

FAKING THUNDER

SHORT SYNOPSIS

In 1863 Alabama, a shortage of salt threatens the food supply of an entire community. With twenty-nine bushels awaiting collection in Rome, Georgia, widow Mert McDaniel entrusts the journey to Jep, a middle-aged enslaved man whose integrity and judgment have earned her unwavering confidence. She sends her eleven-year-old daughter, Katie, along—not merely for Jep to protect her, but because Katie may be able to protect him.

Jep and Katie share a genuine affection, though their differences in age, temperament, and station make for an occasionally contentious partnership. Their journey carries them across Alabama and into Georgia, along roads increasingly threatened by Union Colonel Abel Streight's raid and the Confederate cavalry pursuing him under General Nathan Bedford Forrest.

As the armies clash across the countryside, ordinary lives become entangled in the campaign. Among Streight's Union soldiers is Private Ben Mercer, whose letters home to his wife and children offer a personal glimpse into the hardships, humor, and uncertainty of war.

For Jep and Katie, the dangers are often closer to the wagon. Suspicious strangers, unfamiliar roads, and the realities of slavery present challenges that require more than physical strength. Katie's quick thinking sometimes proves as valuable as Jep's experience and judgment. Along the way, their conversations reveal a shared history and parts of Jep's past that Katie has never known.

Blending wry humor, mounting danger, tenderness, and heartbreak with a little-known chapter of Civil War history, *FAKING THUNDER* follows two traveling companions whose journey to retrieve a community's salt carries them through one of the war's most remarkable pursuits.

Amid armies, battles, and the men history remembers, this is Jep and Katie's story.