

Through The Looking-Glass
Curt Eriksen

I began to suspect that someone was on the other end when my portable computer started taking so long to shut down. I'd switch it off and start putting things away, tidying up in my room, and when I went to fold the screen the little blue light that indicates that the camera is watching would still be on. I'd leave the room and come back and it'd still be shining, a tiny but bright sapphire eye, built into the middle of the casing right above the screen, and after a while I grew self-conscious. I'd close the notebook and unplug the machine and the next time I opened it again the little blue light would still be shining. I'd run the battery down to nothing and leave it for a while, but the next time I plugged it in the light would snap on again. I asked them about it in the service department of the store where I bought the computer, and since the warranty was still good and I kept coming back and insisting so much, even losing my temper on one occasion, they reluctantly admitted the computer into the shop where they took it apart and put it together again at least half a dozen times. But the little blue light wouldn't go out. They changed the bulb and when that didn't work they removed the chip—the software and driver were long gone by then—but the light was still on. Finally they took it from me and gave me another computer, just to get rid of me, and I heard later through a friend who temped there that summer that they beat my old computer up with a hammer and salvaged what they could while incinerating the rest.

But the strange thing is, ever since I took the new computer out of the box and booted it up for the first time, that same jewel-blue eye has been winking on and off, letting me know that the moment I ask to take a look inside, she'll be staring back at me.

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