hall. She works in the social service department, and volunteers as a short-time foster carer for children in need. When the Lake Geneva [Boulder City] Police Department was delivered Jim after the arrest of his father, Ann stepped forward to take care of the kid while waiting for a more permanent solution.

Ann has been working with abandoned or troubling kids before, and she believes in a rigorous approach that could provide a clear regimen to a kid in need of guidance and reference. Therefore, she tries to enforce a rigid schedule with Jim, taking him in and out of school, supervising his homework, restricting his access to TV and play, having meals at set times. Although she is going to do all this out of good faith, her governance severely restricts the freedom of Jim.

## MR LANGSWORTH

A former non-commissioned officer, Mr Langsworth is the history teacher of the Kids. He is a very stern teacher, who believes in his task of educating his pupils about American history and instilling in them pride in their national tradition. In his class, he requires attention and silence; he does not tolerate cheating or ignoring homeworks. He is, however, also a fair teacher, ready to recognize the efforts and the achievements of his pupils. His character is reinforced by the distinctive military jargon he has kept from his service years.

### C-ODIN

A small magnetron robot with a cylindrical body and small wheels, C-Odin was built by Victor as an assistant during his research on the chronovisor. C-Odin has high-level computational and reasoning capabilities and it has helped his creator in figuring out the physics of time and designing the chronovisor.

Since the move to the US, C-Odin has remained packaged away in a box in the garage. His wheels, his motors and his actuators are slightly rusty, but functioning. His memory is still intact, and the Kids could learn from it how to operate the chronovisor. However, since it has been off for the last month, C-Odin is not aware of the latest developments of Victor's research and therefore has no knowledge about the exaphase plug or the chronorecorder.

### MOSES BARTER

Tall and robust, Moses is the local bully of Eastview Elementary School [Mitchell Elementary School]. He hates school (he has been failed and kept behind twice) and detest whoever seems to enjoy their time. He finds his gratification in pushing around littler and younger kids, although he tends to avoid clashing with school authorities - he does not want further problems and be kept behind again!

He acts as the leader of a small gang of other kids from the rougher area of South Lake Shore Drive [Nevada Highway]. The group calls themselves the *Pitbulls*, and they enjoy walking around the neighborhood and claiming ownership of the place. They sometime annoy other kids visiting, in few instances beating them.

### GRIGORII

Of Kazakh descent, Grigorii is the son of an immigrants who moved to Lake Geneva [Boulder City] in the late 1940s. Grigorii inherited the passion for electronics and the business now named *Grigorii's DIY store* from his father. The shop was opened in 1962 as a small electronic

retailer, but under Grigorii it has become a small emporium offering the widest selection of electronics components in Lake Geneva [Boulder City]; although the place might look like a messy storage site, Grigorii can virtually find any electronic component on its shelves and explain its purpose.

He is often willing to help customers and give suggestions, but he has an aggressive business sense. Most of the items in the store have no price tag, and he has no shame in setting a high price in order to secure a significant margin.

# Appendix

## Calendar

All events in this Mystery take place in 1985.

**Feb** VICTOR and JIM arrive in Lake Geneva [Boulder City]. VICTOR is hired at the Loop.

**Mar** VICTOR develops the exaphase plug.

**Apr** VICTOR and JIM build the chronorecorder.

**May 10, Fri** VICTOR is arrested.

**May 12, Sun** JIM is taken into care by ANN.

**May 20, Mon** First day of the Mystery.

**May 24, Fri** History exam.

**Jul 9, Fri** Nuclear explosion.

## Disclaimers, References and Sources of Inspiration

The following sources have been references and sources of inspiration for this Mystery:

- The idea of the chronovisor is inspired by Beyond the Infinite Two Minutes.
- The name of VIKTOR SHTRUM is taken from *Stalingrad* by Vasily Grossman.
- The Lake Geneva maps has been taken from Bing Maps and Open Street Maps.
- The house plans are modified versions of house plans from Perry Homes Utah.
- The image of the exaphase plug was generated using SketchBot2\_0 with prompt “A technical sketch of a plug with six pins”.
- The video of the July 9th recording showing a nuclear explosion (<https://youtu.be/8ctXkJJ2sIA>) is clip cut from the video “One world or none” at the Library of Congress (<https://www.loc.gov/item/2018601242/>).

Although the background may involve real places, all the characters and the events presented in the module remain purely fictional.

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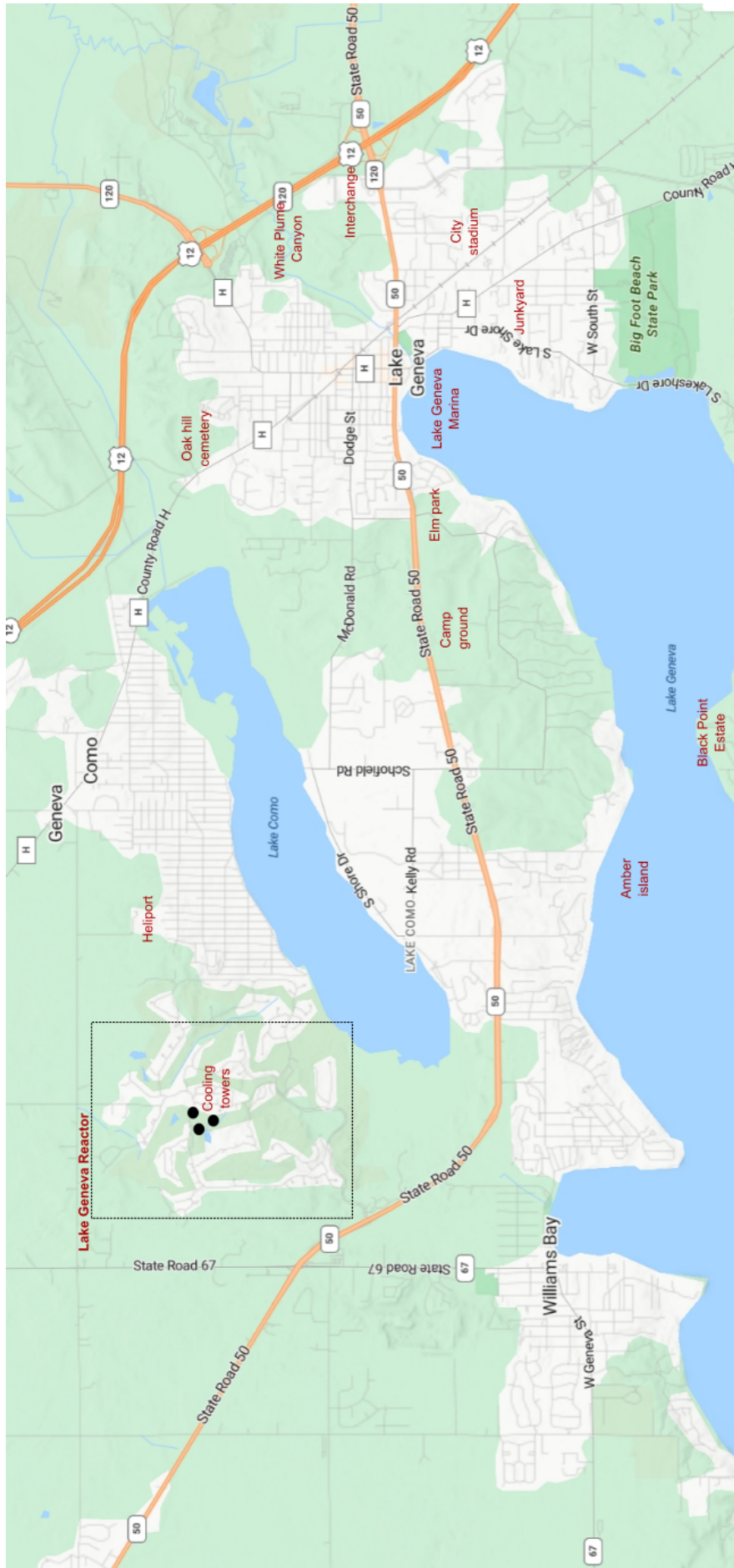


Figure 6: Map of Lake Geneva.





Figure 7: Map of Lake Geneva. South of Main Street.



Figure 8: Map of Lake Geneva. North of Main Street.