

Schrödinger's Cat

by

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(c) For the Dec 2024 challenge

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FADE IN:

EXT. SACRED SOUL HOSPITAL - DAY

The large old white building embraces the majestic gardens that surround it. Many are sensory - bright colors, forms and textures, some are perfumed flowers, others are herbs.

We sweep inside.

INT. SACRED SOUL HOSPITAL - DAY

There are a great number of large windows allowing sunlight into the airy corridors and patient rooms of this bustling building.

We move to the far end of a corridor, away from the action to pause outside an end room that's almost an afterthought.

INT. ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Faded threadbare curtains are pulled across a small fanlight window. A few rays of sunlight play across the inert face of DAVID 40's, as he sits propped up and motionless within the high sided hospital bed.

His unfaltering gaze is upon a machine at the end of his bed. Moving closer, this machine resembles an old valve Cathode ray television. Both man and machine appear inert.

On a small side table (the only furniture) an iPhone's red LED is on, signalling that it is recording.

INT. HOSPITAL BED - DAVID'S POV - CONTINUOUS

DAVID

Is it OK to start?

The TV screen is awash with static. David flips up the bottom of his bedsheet so that it hooks over the screen obscuring it from his direct gaze. On the TV ERWIN Schrödinger replies.

ERWIN

I'm ready.

DAVID

Welcome to today's Twilight Phone. I'm talking to the Austrian physicist Erwin Schrödinger about his infamous Cat thought experiment.

ERWIN

Thanks for having me, David. It's great to be here.

DAVID

You're most welcome. Let's get straight to it. Why?

ERWIN

It's to illustrate a paradox of quantum superposition wherein a hypothetical cat is considered both alive and dead simultaneously because its fate is linked to a random event that may -  
(beat)  
- or may not, occur.

DAVID

I know how that poor cat feels.

ERWIN

Believe me - so do I.

Possibly some canned laughter comes from the TV - that or more static. . .

DAVID

So both alive and dead?

ERWIN

In quantum mechanics terms, the cat's ability to be in an ambiguous state of both alive and dead until it's observed - when someone opens the box - is referred to as quantum indeterminacy or the observer's paradox. This paradox states that an event or the simple act of observation can affect the outcome. The cat remains in an unknown state until they open the box to SEE if the cat is dead or alive with 100 percent certainty.

DAVID

It's safe if you don't look?

ERWIN

Maybe? It's BOTH until you look and the very act of LOOKING can change the outcome.

DAVID

That's just weird. .

ERWIN

Being both alive and dead is effectively a quantum superposition state.

DAVID

I'd say it's hedging your bets.

More some canned laughter comes from the TV.

ERWIN

Some people also use Schrödinger's Cat to talk more philosophically about how the thought experiment can be extended to other situations in life. Let's say you meet your friend for a night out and you're both unsure about what to have for dinner. Until you decide, it's every option that can exist where you and your friend are. From this perspective people think that everything in life is "quantum" because until the future is shown, it technically exists in a state of superposition of all possible scenarios.

DAVID

Yes to everything on the menu!

ERWIN

The most commonly used set of solutions is ALL possible solutions. This is known as Hilbert space.

DAVID

My brain's gonna explode!

ERWIN

You wanna get really freaky?

DAVID

Er, OK.

ERWIN

Light is a particle . . . and a wave. It remains in superposition until we observe it in a specific way.

(MORE)

ERWIN(cont'd)

If we look at light as rays coming from a lamp, we see light's particle behavior but in the double slit experiment, we observe light's wave behavior.

DAVID

So it depends on HOW you look at it?

ERWIN

Yes. As the light goes through the two small slits, you'll expect to see two slit-shaped light patterns on the far wall. That's not what happens. Instead, we see three light waves appear on the wall instead. Even though the light particles are photons, they are also a wave. When the light waves go through the slits, that wave breaks and forms patterns of peaks and troughs, observed on the back wall.

DAVID

Waves that reinforce and waves that cancel each other out.

ERWIN

You got it!

DAVID

All or nothing - particles versus waves. You heard it here folks. Erwin you've been great.

ERWIN

Thanks David. Any time.

DAVID

You've been watching Twilight Phone.  
(beat)  
And out -

INT. ROOM - DUSK

Faded threadbare curtains are pulled across a small fanlight window. The dying rays of sunlight play across the inert face of DAVID 40's, as he sits propped up and motionless within the high sided hospital bed.

A DOCTOR and NURSE enter.

NURSE

It's so drab in here.

DOCTOR

Doesn't matter. He's locked in.

NURSE

That's his syndrome. David's not brain dead.

DOCTOR

Might be better if he was. Poor chap.

The Doctor checks David's charts. The Nurse fixes David's bed, pulling the sheet from the old TV (which is inert). She rustles the sheet to gain the Doctor's attention.

NURSE

How'd he do this?

The Doctor looks from the sheet to the moving faded curtains.

DOCTOR

Must have been the wind.

He puts down David's charts and goes to the iPhone. He stops the recording.

DOCTOR

Let's check.

They both regard the phone as he plays back the beginning.

ON IPHONE SCREEN:-

David in bed, staring yet seeing nothing on his blank TV.

NURSE

Why the TV?

DOCTOR

That has to stay. It's in his notes. Doesn't say it has to be on.

NURSE

Wonder what he'd watch?

DOCTOR

Anything but FOX !  
(indicating the phone)  
This needs a recharge.

He slips it into his back pocket. The Nurse and Doctor turn and leave.

INT. HOSPITAL CORRIDOR - MOMENTS LATER

The Nurse and Doctor walk away from the camera.

NURSE  
You eating out tonight?

DOCTOR  
Nooo! Thursday's meatloaf. You?

NURSE  
I fancy Mac and cheese.

DOCTOR  
Home made?

NURSE  
In your dreams!

The Doctor raises his hands in submission.

DOCTOR  
I'm only asking.

The iPhone is still playing back. Unseen by them, there's a flicker from the pocketed phone. We move in close -

The audio is barely perceptible -

ERWIN  
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(beat)  
- or may not, occur.

DAVID  
I know how that poor cat feels.

ERWIN  
Believe me - so do I.

Some canned laughter. . .

DAVID  
So both alive and dead?

FADE TO BLACK.