

BY ETHEL SAPHIR

ing with her hand over one eye, saluting like an Admiral. "No splashing or spilling or you'll get spanked." She gave our signal—a tremendous wink—and I knew this was a secret mission. We both knew she never spanked.

Before I could say "Aye aye, Sir," Greasy grabbed me and jerked me into the hall. The bathroom door was open and he shoved me in hard and slammed the door. I couldn't push it open—it always sticks—and I saw my ships next to my sailboat towels. Somehow I didn't want to play. My throat felt all tight like after they took out my tonsils. Then I thought of Aunt Ettie out there tied up with her eyes scared and Brown Cap throwing our clean silver things into his dirty bag and that horrible Greasy.

The ships were waiting. Why had Mom said "like yesterday"? I thought I knew but anyway you just have to carry out

orders. Not the tub—the washbowl would be quicker. I started the water running fast and my boats whirled. In a minute rapids were pouring over the sides and through the hole in the floor and I heard pounding from down below. The water was running through the hole that washed out the day before. It was a wonderful shipwreck. And a secret mission!

I sloshed around in the whirlpool; my socks and shoes were soaked, so cool on my feet. Suddenly I heard my mother calling me through the door. I pushed but it was stuck. The next minute it came open and the man from 7B jumped right into the water and grabbed me. He turned off the faucet quick but he wasn't angry. Yesterday he had said he'd call the police if I shipwrecked again.

When he saw the water leaking down from our bathroom, the man had started up the stairs and when Mommy heard

him coming she started to scream. He ran right back and phoned the police. Like in Calling All Cars, they got there on the double.

The officers were in the living room handcuffing the robbers, the way they do in a Federal show. Aunt Ettie was pounding Brown Cap's back and yelling, "You awful thing! You've gone and ruined my sweater."

Then Aunt Ettie and Mr. 7B started picking up the silver and things scattered around. They couldn't hear Mom turn to me and ask very strictly, "Mission accomplished, Sir?"

When I said it was, she saluted. She tied her blue hair ribbon on my shirt and kissed me twice. I didn't mind because that's how French officers decorate you. She said, "Well done, Captain darling." Only she ought to know even the Frenchmen don't say that.

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