



Speak to me of love

By Dorothy Eden

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SURPASSING even the stunning achievement of her great best sellers, *Melbury Square* and *The Vines of Yarrabee*, Dorothy Eden now turns to the story of a great mercantile family - their strengths and weaknesses, passions and preoccupations through three generations - and of an extraordinary woman who was absolute monarch of a lavish commercial enterprise and the prisoner of a blinding passion at home. From the first time she set eyes on Overton House and on its brilliantly handsome young master, William Overton, Beatrice Bonnington was in thrall. In fact, it was sometimes difficult for her to distinguish which one she had fallen in love with first. But though the scion of a distinguished English family might be bought, neither he nor his peers could be forced to accept the daughter of a tradesman, despite the burgeoning success of Bonnington's Emporium in the Bayswater Road, the rival - nay, the equal - of Selfridge's and Liberty's. Wed her he might, but love her William could not seem to do. As he pursued his own pleasures more openly - frequent trips abroad, liaisons with the reigning beauties of the day - Beatrice sought refuge at Bonnington's. There she found the sense of importance that eluded her among the haughty aristocrats who attended her glittering balls at Overton House and mocked her maliciously behind their fans. There "Queen Bea" wielded a real and heady power to build at Bonnington's an empire that was an opulent reflection in microcosm of that other monarch, Victoria's far-flung domain. For Bea, business became an opiate to dull the pain of William's failure as a husband and flight from her bed.

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