🌙MR. SKUNKY LUKE: NIGHTLIFE

The night had been unusually quiet in Whiskerville.

Dragocat sat high upon the old clock tower, his enormous shadow wings folded against his sides as he watched the city below. The moon was bright, the streets were calm, and for once, there wasn't a portal, ancient monster, or PERMA agent anywhere in sight.

Then he heard it.

"HELP!"

Dragocat's golden eyes snapped toward the sound.

Another scream followed.

"SOMEBODY TOOK THEM!"

The ancient compass hanging from his collar flashed blue.

Dragocat launched from the tower.

He followed the voice across the rooftops until he reached Whiskerville Elementary School. A small figure stood outside the school doors, waving frantically.

It was Mr. Whiskers.

"The school supplies!" Mr. Whiskers cried when Dragocat landed. "They're gone!"

Dragocat tilted his head.

"All of them?"

"Every last box!"

Pencils. Notebooks. Crayons. Markers. Glue. Construction paper. Even the brand-new boxes of colored pencils that had arrived that afternoon.

Someone had taken the entire supply shipment.

Dragocat crouched beside the doorway.

For most of his adventures, he had protected Whiskerville from things that belonged in nightmares.

Tonight, however, he had a different problem.

A mystery.

And mysteries were something Mr. Skunky Luke knew very well.

Dragocat examined the floor.

There were muddy pawprints near the loading entrance.

He followed them.

The trail led behind the school, across the playground, and disappeared near an old drainage tunnel.

Dragocat's compass began spinning.

He stepped into the darkness.

The tunnel was narrow, damp, and filled with strange echoes. Then he spotted something caught on a broken pipe.

A tiny piece of purple fabric.

Dragocat sniffed it.

Then he heard movement.

Something rustled farther down the tunnel.

Dragocat spread his wings.

Two glowing eyes appeared in the darkness.

Then another pair.

Then another.

Dragocat prepared for battle.

But instead of monsters charging toward him, several frightened little animals emerged carrying pencils and notebooks.

They froze.

Dragocat lowered his wings.

One tiny rabbit finally spoke.

"We didn't steal them."

Dragocat looked at the supplies.

"Then why are they here?"

The rabbit pointed deeper into the tunnel.

"We found them down here."

Dragocat followed the rabbit's paw.

A broken delivery cart sat against the tunnel wall.

The school supplies had fallen through a damaged section of the pavement during the night.

No thief.

No criminal.

Just a collapsed section of the old tunnel.

Dragocat smiled.

But then he noticed something else.

One box was missing.

The animals hadn't found everything.

He followed a trail of colored pencils deeper into the tunnel until he reached a small hidden chamber.

Inside sat a young raccoon surrounded by notebooks, crayons, and pencils.

The raccoon immediately lowered his head.

"I wasn't trying to steal them."

Dragocat waited.

The raccoon explained that he had been hiding down there because he didn't have any school supplies of his own. He had found the box after it fell into the tunnel and had been too afraid to tell anyone.

Dragocat gently pushed a notebook toward him.

The raccoon looked up.

"You aren't angry?"

Dragocat shook his head.

Then he picked up the box and carried it toward the tunnel entrance.

The raccoon followed.

When they returned to the school, Mr. Whiskers stared at the recovered supplies.

"So... nobody stole them?"

Dragocat shook his head.

Mr. Whiskers looked toward the little raccoon.

The raccoon looked embarrassed.

"I just wanted to learn."

Mr. Whiskers smiled.

"Then I think we can fix that."

The next morning, the raccoon received a backpack filled with notebooks, pencils, crayons, and everything else he needed.

The school also discovered that several other children in Whiskerville needed supplies.

So, they started a new program.

The Guardian's School Supply Box.

Anyone who needed something could take it.

Anyone who had extra could leave something behind.

By sunrise, the mystery was solved.

No villain had been hiding beneath the school.

No dangerous creature had invaded Whiskerville.

And no magical portal had opened.

It had simply been a misunderstanding, a broken tunnel, and one frightened little raccoon who wanted the chance to learn.

From the rooftop across the street, Dragocat watched the children walk into school with their new supplies.

His compass remained silent.

His wings folded behind him.

For the first time, Whiskerville had discovered something important.

Dragocat could solve cases, too.

He wasn't only the Guardian of the night.

He was becoming a detective.

And somewhere beneath his mysterious black-and-white fur, Mr. Skunky Luke was smiling.

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Case #1: The Missing School Supplies

The Guardian had solved his first mystery.

And Whiskerville would never look at Dragocat quite the same way again.

