



Q & A with Jolina Petersheim

Author of *The Alliance*



JOLINA PETERSHEIM is the bestselling author of *The Outcast*, which *Library Journal* gave a starred review and named one of the best books of 2013. Upon the release of her second book, *The Midwife*, *Romantic Times* declared, “Petersheim is an amazing new author.” Jolina and her husband share the same unique Amish and Mennonite heritage that originated in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania. They recently relocated from the mountains of Tennessee to the Driftless Region of Wisconsin, where they live with their two young daughters. Visit jolinapetersheim.com.

- 1. *The Alliance* is quite a unique take on the standard apocalyptic novel, which *New York Times* bestselling author Sarah McCoy said is “ablaze with hope.” Can you tell us how you came up with the idea for this story?**

I guess you could say I had a slightly different childhood. When I was six and my brother ten, our family stood in a field on the camp where my parents were caretakers, and my parents told us that this was where we would meet if we were separated when the world “blew up.” From this field, our family would travel by foot to our friends’ elaborate, fairytale home and live in the blue room hidden behind their bookshelves. My parents in no way meant to instill fear in us. Now that I’m a parent, I see that they were trying to assuage their own fears by coming up with a disaster-recovery plan. But I was born with an overactive imagination, and therefore this plan planted in me the seed of fear—and, subsequently, a driving need to control my environment.

- 2. Would you say you were from a very apocalyptically-minded family?**

Very. This mindset is generational, it seems, for my grandfather—who grew up in immense poverty during the Great Depression—was very “end of the world” as well. I breathed fear all my life and am only now, at twenty-nine, learning to live by faith. This story is an extension of my own personal journey.

- 3. Can you tell us a little more about this journey?**

Of course. When my eldest was six months old, an unnerving exchange with a logger caused my fear to deepen its roots and for me to ask myself whether I would ever use lethal force to protect myself and my family. I believed I would, even though, growing up, I sensed that my own father would adhere to his Mennonite (pacifist) heritage if placed in such a situation. This is very similar to what the Mennonites in *The Alliance* are faced with when a cataclysmic event causes society to break down around the community and begin closing in.



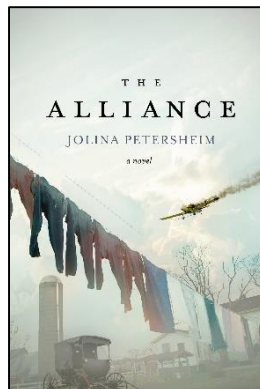
4. I find it fascinating how you drew upon personal experiences to create this story. Leora Ebersole, one of your two narrators in *The Alliance*, has a driving need to control her environment, even after society crumbles around her, because if she controls her environment, she believes she will be able to keep her family safe. Is this something you've also experienced?

Unfortunately, yes (or perhaps fortunately, depending on how you look at it). With every one of my books, God's been faithful to allow me to experience some portion of whatever topic I'm addressing. *The Alliance* has been no exception. My family and I moved from Tennessee to Wisconsin shortly before I finished the rough draft. Eight weeks later, my husband went in for a CAT scan, which revealed a tumor near his brain stem. He had surgery the next morning, and all through that night next to his hospital bed, I feared for my family.

I feared for our two young daughters--our firstborn was two and a half and our second was four months old at the time. I feared that I would be a widow, living on a grid-tie solar-powered farm six hundred miles away from our immediate families.

5. That must've been terribly frightening, seeing one of your worst fears come true.

It was. I really didn't know how to handle it. However, all through that Garden of Gethsemane night, during the hours my husband was in surgery, and the critical weeks that followed the craniotomy, I felt God's presence as if he was sitting beside me. I then understood that God had allowed me to face one of my greatest fears so that I would learn that inner peace can never be acquired through my futile attempts to control my environment—and therefore keep my family safe. Moreover, I can only achieve inner peace if I continually surrender my life and the lives of my family to the One who called us into being.



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