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Thieves Return Stolen Christmas Gifts After Realizing They Were for Orphans

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Thieves in the far eastern city of Vladivostok had a change of heart after realizing the presents they had stolen were en route to children at an orphanage.

"The thieves broke into a car owned by one of our volunteers overnight, and there were gifts for 55 kids from orphanages in there. They took all the valuable items, the boxes and presents," Svetlana Kanya, head of the Vladmama charity foundation, told the Interfax news agency on Thursday.

On the same day, she said, the stolen gifts turned up at one of the city's orphanages after the looters "understood by our trademark labels on the gifts that these were New Year's surprises for children at an orphanage."

"Their consciences came back and they returned the gifts," Kanya said.

The gifts were collected as part of a charity event called "Become Santa Claus," during which more than 1,600 gifts were donated for distribution to children at orphanages and boarding schools. Russians traditionally share gifts on New Year's, just as many Americans

and Europeans do on Christmas.

The story of the conscientious thieves proved refreshing to many Russian bloggers in need of some holiday cheer.

"If only the government had people like that," one commentator, using the nickname Rusyadoomer, wrote on the online forum YaPlakal.

Other commentators echoed that sentiment, saying the proof that "even thieves have a conscious" would help lift people's mood for the holidays.

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