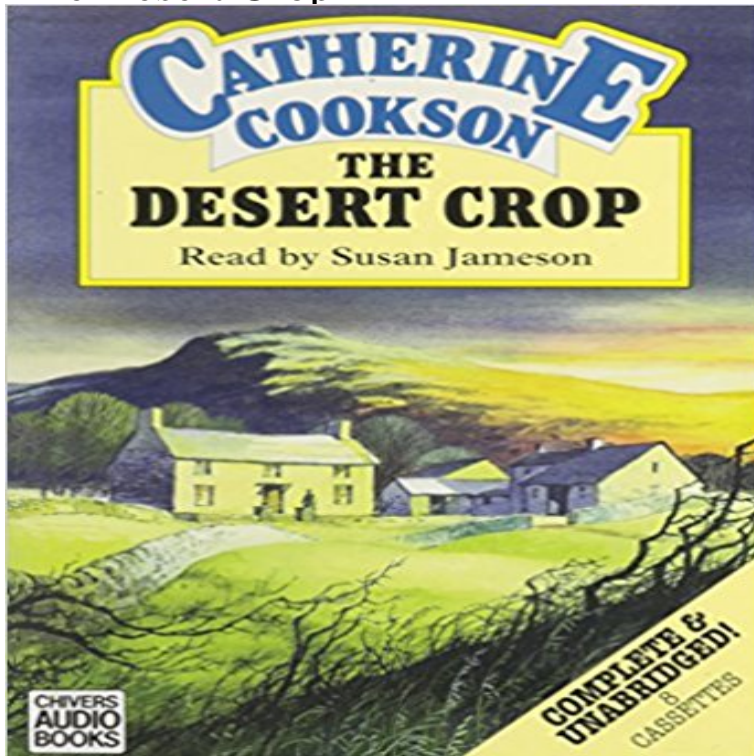


The Desert Crop



Shocking tragedy unexpectedly frees a young man to pursue the love and happiness he thought were unattainable in this family saga by Catherine Cookson, who remains even after her death one of the worlds best loved historical novelists. Money was tight in the farming communities around Fellburn, England, in the 1880s, so when Hector Stewart, only two years after the death of his long-suffering wife, announces to his children, Daniel and Pattie, that he is to marry Moira Conelly, a wealthy distant relative who lives in a castle in Ireland, it is easy to discern his motive. As for Moira, who had not been entirely honest about her background or finances, she has convinced herself that she would be marrying into landed gentry, allowing her the leisured lifestyle to which she believes herself entitled. It is with sonic surprise, therefore, after she arrives with her companion, Maggie Ann, that she realizes she is now the mistress of a ramshackle farm without any servants. Nonetheless, with her ever-cheerful disposition, Moira soon settles into the Stewart family routine. Pattie, always the rebel, leaves home to be married, but Daniel, deprived of an opportunity to study at university by his fathers insistence that he stay on the farm, can see no escape. Moira and Hectors marriage of convenience works well enough at first, but as their growing family compounds their financial difficulties, Hectors behavior toward her changes disturbingly. A horrifying act of violence provokes an even more shocking act of retribution in the family. Yet, this tragedy opens the way for Daniel to expand his horizons and to find the love and joy that have long been denied him. Set in Catherine Cooksons now familiar area of northeast England, Fellburn and its surroundings, this deeply felt novel of family conflict will be admired as one of the most powerful Cookson wrote in a career that spanned

more than forty years.

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