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Cops: Mom drowns girl, 4, in exorcism

By PHILIP MESSING, ED ROBINSON and WILLIAM NEUMAN

A Washington Heights woman drowned her 4-year-old daughter in a bathtub because she thought the girl was possessed, police said yesterday.

The girl, Signifagance Oliver, and her twin sister, Ellagance, were supposed to be living with an aunt in Virginia — and cops were trying to find out how they landed back in the hands of their mother, who has a history of child abuse.

Sabrina Wright told police she heard her own mother's voice coming out of her daughter's body — and held Signifagance down in a tub of water, authorities said.

"She was trying to exorcise some demons," said Administration for Children's Services spokeswoman Jennifer Falk.

Signifagance, who was known as Betty, and Ellagance, who is known as Brenda, were sent in early 1999 to live with the Virginia relative, described as a paternal aunt.

The aunt, who was not identified, was given custody, and New York authorities ceased monitoring the girls in December 1999, Falk said. It wasn't clear if Virginia welfare officials had taken over their case.

At some point, Wright took the children back, although police are not sure how long ago that occurred, and they were searching for the aunt yesterday.

Cops found the drowned girl after they were called to Wright's apartment on West 160th Street shortly before 5 a.m. Monday. She was charged with murder yesterday.

Ellagance was also in the apartment, but she was not harmed.

Wright has at least two other children, a boy, 10, and a girl, 11, who were first taken away from their mother and put in foster care in 1992, after reports they had been physically abused, Falk said.

In July 1997, the boy and girl were reunited with their mother following the birth of their half-sisters.

But a short time after the reunion, all four children were taken from Wright when authorities received a report of domestic violence, Falk said.

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