

# Put Down Your Metallic Rectangle

poetry and [music](#) by Chris Liu

I have a metallic rectangle  
And it has a pair of glittering eyes  
They admire my frowns and smiles  
They flew with me overseas to Lynbrook High

My rectangle is a magical sailboat  
It teleports me across the World Wide Web  
I sail to my grandparents  
7,000 miles across the globe  
They wave back watching TV on a queen-sized bed

One day, I awoke to the sound of crackling metal  
What's wrong with my rectangle?!  
It was rumbling  
Squeaking  
Growling  
Ringing  
Its glaring eyeballs flickered with murder  
As my rectangle mutated into a metallic monster  
(*growl*) Good morning, it croaked  
(*squeal*) Good—good morning  
Then it swallowed me whole

(*dissonant chord*) Aaaah! AAAH!!  
(*chromatic scale down*) What's going on? Ow! What happened to my rectangle?  
Who's that monster? Ow! Why? Where am I? (*music stops*)  
(*tentative*) Where am I?

(*dissonant arpeggios*) Shiny orbs emerged from behind the rubble  
Some flashed orange, while others glowed emerald  
They clustered into hearts, paper airplanes (*music stops*)  
And speech bubbles?  
It was Instagram!  
(*arpeggios*) Oh, hi [*audience member*]

Could you help me get out of... whatever creature my rectangle turned into?  
(*music stops*) (*notification sound effect*) [*audience member*] *liked your message.*

(*brawl stars intro music*) What is that about?  
(*arpeggios*) Bushes shot out of the earth that turned into the color of clay  
Concealing me from enemy gunfire and hidden pathways  
Gadgets, gears, and hypercharges right in the middle of the play  
Balls flew across the field (*music stops*)  
As I clumsily backed away  
Brawl Stars?  
(*arpeggios*) Help! [*audience member*]  
I have low health! Could you heal me and help me escape this monster?  
(*music stops*) (*moan and brawl stars defeat sound effect*)

(*song intro music*)  
(*sing*) When did I lose my smile?  
When did I lose my heart?  
To a cheeky avatar and a frivolous profile

Why did I hide myself?  
Why did I shoot my friends?  
For adrenaline and a haunting trophy on the shelf

I wish to break out of this gloomy capsule  
To roam this world and rediscover my soul

I wish to hug my friends and say I'm lucky to have you  
So let me put down my metallic rectangle

(*emotionally*) Everybody, sing after me!  
Put it down!  
I'm grateful  
To be alive  
In this world

(*trumpet solo*)

(*emotionally*) Now turn to your table partners and say:  
Put it away!

Because  
I love you  
As a friend

*(trumpet solo)*

*(background music playing softly)*

There is no doubt that electronic device overuse and doom-scrolling are urgent issues yet to be solved. As adolescents, we're particularly prone to being addicted to the intermittent rewards we get from checking our devices because our neural pathways are still in development. Interestingly, recent research has also established a connection between device overuse and declining empathy. In other words, one reason we periodically check our devices is that we are expecting a text message, or a "like", from a loved one. But can that replace face-to-face interactions? Data from a survey with German and Chinese participants show that in both countries, people still overwhelmingly prefer getting a hug for social support rather than seeing smiley faces on screens. So let us get off our devices and tell our friends how grateful we are to be in this world and have each other for support.

*(music fades out)*

This metallic rectangle is called a phone  
And let's put it down even if we are to moan  
Social media, games, we love the feeling of home  
But we won't be home if we're alone