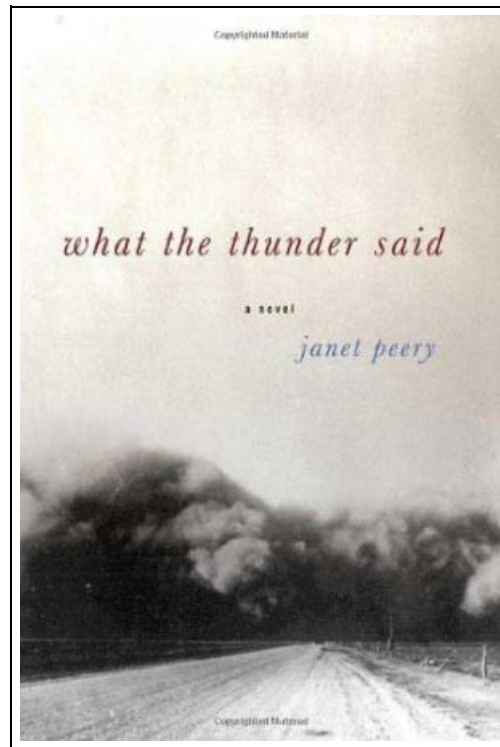


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St. Martins Press March 2007, 2007. New Trade. Condition: New. By the end of this novel's prologue, it is abundantly clear that Ms. Peery's punch lies in her instincts as a short story writer. She is swift and direct, disarming and lyric. Her manner of speaking-through the voices of her dustbowl/depression-era characters-is an identification with the stubborn reticence and perseverance born of that era: 'When she swung into the driver's seat and shut the door, he wondered why, although the day had gone crosswise to his plan, he felt so oddly gleeful. It wasn't just his shriven feet or that they'd dealt with one another to the metes and bounds of their imperfect powers, or that the fire he'd felt to say his piece had come to smoke.' As far as plot goes, Peery's story centers on the Spoon family-McHenry, Billie Ann, and daughters Mackie and Etta. Theirs is a nerve-strung and seemingly doomed clan, riddled with secrets and unable to communicate the love their blood carries. Peery depends on the elder Mackie to tell the bulk of the story-an initially surprising choice until Mackie's inner and outward trajectories are more fully revealed. Though over half of the book is from Mackie's perspective, Etta, McHenry, Jesse (Mackie's son), Georgette (Etta's daughter), an apparently unrelated middle-aged radiologist, and a retired judge have their say. A novel-in-stories, *What the Thunder Said* is painfully beautiful, and sharply funny to boot. With the verve of Flannery O'Connor and an eloquence akin to Wendell Berry, Peery magically pulls together these disparate lives by the sheer power of their inconstant, dazzling humanity. 306 pp.



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