Topic: Losing Self-Control

Pictures given: a game console, a balanced diet, an unhappy man

"Ah!" A shriek came from the living room. Nigel raced down the stairs and into the living room. His mother was hunched over her laptop, one hand clamped over her mouth, so still that Nigel stopped dead in the doorway. On the screen was her credit card bill for the month.

"Twelve thousand dollars," she muttered, her voice trembling with rage. Nigel's face drained of colour. Oh no.

One month ago…

"Nigel! Check out this new game, Mythomagic!" his friend, Derrick, exclaimed when Nigel arrived at school. Mythomagic was a new game that had taken the world by storm. Players controlled a team of characters to fight endless waves of monsters. The game also included a 'Gacha' system so that players could always roll for new characters. The more he talked about it, the more intriguing the game sounded to Nigel.

"I'm currently in the top 1,000 in the world!" Derrick announced.

"Derrick, you play Mythomagic too? I am in the top twenty in the world!" boasted Dan as he smirked at them. Dan began sharing tips on how to play like a professional. His holier-than-thou attitude grated on Nigel's nerves and Nigel was determined to outshine him.

Once home, Nigel downloaded the game. His eyes were drawn to the 'Store' button like a moth to a flame. Scrolling through the packs available, Nigel lit up when he saw a beginner pack. It only cost a few dollars! Without hesitation, Nigel purchased it before burning through his in-game currency on new characters and weapons.

The following day, he showed off his new 'SS' ranked characters – one of the best characters in the game to his friends. When they got excited for him, Nigel's grin flashed as brightly as the sun. Within days, Mythomagic occupied every corner of Nigel's brain. However, the free-to-play characters and weapons paled in comparison to the 'SS' rank ones, and it was not long before the currency packs began to grow more expensive. Derrick and Dan both received far larger allowances than Nigel, so

the next pack was only ever a tap away for them. Nigel had to count what was left in his wallet first, then dig deeper into his savings, until one afternoon there was nothing left to dig into. That was the turning point that sealed his fate…

"Ten new 'SSS' rank characters available next season! Get them in the shop today!" the notification on Nigel's phone read.

Nigel gasped. Dan would have them by morning. I have to get them first! Nigel scrolled through the shop until he found them. His jaw dropped. The cost of each character was 1,000 currency points. That meant a thousand dollars of real money for one character. Where am I supposed to get that kind of money? His thoughts raced. That was when three words appeared in his mind: Mother's credit card.

Blinded by greed, he lost all self-restraint. Nigel dashed to her wallet and fished out the credit card. Just as he was about to enter the credit card details, guilt twisted in his stomach. This is not my money. I should be exercising self-control instead of impulsively buying things! If Mother finds out, I'm doomed! However, the allure of the new characters was simply too great to resist. His resolve to be honest crumbled to dust and Nigel clicked the 'Buy' button.

The statement arrived at the end of the month. That was the shriek that had sent Nigel racing down the stairs.

"I'm sure I only spent two thousand dollars! What is this? A $10,000 payment to Nexan Corp?" Nigel's face flushed scarlet. That was the company behind Mythomagic.

He stammered, "Mother, it…it was me… I spent it…on a game…"

Steam began billowing out of her ears. "Nigel, I'll deal with you later. Right now, I need to call the bank."

Fortunately, the bank was able to cancel the payment and the in-game purchase. Every cent Nigel had spent was refunded. However, as punishment, Nigel's devices were all confiscated and he had no choice but to delete all of his gaming accounts.

Seeing the look of rage and disappointment on his mother's face, Nigel realised the extent of his folly. A game he had first downloaded for fun had seized control of his

life and led him down a dangerous spiral. If only he had continued playing it just for leisure. If only he had not bought that first beginner pack. If only he had not lost his self-control.

Lucas, P6