

The line gets longer. Three rows of consumers sigh and wiggle, wiggle and sigh. Tempers are at an even keel. Temperatures are to soar, reaching 103 degrees. Soon.

The three rows of food and beverage shoppers seem to get shorter, only because of the people ahead of us. My husband and I are in line to purchase the items on a short list. Popsicles is at the top. However, none are found. The refrigerator unit is blank, darkened, not working. Novelty treats are not to be purchased. We wiggle this way and that as if we are in a kindergarten game of “Here we go Loopty-loo, here we Loopty-li” or of “Get those wiggles out.”

We are a mixed group waiting our turn at the check-out counter. Three ladies, who are meeting for the first time, visit about puppies. Show ‘n Tell is number one on the agenda. “Here’s a cute photo of my rottweiler,” says one new best friend in the line on the right. She presents her iPhone photo while sharing the funny stories of her first week with the cuddly buddy. She is wearing a mask.

Her new friends are mask free. They are enjoying the conversation while the rest of us nap or slump comfortably watching this matinee freebee at the store.

Masks are an option. A couple listening to the “Matinee” inches their cart a safe distance forward. She is mask free. He is sporting an indigo mask with comfortable looking ear holds.

The attention shifts behind us as a mask free buyer suggest to a mask wearing lady that we all should open her bottles of booze and start celebrating the Fourth of July early. “I could add my vodka to the party,” he adds. All the shoppers around look in their grocery carts eyes searching for what they could offer as a side dish. No one has glasses to house the beverage. No one has crackers to soak up the alcohol, nor napkins to wipe away traces of imbibing before buying. Shoulders sag as eyes look forward. “How much longer is the wait,” we all wonder.

Between naps, tunes are hummed, and forgotten items are run for. “You have time to get it,” says his wife. “But hurry.” The line ahead shortens, the line behind lengthens. Matinee continues.

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