

**Putting A New Spin on Assault Cases**  
by  
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I just read yet another report of a woman who had been sexually assaulted, and then was re-victimized by insensitive and accusatory questions asked by the police and court system. Questions that, by their very nature, suggest that she may have contributed in some way to getting assaulted.

I thought about this for some time, and it occurred to me that nobody would even consider asking many of these questions if the crime was of a different nature, say, a robbery. Then my satirist mind began to do its thing, and the following flowed out. Please bear with me.

**Scene: Man at the Police Station reporting a mugging.**

Police Constable (PC): So you say that you were robbed?

Male Victim (MV): Yes sir.

PC: Where and when did the alleged robbery take place?

MV: On McDermott Avenue, just East of Main Street, about 7:00 pm.

PC: Do you usually walk in that neighbourhood at that time of night?

MV: Not always. I was meeting some friends for dinner.

PC: And do you usually take your wallet and watch with you when you go out?

MV: Yes. Shouldn't I? Why do you ask that?

PC: Just answer the questions please sir. Could you describe your wallet?

MV: It was a black billfold, with a slot for cash, and some pockets for pictures and cards.

PC: So, a fairly thick wallet, would you say?

MV: I suppose.

PC: And how were you carrying it?

MV: In my back pocket.

PC: So it would have made a large bulge. Right?

MV: I guess so. Why?

PC: Were you wearing a jacket that covered your back pocket, or was the wallet showing?

MV: No jacket, it was a warm night.

PC: So the bulge of your wallet would have been visible to anyone following you.

MV: What has that got to do with anything?

PC: Just answer the questions sir. Now, about the watch. Can you describe it?

MV: A Bulova Quartz with a silver expansion band.

PC: Pretty sexy watch to be wearing when going out on your own, don't you think?

MV: What is that supposed to mean?

PC: Nothing at all, sir. I was just commenting. Now, was this watch covered by a sleeve, or was it exposed?

MV: I was wearing short sleeves, so it was visible for people to see it, if that's what you mean. Why?

PC: I was just thinking that you were walking down a side street in the evening, with your wallet bulging out of your back pocket and wearing a sexy watch like that for everyone to see. Don't you think that you may be giving the impression that you might want someone to come along and, just...take them?

MV: No, I don't think that at all. I was just going to meet some friends. I wasn't trying to draw anyone's attention.

PC: Come on now, sir. Are you really sure this was a mugging and not a consensual exchange of property?

Sounds Pretty ridiculous, doesn't it. But right now, some women out there are not laughing, because what I have written has struck far too close to home. These are exactly the kind of questions that are asked of women when they report a sexual assault or rape. So I ask you this, if these questions aren't appropriate to ask victims of other crimes, what makes them appropriate to ask sexual assault victims?

Let's try another one. How about a car theft?

MV: My car was stolen.

PC: Where was it parked sir?

MV: On Banning Street, right in front of my home.

PC: Do you usually park it there?

MV: It's in front of my home, so, yes.

PC: What model of car is it sir?

MV: It's a red Mazda MX-5 convertible.

PC: Hmm... Pretty hot car to have in that neighbourhood. Was the top up or down?

MV: Up, of course.

PC: A bit of a tease, are you?

MV: What is that supposed to mean?

PC: Nothing at all, sir. Now tell me, by any chance, did you just have it washed?

MV: Yes, washed and waxed. Why?

PC: Washed AND waxed. Seriously sir. You have a sexy car like that, in that neighbourhood, and you just had it washed and waxed. All shiny and sparkling, practically screaming, take me. Don't tell me you weren't expecting this to happen, or maybe even hoping for it to happen?

Hmmm...Just seems wrong when put in that context, doesn't it? Well, from my point of view, it is wrong, no matter what context you use. I think it is time that our justice system began treating sexual assault like they would any other crime. If certain wording is inappropriate to use with other crimes, it should also be inappropriate when dealing with sexual assault and rape. We are overdue for a change.