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“Ocean's Eleven”-Style heist shakes Los Angeles wine shop: over half a million in vintage wines and liquors stolen

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In an audacious crime that seems straight from a Hollywood heist movie, police in Southern California are meticulously investigating a burglary that has shaken the Lincoln Fine Wines shop in Los Angeles' Venice neighborhood. The thief, who performed a theft with seeming ease, made away with approximately 600 bottles of wine and liquor, with a total value exceeding $500,000.

In the early hours of Friday, around 12:30 a.m., the culprit, dressed in a mask, a black hoodie, and a red baseball cap, descended into the wine cellar after drilling a hole through the store's roof. The burglar's actions were captured on surveillance footage before the lens of the security camera was obscured with the adhesive tape from a sign reading "Smile: You're on Camera." Store manager Nick Martinelle, upon witnessing the footage, expressed his disbelief, likening the heist to something out of the movie, "Ocean's Eleven."

The burglar's operation, which lasted an estimated four hours, allowed him to raid some of the rarest and most expensive wines and liquors from the store. The owner of Lincoln Fine Wines, Nazmul Haque, has expressed profound shock and distress since the incident. "It is very hard for me to digest. All my hard work snatched within a couple hours," Haque mournfully confessed.

The alarm was only triggered when the thief exited the wine cellar to pilfer from the store's main shelves around 4 a.m. Haque, who was asleep at home at the time, was alerted by the store's sensors. On receiving the alert, he found his store bathed in a shaft of early morning light streaming in from the hole in the rooftop, revealing the devastation of empty shelves and shattered glass.

A perplexed Haque remarked, "I used to always think they can break in the door and windows. Now, they come through the walls, they come through the roof. You never know." This statement reflects the audacity of the crime, as well as the difficulty of anticipating and preventing such inventive methods of burglary.

Many of the stolen bottles are irreplaceable, according to Martinelle. These included the store's collection of Quintarelli wines, as well as bottles such as The Last Drop – a rare Scotch whisky whose 1971 edition alone is valued at $6,000 – and a bottle of Chateau Petrus 2016, which can fetch as much as $4,500. The entirety of the cellar's French wall, housing bottles with an average worth of $1,000 each, was cleared out.

According to Martinelle, the uncanny knowledge that the thief seemed to possess about the location of the cellar and the specifically targeted expensive wines, some of which were not on display, added a "creepy" dimension to the theft. This fact has spurred discussions with other wine shops in Los Angeles, some of which have experienced

similar burglaries.

In a bid to track down the thief or thieves, the store is compiling a list of the stolen bottles to share with local buyers and auction houses. The hope is that this move might reveal some leads or help recover at least a part of the stolen stock.

Despite the shock and disbelief, Haque has expressed gratitude for the overwhelming support from customers and vendors following the theft. Notably, customers who had not visited since the Covid-19 pandemic began made it a point to come in, buying more bottles than usual as a show of support.

"They're here to support me. That's a very strong message to me," said a thankful Haque, "That helped me a lot to recover from the emotional stress."

As of now, the case remains under active investigation by the Los Angeles police. The outcome of this audacious theft may well have significant implications for security measures in high-end retail businesses not only in Southern California, but also nationwide.