The Funko Pop Convention

Melissa Paulsen
A man’s overly enthusiastic voice advertised through the car radio: *The annual Funko Pop convention is coming to the San Diego Convention Center; don’t forget we’ll be revealing this year’s limited-edition figurine, and one lucky fan will be going home with it. You won’t want to miss out!* The *annual Funko Pop convention, coming near you on March 17th!*

Lydia lowered the radio as Macey wiggled in the cloth passenger seat of Lydia’s Subaru. Flashing her sister a smile so wide it revealed the pink bands of her braces Macey said, “I’m so happy we scored tickets. I feel like I’m about to explode.”

Lydia nodded, listening more to the *splat splat* of San Diego rain and the latest song by Drake rather than her sister, who continued to list the Funko Pops she hoped to collect. Lydia stared at the orange Tesla in front of her. She narrowed her eyes and increased the speed of the windshield wiper. Southern California was practically the sunniest place on earth, so why the hell was it raining now?

“Ursula is my favorite Disney villain, so her of course, and then there are the Dragon Ball Z characters which are cool—”

A driver in an old ’69 Mustang cut Lydia off. She slammed on the brakes, swearing under her breath. Macey rambled on about Funko Pops, unfazed by the pandemonious California traffic.

“—I wonder if they’ve made any Spongebob Funko Pops yet? I heard that they recently released a new cereal character line, you know, like Captain Crunch and the orange bird from the Cocoa Puffs box? Lydia, are you even listening to me?”

Lydia spoke without thinking, “I’m trying to get us there in one piece, I have better things to worry about than freaking Funko Pops. I don’t understand why you like those creepy things so much, with their oversized heads and beady black eyes.”

Macey’s body went rigid. A red corvette blurred by in the next lane over. Peering out of the corner of her eye, Lydia saw that Macey was crying. Crap.

Often Lydia forgot that her little sister was only eleven years old, focused on the latest obsession rather than worrying about bills to pay or jackass drivers in the other lanes. Lydia softened her voice, “Macey, I’m sorry. I didn’t mean it. I’m excited about going to the Funko Pop convention with you; I bought the tickets for your birthday, remember? I know how happy those figurines make you.”

“Yeah,” Macey pulled a tissue out of the glove compartment and wiped her eyes. After a moment she said, “I didn’t like that you spoiled the surprise, but now I’m excited to hunt for rare Funko Pops, like the Loch Ness Monster. Will you help me find it, Lydia?”

“Of course I will.”

Macey smiled. “What are the odds that the convention is on my actual birthday?”

“Pretty crazy.”

“I know, right?”

Lydia imagined the joy etched into her sister’s beautiful face as she beheld row after row of Funko Pops. Macey’s obsession started on her ninth birthday, when Lydia bought her a Princess Bubblegum Funko Pop from their favorite cartoon, *Adventure Time.*

“So, Mace, what’s your favorite Funko Pop that you own?” asked Lydia as she hit the defroster button. The windows were steaming up from their conversation.

“You know that’s a hard question for me.”

“Well, think about it; we still have a half hour until we’re at the convention center anyways.”

As Macey began to yank out various Funko Pops from her backpack, Lydia exhaled through her nose. Keeping her eyes focused on the road, she switched her thoughts to earlier that morning when the two of them were getting ready for the Funko Pop convention. She and Macey bobbed their heads to Post Malone while Lydia brushed Macey’s sleek hair. Macey played with Princess Bubblegum as a distraction from the pain of tangles.

Lydia’s eyes drifted from the road to Macey for a moment. Macey was thoughtfully tapping her index finger on the heads of her Funko Pops and staring out the passenger-side window. Lydia was eight years old when her mother brought Macey home from the hospital. *Remember, it’s your job as her big sister to keep Macey safe,* her mother had told her. Lydia stared down at the still bundle in her mother’s arms, swaddled in a periwinkle-colored blanket. Lydia had set her hand on top of Macey’s head and told her she loved her. Macey cooed in delight. *Look at that Lydia, she already loves you too.*

Lydia switched lanes, passing the orange Tesla. She let Macey’s voice, laced with Funko Pop passion, float around in her head.

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“—so yeah, that’s why I think it’s my favorite Funko Pop. It always makes me smile. I also really like—gosh this is hard—why did you ask me this question? I also really like…”

Due to traffic it took an extra half hour for the girls to arrive at the San Diego Convention Center.

“Oh my God! We’re finally here!” said Macey, her blue eyes wide. Lydia had to tell her to wait by the car and not to run off immediately into the building. Lydia scooped up her brown purse from the backseat, checked that she had her phone, asked Macey for the fifth time if she had her phone, and pulled out the paper ticket stubs.

“Stay close, remember?” said Lydia. She handed Macey her ticket.

Together the girls walked towards the convention center. The sun began to peek out from beneath the clouds, reflecting off the aqua-colored roof tiles.

“Over 6,000 square feet of Funko Pops,” said Macey. Lydia rolled her eyes but couldn’t help smiling at her little sister’s enthusiasm as they entered through the glass double doors.

A shaky old woman wearing a black polo shirt with the words “STAFF” printed on it slowly scanned the girls’ tickets. Lydia tried not to breathe too hard, her anxiety causing her breaths to come in short bursts. Lydia gripped Macey’s sweaty hand as they entered the convention and heard her gasp. The bustling scene spread out in front of them overwhelmed Lydia.

A tsunami of voices assaulted her ears and she stared at rows upon rows of booths set up equidistant from each other, all crammed full of plastic Funko Pop figurines. Vendors popped out of their stalls like over-caffeinated Jack-In-The-Boxes, all claiming they had the rarest and least expensive Funko Pops. Lydia felt Macey’s body stiffen next to her as one young vendor inched a little too closely inside Macey’s bubble of personal space. Macey shifted her weight from foot to foot, nearly yanking Lydia’s left arm out of her socket as they weaved through the throngs of people.

There were multiple booths with Disney characters, anime heroes and villains, and Marvel characters, as well as celebrity based Funko Pops, DC Comics characters, and Pokémon Funko Pops. The figurines’ wide, empty black eyes sent a chill up Lydia’s spine. Macey guided them past pimple-faced teenagers, thirty-year-old men, and elementary-aged boys and girls, before coming to a sudden stop at the animal-themed booth.

“Hello girls,” drawled a middle-aged woman, ringlets of blond hair framing her face. Her red lipstick was smeared and she stood freakishly tall in her Stilettos. Lydia didn’t like the way the woman peered down her nose at Macey, practically feasting on Macey’s juvenile innocence, her stare lingering much longer than it should have.

“It’s here! The Loch Ness Monster!” said Macey.

“You have a good eye, sweetheart,” said the lady slowly, as if she were talking to a toddler and not a tween girl. She turned around and pushed a box containing a rainbow-colored Bigfoot aside to grab the Loch Ness Monster, pulling it down from the top shelf. She pretended to admire the figurine for a moment before setting it on the counter. She nudged it towards Macey standing at the edge of the counter.

Macey held the box out at arm’s length, observing the turquoise colored sea-monster with kelp dangling out of its mouth. “How much is it?” breathed Macey.

“Thirty-five,” replied the lady.

Lydia nearly choked on her spit, “Thirty-five bucks, are you serious?”

“It’s a rarity, ma’am” said the lady, cattily eyeing Lydia. “It could sell for much higher, but this is the special convention discounted price. Take it or leave it.”

Lydia was about ready to shove the plastic Loch Ness Monster down the lady’s throat when Macey turned towards her. Macey lifted her dark eyebrows and jutted out her lower lip in a pout. “Please, Lydia? It is my birthday.”

“Yes, I promise I’m sure. Please, Lydia, it would be the best birthday gift ever.”

“Fine.”

“I love you, Lydia.”

“I love you too, Macey.”

“Well, isn’t that sweet,” said the woman holding out her hand palm up. “It is a special figurine for a rather special girl.” The vendor stooped down and said to Macey, “Remember, don’t stick it in your mouth, you could choke on it.” Macey nodded, oblivious to what the lady actually said. She was too busy staring at the row of Power Rangers Funko Pops in the neighboring booth.

Lydia felt the heat rise in her cheeks. Macey will be a teenager next year, and the figurine was larger than her fists, how stupid did the vendor
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“Are you sure you don’t want to come back and make your decision after looking around some more at the other booths? If I buy you this, I can’t buy you anymore, you know.”

“Better hurry, this rarity won’t be here for long,” said the vendor lady, not helping matters.

“Yes, I promise I’m sure. Please, Lydia, it would be the best birthday gift ever.”

“Fine.”

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lady think she was? Lydia had to bite her tongue from retorting that the woman looked like the ugly cousin of the mythological Amazons. Instead, to keep herself grounded, she focused on Macey’s smile: a smile that acted like a magnetic field, drawing people in until it was impossible not to smile back.

Macey clutched the square, white box tightly to her chest: her newfound treasure. Lydia let go of Macey’s hand as she fished in her wallet for thirty-five dollars. She placed two twenties in the vendor lady’s pale hands.

“And five makes forty,” said the vendor lady, handing Lydia her change and scratching her with her fake nails in the process. “It was a pleasure doing business with you.”

Yeah, whatever, con woman, thought Lydia. “C’mon Macey, let’s go.”

Macey turned the corner, knocking over a white Funko Pop box containing a version of Naruto. Ignoring the high-pitched shouts of the vendor, Lydia nearly tripped over a little boy sitting cross-legged on the floor trying to decide between a Spider Man or Babe Ruth Funko Pop.

Finally, she spotted Macey standing at a long rectangular card table, the Loch Ness Monster still held firmly to her chest.

“Macey!” she called. “I thought I told you to stay close besides me at all times. Don’t you run off again, you understand me?”

“Sorry,” said Macey, her eyes downcast.

“Can I have your phone, please, Mace? You know how important it is to have it turned on so I can reach you in a crazy place like this. Why did you run off?”

Macey dug the phone out from her pocket and placed it in Lydia’s outstretched hand. Lydia turned it on while Macey explained, “I saw a sign for a Funko Pop contest. Look Lydia!” Macey bounced on the balls of her feet and pointed at a yellow signup sheet attached to a clipboard.

“Will you please enter for me? I’m not old enough.”

Lydia tucked a lock of black hair behind her ears, regretting that she didn’t braid it this morning. She wiped the sweat off her neck and looked at the paper: Enter the Funko Pop scavenger hunt for a chance to win! (Must be 18 years or older to compete).

“What do you win?”

“Funko Pops!” said Macey. Looking into her little sister’s earnest blue eyes, Lydia didn’t have the heart to say no. She scribbled her name onto the signup sheet.

“Thank you, ma’am. The contest is going to begin in ten minutes, please follow me,” said a man with square glasses behind the table. His hairline was receding and the growing bald spot reflected the room’s harsh fluorescent lighting.

“Wait, what about my sister?” yelled Lydia, gripping Macey’s bony wrist. “I can’t just leave her here alone, are you crazy?”

“Calm down, ma’am. Your sister will be alright. She can watch in our designated viewing area. It’s right over there,” said the man pointing behind him with his thumb.

“No. I’m not leaving her. Especially not after I just finished searching this entire convention center for her.”

“Then I guess you’re dropping out of the contest?”

“Lydia, don’t!”

Lydia sighed. “Fine, Macey. No, sir, I’m not dropping out of the contest, let me just get my sister settled first, alright?” The man shrugged in response. Lydia led Macey over to a square area blocked off by velvet ropes.

“Macey, listen to me. I need you to sit here in this metal chair, while I compete in the contest for you. You can’t go anywhere, okay? I need you to cheer me on.”

Macey sat down in the metal folding chair, setting her box containing the Loch Ness Monster figurine in the lap of her pale blue jeans. “It’s cold,” she said. Lydia opened her mouth to speak when Macey added, “But I’ll stay here.”

“Five minutes,” called the man.

“Okay, I have to go now. See you soon.”

“Good luck, Lydia,” said Macey. “Win me some rare Funko Pops.”

“I’ll do my best,” said Lydia as she followed the man. He led her over to the side of the building, close to the wall. She stood side-by-side with her fellow competitors; there were too many of them for Lydia to count.
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“I thought I told you to stay close besides me at all times. Don’t you run off again, you understand me?”

The room was too densely packed to run, so instead she had to elbow her way through clumps of people, like a fish swimming upstream in a current of human body odor. She hurried past Tony Starks and Mickey Mouses, eyeing her incredulously, accusing her of failing her one job; How could you lose your sister? What if she gets kidnapped? Lydia reached for Macey’s hand but felt nothing except warm air.

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The plump teenage boy next to her picked at his teeth, and the middle-aged man to her left, who wore a red Star Wars shirt, did some stretches. *God these people were odd balls,* thought Lydia. She took a deep breath and reminded herself that she was doing this for Macey on her birthday.

The staff man explained the rules. “Hello, Funko Nerds. The annual Funko Pop scavenger hunt is about to begin.” He waved his hands with mock enthusiasm. “It consists of three portions. The first task will be who can stack the most Funko boxes in a minute. The second task will be the Funko in a haystack challenge where you will have to find one specific figurine from a large pit full of Funko Pops. The third and final task will be racing around the convention center to find a specific Funko Pop vendor and doing the thing they tell you. Keep in mind that you are not allowed to ask any vendors for directions.”

Lydia didn’t like the sound of that. “What kind of things would we have to do?”

“I don’t know. Do a little dance, bark like a seal, do ten pushups? It depends on the vendor.” The staff man pushed his rectangular glasses back up the bridge of his nose. “As I was saying, after these tasks are complete, race back here and climb the Funko Stairs. The first person to ring the bell at the top will be the winner.” Lydia glanced at these so-called “Funko Stairs.” They were ten wooden steps that led to a square platform with a silver bell. Funko Pops lined the sides. Across the platform sat a green plastic slide; it reminded Lydia of one of those old Forest Service fire lookouts her dad used to take her to when she was a child.

The staff member’s deep voice interrupted Lydia’s thoughts, “Remember that shoving and physically harming other competitors is against the rules. There is also absolutely no sabotaging the other competitors; we had an issue with that last year. Remember, the first three letters in Funko are F.U.N.” The staff man rolled his eyes. “Okay, get yourselves ready, because the competition starts...now.” The man thrust his arm forward like a football referee declaring a first-down.

Lydia followed closely behind the middle-aged man in the Star Wars shirt and started stacking boxes.

“Luckily, I work in a grocery store, sweet cheeks, so my bagging skills will come in handy,” he said to Lydia, his breath smelling like sour cream and onion potato chips. He made squeezing motions with his hands. Lydia ignored him, the creep; she didn’t want to think about the things that man probably did to his poor Funko Pops. She shuddered but continued to diligently stack one square white box on top of the other, building a fortress of Funko Pops; picturing Macey’s face, she worked even faster, ignoring the cuts from the cheap cardboard that found a home in the fleshy parts of her palms.

“One minute is up,” said another staff worker, this time a young Hispanic man with golden stud earrings. “Let’s see what you got. The winner of this task gets a ten second head-start.” Lydia was one of the last in line to be judged. The man looked Lydia’s tower up and down. “I’m impressed, we have a winner here. What’s your name?”

She had to ask him to repeat his question because the teenage girl next to her was loudly sobbing over her toppled Funko Pop tower. “Lydia.”

“Lydia, you earned a ten second head-start. Are you ready?”

She said yes and sprinted across the room towards one of the plastic pool pits filled with Funko Pops. Trying to ignore the ridiculousness of the moment, Lydia dove into the pool and immediately regretted it as plastic dug sharply into her ribs. According to the photograph in front of the pool, Lydia had to find a specific edition of The Hulk: the *Thor: Ragnarok* edition in which Hulk wears a Roman gladiator helmet, red plume and all. She scooped up as many figurines as she could, examined them quickly and then discarded them. Wave after wave she did this: tossing Donald Ducks, Gokus, and Medusas onto the concrete floor. By the time she found the figure, the other competitors were either well into their own searches, or already sprinting to find their assigned vendor. Lydia handed the Hulk figurine to the perky staff worker who couldn’t have been much older than sixteen.

“Awesome work!” he said, turning the figure over in his hands. “Your next task is to find a vendor named Alex who will give you a Cap’N Crunch figurine. Good luck, matey!”

Booth after booth Lydia approached vendors breathlessly and they told her that no, their name wasn’t Alex, sorry, but good luck. Star Wars man and tooth-picking boy were hot on her heels. The closest vendor happened to be a gothic woman selling Funko Pops from video game series. The dark eyes of Pikachus, Crash Bandicoots, and Lara Crofts matched the woman’s lace dress. Tattoos of snakes slithered along her right arm, and on her right hand she wore a ruby ring.

“Are...you...Alex?”

“Who’s asking?” said the vendor with a smirk. What was with these people?

“I was told—” Lydia paused to catch her breath, “—that a vendor named Alex would have a Captain Crunch figurine to give to me. I’m competing in the scavenger hunt.”

The vendor applied some plum-colored lipstick and shrugged. “Why
The plump teenage boy next to her picked at his teeth, and the middle-aged man to her left, who wore a red Star Wars shirt, did some stretches. *God these people were odd balls*, thought Lydia. She took a deep breath and reminded herself that she was doing this for Macey on her birthday.

The staff man explained the rules. “Hello, Funko Nerds. The annual Funko Pop scavenger hunt is about to begin.” He waved his hands with mock enthusiasm. “It consists of three portions. The first task will be who can stack the most Funko boxes in a minute. The second task will be the Funko in a haystack challenge where you will have to find one specific figurine from a large pit full of Funko Pops. The third and final task will be racing around the convention center to find a specific Funko Pop vendor and doing the thing they tell you. Keep in mind that you are not allowed to ask any vendors for directions.”

Lydia didn’t like the sound of that. “What kind of things would we have to do?”

“I don’t know. Do a little dance, bark like a seal, do ten pushups? It depends on the vendor.” The staff man pushed his rectangular glasses back up the bridge of his nose. “As I was saying, after these tasks are complete, race back here and climb the Funko Stairs. The first person to ring the bell at the top will be the winner.” Lydia glanced at these so-called “Funko Stairs.” They were ten wooden steps that led to a square platform with a silver bell. Funko Pops lined the sides. Across the platform sat a green plastic slide; it reminded Lydia of one of those old Forest Service fire lookouts her dad used to take her to when she was a child.

The staff member’s deep voice interrupted Lydia’s thoughts, “Remember that shoving and physically harming other competitors is against the rules. There is also absolutely no sabotaging the other competitors; we had an issue with that last year. Remember, the first three letters in Funko are F .U.N.” The staff man rolled his eyes. “Okay, get yourselves ready, because the competition starts...now.” The man thrust his arm forward like a football referee declaring a first-down.

Lydia followed closely behind the middle-aged man in the Star Wars shirt and started stacking boxes.

“Luckily, I work in a grocery store, sweet cheeks, so my bagging skills will come in handy,” he said to Lydia, his breath smelling like sour cream and onion potato chips. He made squeezing motions with his hands. Lydia ignored him, the creep; she didn’t want to think about the things that man probably did to his poor Funko Pops. She shuddered but continued to diligently stack one square white box on top of the other, building a fortress of Funko Pops; picturing Macey’s face, she worked even faster, ignoring the cuts from the cheap cardboard that found a home in the fleshy parts of her palms.

“One minute is up,” said another staff worker, this time a young Hispanic man with golden stud earrings. “Let’s see what you got. The winner of this task gets a ten second head-start.” Lydia was one of the last in line to be judged. The man looked Lydia’s tower up and down. “I’m impressed, we have a winner here. What’s your name?”

She had to ask him to repeat his question because the teenage girl next to her was loudly sobbing over her toppled Funko Pop tower. “Lydia.”

“Lydia, you earned a ten second head-start. Are you ready?”

She said yes and sprinted across the room towards one of the plastic pool pits filled with Funko Pops. Trying to ignore the ridiculousness of the moment, Lydia dove into the pool and immediately regretted it as plastic dug sharply into her ribs. According to the photograph in front of the pool, Lydia had to find a specific edition of The Hulk: the *Thor: Ragnarok* edition in which Hulk wears a Roman gladiator helmet, red plume and all. She scooped up as many figurines as she could, examined them quickly and then discarded them. Wave after wave she did this: tossing Donald Ducks, Gokus, and Medusas onto the concrete floor. By the time she found the figure, the other competitors were either well into their own searches, or already sprinting to find their assigned vendor. Lydia handed the Hulk figurine to the perky staff worker who couldn’t have been much older than sixteen.

“Awesome work!” he said, turning the figure over in his hands. “Your next task is to find a vendor named Alex who will give you a Cap’N Crunch figurine. Good luck, matey!”

Booth after booth Lydia approached vendors breathlessly and they told her that no, their name wasn’t Alex, sorry, but good luck. Star Wars man and tooth-picking boy were hot on her heels. The closest vendor happened to be a gothic woman selling Funko Pops from video game series. The dark eyes of Pikachus, Crash Bandicoots, and Lara Crofts matched the woman’s lace dress. Tattoos of snakes slithered along her right arm, and on her right hand she wore a ruby ring.

“Are...you...Alex?”

“Who’s asking?” said the vendor with a smirk. What was with these people?

“I was told—” Lydia paused to catch her breath, “—that a vendor named Alex would have a Captain Crunch figurine to give to me. I’m competing in the scavenger hunt.”

The vendor applied some plum-colored lipstick and shrugged. “Why
do you think I would have that? I'm a video game Funko Pop vendor.”

Lydia turned to leave, trying to stay motivated on this wild goose chase for Macey.

“Hey, wait just a minute,” said the vendor smacking her hand on the counter to grab Lydia's attention. “I was just messing with you. Yeah, I'm Alex.”

“Do you have the Captain Crunch guy?”

Alex bent down, her dark hair cascading into her face. When she arose she slammed the Captain Crunch Mascot onto the countertop.

“There you go. And it's pronounced Cap’N Crunch, FYI. Not captain. To take him you must do the macarena dance three times while standing on one foot.

“Are you serious?”

“That's the name of the game. I could make you do something worse, you know.”

“Fine.” Lydia complied, standing like a stork with one leg in the air, staring down at her checkered Vans to keep her balance. She felt ridiculous as she put her hands on her hips and shook them in a circle.

When Lydia finished Alex said, “Nice dance moves.”

“Whatever, thanks,” said Lydia, grabbing the diabetes-causing, cereal eating, blue and yellow clad pirate. At the booth next to her she saw Star Wars man grab a Baby Yoda Funko Pop. Lydia felt lost in this massive convention with its dense crowds and identical-looking booths. She spun dizzyingly in circles trying to reroute herself back to the Funko Stairs. She had come this far, she couldn't let Macey down.

“Hey,” she called to the man in the Stars War shirt, jogging up to him. “Look, I have no clue how to get back to the Funko Stairs, and you know as well as I do that we’re both in the lead. Today's her twelfth birthday and I want it to be special. Please.” Star Wars man's bushy brown eyebrows shot up and he grinned, flashing his pearly whites like the Cheshire Cat.

“Well, well, well,” he said, “what an interesting offer.”

“Dude, I don’t have time for this shit. Will you tell me how to get back to the freakin’ Funko Stairs or not?”

“Clue is very telling.”

“Hell no, I am not kissing you on the lips.”

“Then no clues for you.”

God, she despised this oily, sweaty man.

“On the cheek.”

“Lips.”

“Cheek.”

“Fine.”

The man leaned in, grinning profusely. He smelt like body odor and cheap Axe body spray. On his cheek sat a bright red pimple with an ingrown hair attached to it. Lydia pictured Macey's smiling face, imagining how she would wiggle with joy after Lydia won...it was all she could do to keep from gagging as her lips met the man's greasy skin.

“Turn around, take the first left, and then a right, and you'll be there,” he said. Lydia sprinted as far from the weirdo as she could. “Goodbye, sweet cheeks,” he called after her. “See you in the next life.” Yeah, if she was eternally damned to hell.

She followed the man's directions but as she ran the crowds became thinner. He didn’t— Lydia clenched her fists and growled at Star Wars man’s treachery. A little girl in a Wonder Woman costume stared at Lydia while her dad chatted up the vendor.

“Are you in the contest?” asked the girl, her voice softer than Lydia anticipated.

“Yes, can you help me? How do I get back to the stage?”

The girl popped a peppermint into her mouth and sucked on it thoughtfully. “You just have to go that way, past all those folding chairs. Papa and I passed it earlier.”

“Thanks!” yelled Lydia. She sprinted in the direction that the girl’s chubby finger pointed. Soon she came across a roped off area. A short man clutching a clipboard to his chest held out his hand.

“You can’t come through here, ma'am. It’s roped off for Mike Becker’s talk at five—”

Lydia didn’t let the man finish. She ripped the clipboard from his hands and chucked it towards the wall.

“Hey—” the man yelled, chasing after it. Lydia ducked under the ropes and ran across the metal folding chairs, leaving a trail of collapsed seats behind her. The Funko Stairs soon came into eyesight. Lydia noticed Macey's face light up as she clapped her hands and hollered, “Go Lydia!”

Star Wars man showboated on the steps as the crowd roared. Thinking that the cheering was for him, he bowed and began to princess wave, stopping to take in the moment. Lydia climbed the stairs two at a time; they shuddered beneath her weight. Cheap pieces of crap, thought Lydia, as she rushed past the Star Wars man, her arms pumping at her sides like an Olympic sprinter. Lydia held up the Cap’N Crunch figurine and rang the silver bell at the top of the platform. Clang. Clang.
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“Hey,” she called to the man in the Star Wars shirt, jogging up to him. “Look, I have no clue how to get back to the Funko Stairs, and you know as well as I do that we’re both in the lead.” Lydia sighed, hating herself for what she was about to ask, “What would it take for you to let me win? It’s for my little sister. Today’s her twelfth birthday and I want it to be special. Please.” Star Wars man’s bushy brown eyebrows shot up and he grinned, flashing his pearly whites like the Cheshire Cat.

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“We have a winner,” said a college-aged girl with a blue streak in her hair. The nearest clump of people clapped. Macey jumped up and down, repeating, “That’s my sister, that’s my sister.” The crowd slowly dispersed. Star Wars man pleaded with a judge but the judge turned his back, unsympathetic to the grown man’s pleading. Lydia smiled as she watched Star Wars man sulkily walk back towards the Star Wars booth to drown his sorrows in impulse purchases.

“So what do I win exactly?” asked Lydia.

“You don’t know?” said the college-aged girl. She laughed and said, “You entered a Funko Pop competition with the world’s craziest fans, and you don’t know what you were competing for this entire time?”

“No, I guess not. I did it for my sister.”

The girl laughed so hard spit flew out of her mouth and nestled in her blue hair streak. Lydia couldn’t look away as the girl said, “Oh, man, that’s good. Well, first of all, you get to keep the Cap’n Crunch Funko Pop. You also get this year’s rarest edition, a golden Freddy Funko figurine on skis. She handed Lydia a golden human boy figurine on silver skis with a crown on his head. The girl also gave Lydia a beige colored tote bag with the Funko Pop logo imprinted on it in block lettering. Lydia dropped the Cap’n Crunch and Freddie Funko figurines inside.

“You also get a sixty second shopping spree to fill up that tote bag with Funko figurines from the Funko pit. You know, the one you dug through in the second part of the challenge?”

_You’re got to be kidding me._ Lydia would have to run again, like a chicken without a head, for more cheap plastic figurines. She looked over the balcony. Macey waved up at Lydia and blew her a kiss.

Lydia called down, “I get to grab as many Funko Pops as I can in sixty seconds from the Funko pit.”

Macey beamed, her bright pink braces bands radiant in Lydia’s eyes. “Make sure to find Ursula!”

Lydia smiled back, staring at her sister from the top of the ridiculous wooden Funko tower. She admired her sister’s upward slanted eyes, and shrunken ears and nose. Most people thought Macey was as intelligent as a three-year-old and treated her as such. They didn’t know that Macey was a bright young woman with hopes and dreams of running the Funko Pop company one day. Macey never chose to have an extra chromosome.

“I’m ready,” Lydia told the lady with the blue-streak in her hair. Lydia plopped herself down onto the plastic green slide; finding an Ursula figurine was the least she could do for her sister’s twelfth birthday.