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SFPD Identify Two Suspects in “Blessing Scam”

October 11, 2016 | 3:33 PM

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Investigators from the San Francisco Police Department’s Special Victims Unit have released the identity of two suspects wanted in connection with the “Blessing Scam” that has occurred in the Chinese community. The “Blessing Scam” is an ongoing series of scams targeting older Chinese victims, resulting in great financial loss.

The scam often occurs after the victim is approached by the first of three female Cantonese-speaking suspects. The suspect asks the victim if she knows a doctor in the area because a family member had fallen severely ill. The second suspect joins the conversation stating that she knows a doctor, and persuades the victim to all visit this doctor together.

While en-route to the doctor, an additional suspect approaches the group and acts as a fortune teller. This fortune teller tells the victim a loved one will be cursed or suffer some form of misfortune. To relieve the curse, the victim must present the fortune teller with valuables to be “blessed.”

The suspects convince the victim to bring valuables, consisting of currency and jewelry to a nearby street. A “blessing” is performed. Then, through sleight of hand, another bag containing worthless items was given back to the victim. The victim is instructed not to look in the bag for a specified amount of time or the “blessing” would be invalidated.

San Francisco Police are investigating four incidents reported thus far in 2016. The first reported case was in the Richmond District in July 2016, followed by two in the Central District August 5th, and August 8th and a final reported case in the Richmond District August 9th.

The Special Victim's Fraud Unit has vigorously investigated all four cases. Today we, the San Francisco Police Department are happy to announce that we have identified two suspects in a blessing scam that was committed here in San Francisco.

Warrants have been issued for the arrest of: Yiyuan Li, age 57 and Jinqin Zhen, age 48 on the charges of theft from elder, grand theft of property and conspiracy. We believe that these two suspects conspired with two others to commit a blessing scam in the Richmond District. Yiyuan Li is also a suspect in a similar case in New York and she is also has an arrest warrant in connection with the New York investigation. We will continue to work and collaborate with New York City Police, the District Attorney’s Office and Homeland Security to ensure the arrest of these outstanding suspects.

The Special Victim's Fraud Unit of the SFPD will continue to work these cases in an effort to find justice for these victims. The San Francisco Police encourage anyone who has been a victim this crime and has not already reported it to please report it now. We cannot express how important it is that you do this so that we can work to bring these predators to justice. Members of the community can help stop this crime by keeping a close eye on their elders and talking to them about this scam.

If you are a victim of the scam please report it. If you have any suspicions that you maybe witnessing or have witnessed the scam please call the police. To report a crime, call 911; language services are available when you call 911. A Cantonese language tip line has been established for Cantonese speakers who may wish to provide information. The Cantonese Tip Line is (415) 553-9212.

In 2014, the SFPD produced a [video to warn the community of this scam](#).

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