*Born Digital Microfiction Contest 2026*
*– Shortlisted Stories*

# Making Sure That It's You

By Jennifer Schloske (University of Stuttgart)

It's watching me again.

Hi.

A small light flickers, blinks, tick-tick-tick-ticks so eagerly in the quiet of my home and it's telling me that

It's watching me again.

*Making sure that it's you.*

I try to look as unobtrusively myself as I can. Straight back, no smile, no frown. It didn't mind the sudden change of glasses two weeks ago but I know that it really, really does not like my teeth.

A blinking eye on the screen tells me what it's doing – mapping nose, lip, lip, eye, eye, cheek, cheek, chin – and piecing together whether this assembly of flesh and pores and hair and sebum is me.

Thank you for giving me this assurance every time we see each other.

I wonder how you're so certain about me, but I lean forward, eagerly awaiting the euphoria of your *Welcome!,* of the clean, synthetic promise that I am I am I am I, that all it takes for me to be me is my unwashed face and a toothless smile.

Because outside, when I am made to interact after days of silence, I do not recognise myself. I forget how my voice sounds. I forget how I make it from my doorstep to the bus. I look through the pavement when I try to watch myself walk. I lock eyes with one of you and wonder if you think I look worn out. Sometimes I hope you do. Maybe one of you even knows why I can't feel my arms and legs on my way home.

So please – welcome me back to myself.

*Try moving closer to the camera.*
Sure thing.
*Making sure that it's you.*
Please do.
Try moving closer to the camera.

Please.

You know me.

*Recognition failed.*