\*Discuss an accomplishment, event, or realization that sparked a period of personal growth and a new understanding of yourself or others. (1,250 - 3,250 characters, approx. 250 - 650 words).

My mansion’s double door entrance opened as I walked towards the hallway, passed my dining room, son’s room, master bedroom, and finally my living room. I turned left and passed my DJ booth before pondering my life choices on my massage chair. That is a day in my life of playing The Sims.

Gaming might be something I have in common with millions of other people, but this particular game is different. When I play The Sims, I call the shots. I can create the virtual version of myself, who lived a fantasy life of luxury that the real me could only dream of. I was committed to making sure my characters could live their lives to the fullest. I gave them a luxurious two-story mansion, a college education, and a perfect wealthy family.

As time went on, several friendships and relationships ended because I was spending too much time playing the Sims and spending less time with the people around me. I didn’t mind at first, until my then-boyfriend broke up with me because I was too obsessed with the game. It then dawned upon me on the fallacies of my life’s focus: I was more focused on perfecting a virtual life that does not even exist rather than pursuing the milestones that would make my real life the best version possible.

“Why was I so obsessed with this game?” I ask myself as I hit the existential crisis of my teenage life and try to break down the reason for my obsession.

The answer was right there: it boosted my confidence. I was able to do and own anything. I didn’t need to think twice before clicking on any actions in this game. This level of confidence that I had in The Sims was one I never really had in real life. In this game, it was as if I was a God and these little people followed whatever I set them out to do. In real life, I’d be scared to make any wrong decisions. But in The Sims, I’d do any actions in a heartbeat because I can easily switch characters once things go wrong with the current character I was playing with.

After this epiphany, I have now realized my problem. However, I still couldn’t get over the hurdle of getting past my virtual life and taking the leap to start making a difference in my actual life. Feeling conflicted and stuck, I decided to seek advice from my father about this.

“My dear, nothing in life should be feared, it should be understood”, those words struck me as he continued on about how life still goes on no matter what. His words assured me that what’s happening in real life is not as bad as I thought because my family will always be there to support me. With his words deeply engraved in my mind, I started having clearer life goals and, thus, the courage to start pursuing them. This was the beginning of an era for me: an era of a new awakening and understanding of myself.

Ever since, I have slowly changed the way I spend my time. I gradually started leaving the computer screen and living in reality instead. Although I’m back to level 1 in my real life, I am taking baby steps to eventually reach the top without going too fast just like how I started off from nothing in The Sims.

Time can’t be bought, not even on The Sims. Starting this application and finally following my dream regardless of whether I think it was scary or not is a giant leap in the right direction. Learning from the past and this game, I’d never use excuses to escape reality and take the steps to claim the life I deserve.