



Go for the Golden!

Sometimes, when sitting down to write one of these stories, I have to look over my list of story ideas, but on other occasions, that isn't necessary at all - the story jumps up and begs ... write me, write me! ... And so it is today. I have to write about something that happened to me on the day that I wrote the previous story (about my daughter and insects).

Without trying to dramatize this overly, let me simply lay out the sequence of events. I wrote the story, including a short episode that described a children's encyclopedia set that was in our house more than 50 years ago, and which I have not seen in the intervening years, and then went to bed. At this point, the story was not published, but existed only in my own computer. The next morning, among the emails that populated my inbox was one from friend and collector Jacques Commandeur, who lives in the Netherlands. Attached was [a photograph](#) which showed my current print set on display in one room of his home. (I had requested such photos from the collectors some time ago, for display on my website.)

Jacques owns a number of books on prints and printmaking, and as he knew that these would be of great interest to me, he included in the photo a nearby large bookcase, stretching from floor to ceiling, full of books on printmaking (along with some tools and supplies). I was indeed interested in these, but what caught my eye first were not any of the print books, but a set of 16 books in a row - a bit blurred in the image - right up at the top of the bookcase, the place you might normally put books that are not in regular daily use, but which you want to keep visible and in your mind.

Do you see what has happened? Yes, the set of books in Jacques' photograph is the same set of books about which I had written my story the night before, and which I haven't seen in more than half a century. Here they were again, coming back to me two days in a row - this time in a 'random' snapshot taken on the other side of the planet! This seems coincidental beyond belief!

Now I'm not a complete dunce at mathematics, and have a basic layman's overview of statistics, as well as some psychology, so I understand quite clearly what has happened here. I have allowed to pass without notice the vast number of occasions when a friend sent me a photo that *didn't* contain such an interesting synchronicity. I am simply *selecting* this one that did, and being fooled by that into thinking 'What an amazing coincidence! This is completely impossible!'

When a golf ball lands on a blade of grass on the fairway, what an incredibly rare chance it is - to land on *that* particular blade of grass! But of course it *must* land somewhere - the trick would come if you were to try and choose in *advance* on which blade!

But even though I know this background on how a 'coincidence' works, it still remains astonishing. For my friend Jacques to have owned the same set of books, to be trying out a new camera just now, to have decided to shoot the photo in a different room from where he would normally have taken it (he said in a letter, "Actually, this is not the room where I normally display your prints"), and for him to have sent it to me the very week (the very day!) that I prepared that particular story out of all the hundreds that I have written ... It just seems completely impossible that such a thing could happen.

All is not perfect though, as the gods who arrange such coincidences slipped up a bit along the way this time! My set was 'The Golden Book Encyclopedia', but Jacques' is the 'Encyclopédie Du Livre D'or' ... the French edition.

So, no coincidence at all, really. :-)