

The Paradigm Discourses

“Bingo Bos”

Murphy's law was propounded by another man of the same name.

– Nagler's Comment

“BINGO.”

Paradigm had given up on the game long ago. He was sitting on the windowsill torn between watching the antics of the team or enjoying the last moments of a great sunset. Photons were one of the Realm's best inventions. People...endlessly fascinating.

Curiosity rotated the huge wire drum several times, pulled out a random tile and announced the number on it. A few seconds of mad scrambling by the remaining diehards, then silence. She repeated the process for the umpteenth time.

Mathematics wandered over; he too had tired of the game. “Randomness and statistics, two of my favorite subjects. Interesting randomizer she brought, that wire drum does a pretty good job of making us lose track of where the numbered tiles are.”

Paradigm turned and looked at Mathematics, long enough to make him nervous. Finally, “What did you say?”

“It's a good randomizer.”

“No, no, not that part. The lose track of part.” Paradigm leaned in.

“Ah, well the purpose of a randomizer is to simulate randomness. If you could track where a particular tile of interest was, you could reach inside and select it. So much for randomness. I know you get this, but you have that look on your face as if Epiphany had just glided into the room.”

“Yeah, I do seem a bit smitten by her.” Mathematics glanced over at Curiosity, but Paradigm didn't notice.

Paradigm pressed on, trying to dredge up a memory from some long-ago class. He looked at Mathematics again, while he thought. When he finally couldn't take it anymore, Mathematics intruded on Paradigm's internal processing, “You've thought of something, haven't you?”

Paradigm nodded. “Given two balanced classical coins, flip them at the same time. What are the odds?”

“That *you* have two classical coins, probably pretty low.” He grinned, getting one up on Paradigm was an event to cherish.

Paradigm's retort was fast, “If Reason had uttered that query, your quip would have been if they were ‘well balanced’.” That elicited a laugh from both.

“Ok, ok, I'll answer your question, four possible outcomes, equally likely, 25% chance of each, 50% chance the coins will match, 50% chance they won't. You could try a more challenging question, Paradigm, this is what I do for a living.”

“I know, and I will, right now. Same question...but for quantum coins.” He let that question hang in the air. Now it was Mathematics turn to stare into space while the mental machinery went to work.

Eventually, Mathematics responded, slowly, like the words were working their way out of taffy, “Distinguishable or indistinguishable?”

Paradigm just raised his eyebrows.

“Oh shit.”

“Grab a stack of envelopes and a bucket of coins, I’m going to steal Curiosity’s wire drum.”