

The Queue

Trolley brimming, peering along the checkouts, the excursion is nearly over,

That one's long, that one's shorter, that's 10 items only, baskets only, disabled and pregnant only!

Where to go, what to do, how to attack questions tumbling in the mind, seconds fly, a trolley passed by, they've spotted a gap, how did I miss that?

Join a line and watch with intent counting how many items do they have?

Moving slowly, only three in front with trolleys full to the top, environmentally conscious with bags at the ready, the flow is smooth and painless. Time to relax it's nearly over, time to look and observe the hordes.

The queue next door is moving ever more rapidly, the bespectacled old dear level with me is about to disappear?

A problem? Oh no how can it be? Why should this happen to me?

A glance at the checkout maiden reveals all, she's on the tannoy. A catastrophe has occurred, the red faced guy three in front has a bag of beans without a price and a wait ensues.

My toes are tapping and in front her fingers are rapping. In the distance a gliding price checker comes into view, roller skates blazing the aisles searching for the missing price, is once or is it thrice?

At last it arrives and the culprit is gone, the blue rinse way ahead of him.

All are itching to reach the conveyor for it signals a milestone on the path to freedom. The one in front has more than I thought, small fiddly little things, and hundreds of them. They move swiftly

and a space appears, they place the „NEXT CUSTOMER“ barrier and I“m away, it“s my turn, I“m nearly there, I can“t quite believe it. It“s seems to speed up. One by one the trolley empties, only a few to go, STOP!

The checkout maiden gets replaced, a tea break is needed. I“m parched too and I“m stuck in a queue, I can“t wait for lovely hot brew.

It starts slowly, oblivious to the other dwindling parallel lines, my end is in sight. Batteries, yes batteries, I need some of those, duly added to the load.

At last it“s me; I“m there, well almost.

She swipes each one, I“m sure I“ve checked them to avoid a hitch. They whiz by and I bag as fast as I can, the till rings to signal the end and I“m there, I“ve made it. It“s time to pay.

Out comes the wallet, hand over the card, she places it in the slot, I punch in the numbers, confidently thinking of the shortest route out, and, “I“m sorry Sir but it won“t accept it. Would you like to try again?”

Panic stricken, thoughts teeming in my mind, what is the number, I have made an error in haste?

Focus, tremble, think again, punch again with pulsating digits. Ah, a pause, it must be accepting, a wave of relief washes by. “Sorry sir, it“s no use, have you another method of paying?”

A search in the wallet brings about many fears for the wife has the cards and it“ll all end in tears.

An assistant arrives and impounds the trolley, emptying the bags. Sad, dejected, unfilled bags in hand, plodding to the exit my mobile rings, “Can you get me some of those nice mints that I like; they“ll be next to you when you“re in the queue?”

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