



DICEY'S SONG

The second book in the celebrated Tillerman cycle



CYNTHIA VOIGT

What a day, Dicey thought. What a summer, for that matter, but especially, What a day. She stood alone in the big old barn, in a patch of moonlight; stood looking at the sailboat resting on its sawhorse cradle, a darker patch among shadows. Behind her, the wind blew off the water, bringing the faint smell of salt and the rich, moist smell of the marshes.

You never knew where a road would end, Dicey thought, the breeze curling around her ears, you just knew that roads ended. Not like water, which always kept moving. Not like the stars, tossed out across the sky—the stars had made that light millions of years ago and already they were burning with new light. And the moon too, the moon would swell and dwindle, go dark and swell again. But the Tillermans traveled on a road, and roads ended. Dicey's road, and James's, Maybeth's, Sammy's, had ended here. The Tillermans' road had rolled up against Gram's

house, and they had tumbled off it into Gram's—Dicey grinned. Not exactly into Gram's arms, maybe not into her lap. Certainly into her life.

So. So they were going to live here, on the rundown farm, with Gram—Dicey's heart danced again, inside her, to say it to herself like that. Home. Home with their momma's momma, who was also a Tillerman. Home: a home with plenty of room for the four children in the shabby farmhouse, room inside, room outside, and the kind of room within Gram too—Dicey had seen Gram and how she listened when Maybeth sang, how she talked with James, how her eyes smiled at the things Sammy said and did—the kind of room that was what they really needed. One of the lessons the long summer had taught Dicey was how to figure out what they really needed.

Dicey studied her sneakers, gray with old grime, the places where her toes had worn through pockets of darkness. When she wiggled her toes in the moonlight's shadows, she couldn't see anything moving. Home for Dicey, too, with the Bay—the Chesapeake Bay, quiet with little waves and long tides—the Bay just out of sight, with this grandmother whose character had sharp corners and unexpected turns, with the sailboat waiting here in the barn.

She stepped into the darkness and placed both

her hands flat against the rough hull of the boat. Imagining how it would feel when the little boat rode on the water, how it would respond to the wind in its sails, to the waves sliding by, to her hand on the tiller. She leaned her forehead against the wood, feeling the solid curve of the hull against her skin. Unexpectedly, she found herself yawning, a huge, hollow yawn that stretched her diaphragm up against her heart and cracked the hinges of her jaw.

Dacey smiled to herself. Here it was, probably the most exciting day of her life, certainly one of the best, and all she felt was tired. As if all the walking and worrying, all the hunger and hope of the long summer, all hit her at once. Her bones sagged and her brain couldn't grab onto any ideas. The muscles that held her bones in working order ached, but not a hurting ache, kind of a contented throb.

Dacey yawned again. She guessed she'd better get to bed, but she guessed she knew why she didn't want to: this happiness blew through her like wind, buoyed her up like water, and she wanted to float along on it. But the summer had worn her out, like it had worn out her sneakers; and tomorrow she'd have to start school, but on the weekend she'd get the boat into the water and learn how to sail it; the long summer stretched behind them, they'd made it through, made it home.

LETTING GO

The four Tillerman children finally have a home at their grandmother's rundown farm on the Maryland shore. It's what Dicey has dreamed of for her three younger siblings, but after watching over the others for so long, it's hard to let go. Who is Dicey, if she's no longer the caretaker for her family?

Dicey finds herself in new friends, in a growing relationship with her grandmother, and in the satisfaction of refinishing the old boat she found in the barn. Then, as Dicey experiences the trials and pleasures of making a new life, the past comes back with devastating force, and Dicey learns just how necessary—and painful—letting go can be.

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