

'Crankshaft' Comic Criticized for Implying Older Women Are in Less Danger of Being Assaulted

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NEW YORK Yesterday's "Crankshaft" comic has stirred anger for implying that older women have less chance of being assaulted than younger women.



In the strip by Tom Batiuk and Chuck Ayers of King Features Syndicate, the Lois character drops the contents of her handbag on the ground. Then Crankshaft says: "You're sixty-eight, Lois. You can probably stop carrying the pepper spray."

The Comics Reporter blogger Tom Spurgeon commented: "I'm unable to come up with a reading of the joke that doesn't have it hinge on the woman no longer needing to protect herself from assault because she's older and not as good-looking anymore."

Jessica Valenti of Feministing.com wrote of the strip: "Not only does it attempt to make a joke out of rape, it also plays on the gross myth that only young, 'attractive' women get sexually assaulted. Which, of course, is a version of 'rape is a compliment.'"

Valenti's post elicited many comments that also criticized the comic. One person said: "I don't mean to detract from the rape inference because clearly that's what mentioning the age is doing, but on another level -- 68 year olds also get mugged and beaten. Why would anyone advocate that after a certain age you should stop worrying about defending yourself?"

But some people mentioned that Crankshaft is a curmudgeonly character who wasn't necessarily reflecting the views of Batiuk, the comic's writer. "Crankshaft the character is not supposed to be the most 'with it' person," said one Feministing.com correspon-

dent. "He's not exactly Archie Bunker but that's part of his origin. Doesn't Lois look annoyed in the last panel? Maybe the cartoonist is fully aware of the issue."
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