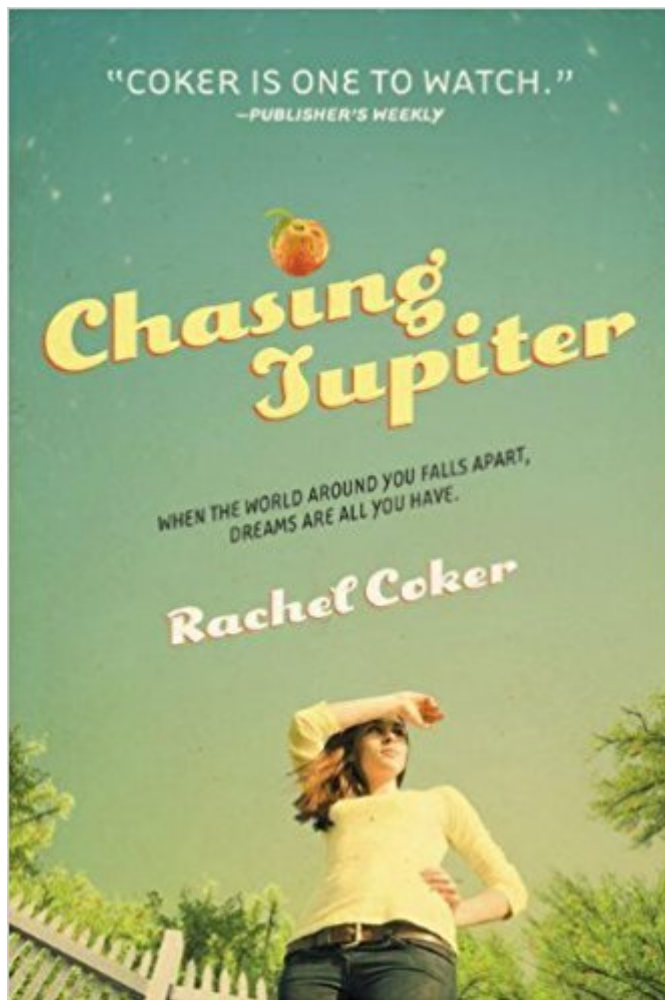




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Chasing Jupiter



Synopsis

Scarlett Blaine's life in 1960s Georgia isn't always easy, especially given her parents' financial struggles and the fights surrounding her sister Juli's hippie lifestyle. Then there's her brother, Cliff. While Scarlett loves him more than anything, there's no denying his unique behavior leaves Cliff misunderstood and left out. So when he wishes for a rocket to Jupiter, Scarlett agrees to make it happen, no matter how crazy the idea might be. Raising the rocket money means baking pies, and the farmer's son, Frank, agrees to provide the peaches if Scarlett will help him talk to Juli. The problem is, Scarlett really enjoys her time with Frank, and finds herself wondering if, someday, they could be more than friends. Just as she thinks everything might be going her way, Cliff suffers an accident that not only affects the rocket plans, but shakes Scarlett's view of God. As the summer comes to an end, Scarlett must find a way to regain what she's lost, but also fulfill a promise to launch her brother's dream.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Gr 9 Up-In rural Georgia, in 1969, 16-year-old Scarlett Blaine is a people pleaser. She struggles to be the perfect family member and caregiver for her autistic younger brother, Cliff, and her mentally unbalanced grandfather. When Cliff sees Neil Armstrong's Moon walk, he wants to fly to Jupiter and enlists Scarlett and Frank, the local peach farmer's son, to help build a rocket. Scarlett loves Frank, but his crush on her free-spirited, older sister and her parents' fighting leave the teen wondering

how to cope with a world turned upside down. Scarlett puts her faith in God and family. This book is recommended for libraries looking to expand their Christian-fiction collections.-Lisa Gieskes, Richland County Public Library, Columbia, SC
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Sixteen-year-old Scarlett Blaine has her hands full. Both her parents work hard just to put food on the table (though the cooking frequently falls to Scarlett). Her grandfather lives with the family because of his dementia. Her older sister, Juli, is a hippie, and her 10-year-old brother, Cliff, is peculiar—making lists, not wanting to be touched, having spells of silence, and wanting to build a rocket that will take him to Jupiter. To support his dream, Scarlett decides to sell peach pies to help him build it. Handsome, quiet Frank will help, too, and conveniently, his dad owns the peach orchard. Set in rural Georgia in 1969, there are real issues here (many contemporary readers will recognize Cliff's challenges as Asperger's) and romance as well. This excellent story about first love, family ties, and what matters most is the second novel by the 17-year-old author of *Interrupted* (2012). Grades 8-10, --Melissa Moore

This is a sweet, nostalgic portrait of an America on the brink of something wonderful and a 16-year-old girl whose life changes forever. Scarlett Blaine is a sweet, spunky narrator whose faith (and likewise doubt) in God is rendered believable at Coker's expert hand. Her slow, sweet relationship with Frank, the peach farmer's son, her camaraderie with her unique and special brother, Cliff, and her ability to relate to her Grandpop Barley when everyone else wonders too much about his red tie and obsession with peanut butter immediately endear her to readers. I loved the Georgia summer setting of the book: the long, lazy days and the fast-falling nights. I also loved the excitement one teenager experiences at the precipice of adulthood: like there is so much more on the brink love, faith and family. When tragedy strikes and Scarlett's world is torn apart, she learns to trust in God like never before. Sometimes a rocket to Jupiter is just another one of the seemingly impossible presents on your little brother's crazy Birthday list, other times its symbolic of faith and pursuing a God who seems unreachable when, really, He's as close as your next-door neighbour.

Age Appropriate For: 10 and up for some thematic elements. Best for Ages: 14 - 20 I loved Coker's first book so much that I went out and paid full price for her second book when it came out. For those of you who don't know me, this never happens. I normally wait until the price comes down or until I can get it to review. I just don't

have the money to buy books new and fresh off the press. So, as you can tell, I was very excited about the book. Since I was in the middle of a project when I got the book, I let my younger sister read it first, since she was also a Coker fan. She finished it and said she was disappointed with the book. So, I put off reading the book. When I finally got around to reading it, I went in with low expectations. Scarlett was just a hard character to connect with; in fact I didn't until I was about 60% done. After an accident and Scarlet is wondering if her loved one will live or die, I finally found my connection, as I had been through some of the same emotions with one of my siblings. While Scarlett was a well-developed character and well written, most of the time she just seemed distant from the reader. Coker's writing was superb in her last book, but it was even better in this one. Her style and way with words is nothing short of being brilliant. I am sure that, with her talent, she will go far in her writing career. The supporting cast of this book was excellent. Frank was my favorite, the kind animal lover who wants to help Scarlett and Cliff have a wonderful summer. Cliff, a boy who obviously has some sort of mental handicap like down-syndrome, tugged at my heart strings. Her Grandfather made me sad as I thought of the wonderful elderly people I have known that have had dementia. Juli was the wild child, but she was still likable. My favorite part of this book was Scarlett talks with the pastor's wife as she tried to figure out what the purpose of life and hardships are. I felt that Coker did a great job at answering these tough questions, and give real hope, not syrupy answers. Over all, I recommend this book to those who like historical fiction, great storytelling, and coming-of-age stories.

My 10 year old daughter is an advanced reader and loved this book!

My 7th grade daughter loved this book!

It puzzles me to no end why I'd never heard of teen novelist Rachel Coker until now. Introduced to her by my wonderful friend, Rosie, I was taken aback at the glowing reviews, forgot about it, and was then offered a copy through DJC Communications. Already Rachel has an impressive résumé and if only one word were to describe (as impossible as this is) Rachel's sophomore novel, it'd be unique. Missing from the story is any hint of a feel-good vibe because its impact is meant to go deeper - to touch its reader - than the average teen novel. Unlike the majority of YA fiction, there is no love triangle or flying creatures, just straight-forward, "solid" writing curbing what could have otherwise been a story thought too quirky for the happy-ending sort of

reader. Every single one of these characters is quirky albeit memorable in their own way. Cliff is a compulsive kid in nearly everything he does and is hard to "understand" as a result. Favorite parts within these pages include the relationship between the fun (and underused!) character of Mrs. Greene and Scarlett. Shades of the best-selling novel, *The Help* vividly comes to mind during these portions of the book, bringing thoughts of Minny and Celia's endearing story to life. There's a hilarious scene involving a chicken and some great conversations between them. It's in these moments that Coker's writing voice is best. Written in the first person, this is unarguably the most mature, well thought-out novel I've ever read in this prose. There's wit and tears in equal measure but the voice of Scarlett is never lost in all that drama. Her struggle is real and relatable to any young person if they've ever "gone along" (for the sake of their parents) with the spiritual traditions they've been brought up with. Likewise, Scarlett's transformation of realizing she is not as indestructible as she thinks is heartfelt. The only flaw I found a bit rushed was the "epilogue." It reads a bit too hurried for my tastes and although I am a big fan of that "last word," I prefer it being more fleshed out. Not only is what is on the inside worth discovering, this cover jacket is stunning! The book is beautifully designed, it's a hardback and the concept is perfection complementing the story in every sense. Written with maturity and appearing on the Christian fiction scene with a fresh voice, Rachel has the makings of a long career with endorsements that are wonderfully favorable. She's got a knack for story-telling, and if *Chasing Jupiter* is any indication, she isn't going to be disappearing from the book shelves of stores anytime soon. It's moving and remarkably poignant. Bravo, Rachel. With thanks to the publisher and DJC Communications for providing a copy of this book for reviewing purposes.

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