

# Consumer Confidence

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## CONSUMER CONFIDENCE

A short comedy

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### Synopsis:

A convenience store clerk insists that all sales are final when his former elementary school teacher requests a refund on a package of condoms. Will she persuade him otherwise?

### Cast of Characters:

Miss Hooper, female, late 60s-70s

Mel, late teens-early 20s, male convenience store clerk

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Place: a convenience store, may be suggested with a counter and a display

Time: Saturday night

Enter MISS HOOPER who carries a handbag.

MISS HOOPER

Hello, young man, I, um, need to speak to someone in charge.

MEL

That's me. Miss Hooper? Is it you? Third grade. Randolph Elementary School?

MISS HOOPER

Forgive me. I'm having a senior moment. Your name. Please remind me.

MEL

Mel. Mel Abbott. You taught me the times tables.

MISS HOOPER

My land, you're all grown up now. Didn't recognize you without your freckles.

MEL

I'd know you anywhere. How are you?

MISS HOOPER

Enjoying retirement. You must be in college.

MEL

Yes. Summer job. What can I do for you?

MISS HOOPER

I need to return this item. Here's my receipt.

MEL

Sorry, Miss Hooper. I'd like to help you, but all sales are final.

MISS HOOPER

But the package hasn't been opened. See for yourself.

After rummaging in her handbag, she hands him a package.

MEL

Condoms?

MISS HOOPER

Yes.

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MEL  
Well, I, uh—

MISS HOOPER  
You act surprised.

MEL  
You ah, you're —

MISS HOOPER  
They're not for me.

MEL  
Right. It's just—

MISS HOOPER  
You're an adult. Surely, you've—

MEL  
Um, I've—

MISS HOOPER  
Excuse me. Your private life is none of my --. I'd like my money back please.

MEL  
That's against store policy. I can't help you. I'm sorry.

MISS HOOPER  
Surely you make exceptions.

MEL  
No, the owner's very firm.

MISS HOOPER  
Not even if you explain who I am.

MEL  
Believe me. He wouldn't even do it for his own mother.

MISS HOOPER  
Let me speak to him.

MEL  
That's my Dad. He's taken the night off. I'm in charge now.

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MISS HOOPER

Then you can make your own decisions. Remember all the times I let you be the first one out the door when school ended for the day? I could have given every one in class a chance to be at the head of the line. But instead--

MEL

Back then you said it was alphabetical.

MISS HOOPER

Back then, if you recall, you said it was very important to you to be the first one to get outside and ride your bike to the playground. So?

MEL

This is out of my hands, Miss Hooper.

MISS HOOPER

I listened and did what you requested. Now it's your turn to—

MEL

That was a long time ago. Besides, this is not the same—

MISS HOOPER

I'm sure your father wants satisfied customers and REPEAT business, Mel.

MEL

Of course, but he expects me to adhere to—

MISS HOOPER

My friends at the senior center have a rating system for local businesses that we all pay attention to. For example, we gave your competitor Wiggly Piggly a poor rating. You know what happened to that store, don't you?

MEL

It closed.

MISS HOOPER

Right. I'm the chair of that committee. Well, young man?

MEL

My Dad says we have a loyal customer base, Miss Hooper. I'm sorry if you're unhappy. We really do value all of our customers. But under the circumstances my hands are—

MISS HOOPER

Well, if you can't give me my money back, I expect you'll agree to an exchange. For old times' sake.

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MEL

For what? Coffee? A Big Gulp?

MISS HOOPER

More of the same of course. But a different material. My friend is allergic to this kind.

MEL

Then why didn't he bring his own? Then you wouldn't have to—

MISS HOOPER

Because **I** did. I was a Girl Scout so I wanted to be prepared. That's our motto.

MEL

Boy Scouts have the same one. But no merit badge for condoms.

MISS HOOPER

Then I urge you to use your imagination, Mel. Think forty or fifty years from now. You're a widower or divorced. You're starting over. A special date. Some candlelight. A bottle of wine.

MEL

I'd know what kind of condoms to buy.

MISS HOOPER

Okay. I realize this is a stretch. But put yourself in my shoes.

MEL

That is a stretch.

MISS HOOPER

You're a tough negotiator, Mel. What are you studying in college? Law?

MEL

Acting.

MISS HOOPER

Then it's not a stretch.

MEL

He pauses and looks at the ceiling.

My grandma has a boyfriend.

MISS HOOPER

Now you're talking.

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MEL

They met online.

MISS HOOPER

Bet it never occurred to you that they actually—

MEL

Uh, no. My grandma's ancient, but she says he's younger.

MISS HOOPER

That makes your grandma a cougar. See what you have to look forward to. Now about that exchange.

She puts on her glasses that are on a chain around her neck.

My friend was very specific.

She steps behind the counter where MEL is standing.

MEL

Miss Hooper, you can't go back there. It's off limits.

MISS HOOPER

The print on these packages is so small. Not every customer is a teenager.

MEL

I'll get in trouble—

MISS HOOPER

I'll only be a minute. Besides, I'm your only customer.

MEL

Really, I insist. If my Dad were to walk in unexpectedly, I could—

MISS HOOPER

Do you have a magnifying glass? I need to read the label.

MEL

Like I said, you can't come back here.

MISS HOOPER

Of course, I can take my business elsewhere.

MEL

The drug store across the street's closed and we're about to--.

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MISS HOOPER

But you don't have a magnifying glass.

MEL

I have good eyesight. I'll be glad to do what I can -- provided you give my Dad's store a very good rating.

MISS HOOPER

I'll be glad to give Friendly Harry's four stars if we can work this out.

MEL

Now you're talking.

MISS HOOPER

But first I need to be sure I have the right product before leaving this store.

MEL

If it's a question of size, we have, uh, --

MISS HOOPER

It's about the material. Please check the label for latex. That's the only kind I -- he--

MEL

Yup. Latex. Says so right here. How many do you--

MISS HOOPER

Just a moment. I'm not finished.

MEL

I hate to rush you, Miss Hooper. But we're closing in a few minutes.

MISS HOOPER

What's the expiration date? If it doesn't work out, it could take me a while to find another, uh, candidate.

MEL

Expires a year from now. You're all set.

MISS HOOPER

Thank you, Mel. You were always a good student.

MEL

What size do you need?

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Size? MISS HOOPER

We have average, jumbo or...? MEL

I've no idea. We didn't get that far. MISS HOOPER

Does he have large feet? MEL

He has a nice smile. MISS HOOPER

Ah, some people say there's ah, a relationship. MEL

I haven't noticed his feet. What do you recommend? MISS HOOPER

Well, since you're on a budget. One size fits all. MEL

I don't want to be wrong ... again. MISS HOOPER

Tonight's the night? MEL

Tomorrow. Well, maybe. MISS HOOPER

Maybe? MEL

He's a new, ah, beau. MISS HOOPER

A variety pack might be better. It has different colors, flavors, textures. MEL

Wow. MISS HOOPER

She pokes around the display.



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What's it called?

MEL

Unfortunately, we're out right now.

MISS HOOPER

Just my luck. Does your grandma come here for condoms?

MEL

Of course not. (Pause) Her boyfriend does...grinning from ear to ear.

MISS HOOPER

Really?

MEL

Just kidding. Do you and this guy have a future?

MISS HOOPER

I like him a lot. But--.

MEL

Is that why you wanted to know the expiration date?

MISS HOOPER

We're both old. But he's, ah, older...

MEL

Then I'd get the six pack. You'll save money and have something to look forward to---with him or somebody else.

MISS HOOPER

It's clear you have a future in sales, Mel. Ring it up. I'll save my receipt.

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