

A Roman senator's daughter and her husband embark on a mission for the emperor. They'll deliver the sword of King David of Israel that legend claims carries a curse to Jerusalem. At every turn, they are faced with challenges—and a brutal killer.

A Sword Among Ravens

By Cynthia Ripley Miller

Order the book from the publisher Booklocker.com

<https://www.booklocker.com/p/books/11328.html?s=pdf>

**or from your favorite neighborhood
or online bookstore.**

A Sword Among Ravens



BOOK THREE OF THE LONG-HAIR SAGA

CYNTHIA RIPLEY MILLER

Copyright © 2020 Cynthia Ripley Miller

Print ISBN: 978-1-64719-001-9

Epub ISBN: 978-1-64719-002-6

Mobi ISBN: 978-1-64719-003-3

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, recording or otherwise, without the prior written permission of the author.

Published by BookLocker.com, Inc., St. Petersburg, Florida.

Printed on acid-free paper.

The characters and events in this book are fictitious. Any similarity to real persons, living or dead, is coincidental and not intended by the author.

BookLocker.com, Inc.

2020

First Edition

Library of Congress Cataloguing in Publication Data

Miller, Cynthia Ripley

A Sword Among Ravens by Cynthia Ripley Miller

Library of Congress Control Number: 2020918587

Praise for the Long-Hair Saga Novels

by
Cynthia Ripley-Miller

On the Edge of Sunrise; The Quest for the Crown of Thorns; A Sword Among Ravens

“From cover to cover a gripping read – in all senses of the word! Grips your interest and imagination, your held breath and your pounding heart! A thumping good novel!”

- Helen Hollick USA Today bestselling
author of the *Sea Witch Voyages*

“Forbidden love, a turbulent time period, and world-changing events combine to produce a real page-turner.”

- India Edghill, author of *Queenmaker*,
Wisdom's Daughter, and *Delilah*.

“A passionate and intriguing take on the often-overlooked clash of three brutal and powerful empires: the Romans, Franks, and Huns. A Compelling read!”

- Stephanie Thornton, author of *The Secret History* and *The Tiger Queens*

“Readers will be absorbed by a setting of barbarian Gaul and the constancy of Arria’s and Garic’s destined love amid the strife of a dying Roman Empire.”

- Albert Noyer, author of *The Getorius* and *Arcadia Mysteries*

“In this thriller, set in fifth-century Rome, rivals race to possess Christ’s crown of thorns. Ripley Miller (On the Edge of Sunrise 2015) astutely brings to life a Rome teetering precariously on the brink of

collapse ... The plot advances energetically, and the combination of political and romantic drama—spiritual as well—is rousing. The reader should be glad to have read this volume and eager for a third. Intelligent and artfully crafted historical fiction”

- Kirkus Reviews ~ *The Quest for the Crown of Thorns: Book Two of the Long-Hair Saga*

“Miller writes (*A Sword Among Ravens*) with not only a great deal of elegance but also authority, which brought this era back to life in all of its splendour . . . she sweeps them away in a narrative that can only be described as enthralling.”

- Mary Anne Yarde author of the *Du Lac Chronicles*

AUTHOR'S NOTE

I often feel like a detective searching for the facts true to the 5th century, and I enjoy it. In my previous two books and this one, I researched many items and customs that the modern person might be unaware of or take for granted. For example: Which gems were known and used in the time of King David of Israel (ruled 1035-970 BC)? Was the size, metal, and shape of a sword used in King David's time the same as a sword used in the 5th century AD? How many miles could a traveler on foot, on a horse, or in a wagon cover in one day? What materials were used to stitch and treat a variety of wounds? What were the burial practices? Did sutures dissolve, and did they shake hands? In this note, I would like to offer the reader a bit of background to help broaden the setting and customs of the time in the Roman Empire and late antiquity (AD 395-800).

Roman Months: Januarius, Februarius, Martius, Aprilis, Maius, Junius, Julius (originally Quinctilis, changed later to honor Julius Caesar), Augustus (originally Sextilis, changed to honor Caesar Augustus), September, October, November, December.

Roman Days (The seven day week introduced by Emperor Constantine AD 306-337): Monday-*dies lunae* (moon's day); Tuesday-*dies martis* (Mars); Wednesday-*dies mercurii* (Mercury); Thursday-*dies jovis* (Jupiter); Friday-*dies veneris* (Venus); Saturday-*dies saturni* (Saturn); Sunday-*dies solis* (sun's day).

Transportation and Accommodations: I used Lionel Casson's books *Travel in the Ancient World* and *The Ancient Mariners* and the 'Pilgrim of Jerusalem's' account as prime sources. People traveled primarily on foot or horseback; by carts, coaches, and wagons; and by ship.

Hospitium, stabulum, and mansio were terms used for 'respectable' lodging in ancient Rome. They provided everything travelers might need: 'meals and sleeping quarters; change of clothing for the drivers and postilions; change of animals; carriages and drivers; grooms; escorts for bringing back vehicles and teams to the

previous station; porters; veterinarians to put to right animals in trouble; cartwrights to put to rights equipment in trouble.’ (Casson 1994)

Although actual passenger ships did not exist in the 5th century, people traveled on trading vessels and freighters. In Lionel Casson’s book *The Ancient Mariners*, I discovered that passenger lists and manifests were used. ‘Travelers booked deck passage, sleeping either in the open or under little tent-like shelters.’ The average amount of time it took to travel by sea was 5-6 days, depending on the destination, and 8-10 days in poor weather.

PLACES

Constantinople: The capital city of the Eastern Roman Empire from the years AD 330-1204 and 1261-1453, and as the capital of the Latin Empire (1204-1261). Later it served as the capital of the Ottoman Empire from 1453-1921. In the 1920s, the Turkish variation Istanbul became the preferred name of this historic city.

In AD 330, the Roman emperor Constantine moved the capital from Rome to Byzantium and renamed the city *Constantinopolis*, meaning ‘City of Constantine.’ In AD 395, the Roman Empire was divided into two parts. Constantinople remained the center of the Eastern Empire until 1453, whereas the Western Empire and Rome fell in AD 476. Constantinople was the largest and wealthiest city in the empire from the fifth century into the thirteenth century. In Roman times, the government advanced Christianity and the city as the home of the Patriarch of Constantinople and the ‘guardian of Christendom’s holiest relics such as the Crown of Thorns and the True Cross.’ (newadvent.org, ancientcivilizations-ushistory.org, wikipedia.org)

Jerusalem: In AD 324–25, Emperor Constantine reunited the empire after winning the Civil Wars of the Tetrarchy. Within a few months, the First Council of Nicaea (first worldwide Christian council) confirmed the status of Aelia Capitolina, (the name given to Jerusalem by the emperor Hadrian in AD 130) as a residence of a patriarch. This was when a significant wave of Christian pilgrims and immigration to the city began. The city is believed to have been

renamed Jerusalem in 324. In 325, the ban on Jews entering the city remained in force (first enforced by Emperor Hadrian after the Simon Bar Kokhba revolt) but were allowed to enter at different periods once a year to pray at the Western Wall on ‘the ninth of Ab’ (Asali, K.J., *Jerusalem in History*, 2000).

Damascus Gate: “Emperor Hadrian’s Neapolis gate . . . now became St. Stephen’s Gate for some centuries [Byzantine period] until the Arabs named it the Gate of the Column, and later the Nablus Gate; Jews called it the Shechem Gate; Ottoman’s called it today’s name, Damascus Gate. (Today’s St. Stephen’s Gate is on the eastern side of the city.)” (Montefiore, 2011)

The Tower of David: Herod the Great built three towers named Phaesal, Hippicus, and Mariamne. With time, however, only one survived. During the Byzantine era, the remaining tower, ‘and by extension the Citadel as a whole, acquired its alternative name—the Tower of David.’ In error, the Byzantines identified the hill on which it sat as Mount Zion and assumed it to be David’s palace mentioned in 2 Samuel. The Tower of David, known to the Byzantines (this story’s time period), is not the minaret built by the Muslims that is seen today and called the Tower of David. David’s Road and St. John’s Street are fictitious names I created for lack of data for the time.

Garic’s fictional farm is called *Wilder Honig* (I used German to represent the ancient Frankish language) and *Wild Honey* in English. It’s in the province of Belgica Secunda in northeastern Gaul (France).

Arria’s villa is located in *Tuscia*, the Roman name for Etruria, the territories in central Italy originally under ancient Etruscan influence. In the past, it equated with the modern-day region of Tuscany.

POINTS OF INTEREST

Flavius Valerius Marcian: The emperor of the Eastern Roman Empire, Flavius Marcian, ruled from AD 450-457. He spent his early years as a soldier but rose to a position in the Roman guard, an elite unit that served as household members and bodyguards to the emperor. In time, Flavius Marcian was made captain of the guard and later raised to the position of senator. When Theodosius II died in

450, the deceased emperor's sister, Pulcheria, chose Marcian as her consort to rule the Eastern Roman Empire in Constantinople (Istanbul, Turkey).

Patriarch: In AD 451, the Council of Chalcedon raised the bishop of Jerusalem to the position of patriarch. Juvenal was the first patriarch from AD 451-458.

The Latin endearment *Mellitula* used by Garic for Arria means 'little honey.' The German endearment *Krieger* used by Arria for Garic means 'warrior.'

David's sword is a fictitious creation.

Lastly, I've endeavored to represent the events, places, and beliefs as near to the historical record as possible. However, I've also added my interpretation to the lives of all the characters, real and imagined.

The Cast of Characters

Arria Felix: A Roman Senator's daughter and a Roman envoy

Garic the Frank: A Frank barbarian noble and First Counsel to his tribe and Arria's husband

Lucius Valerius Marcian: A tribune and Arria's first husband killed in battle in AD 448

Darius: A Roman centurion under Lucius Marcian and Goth barbarian

Emperor Flavius Valerius Marcian: A senator, later emperor of Constantinople; Tribune Lucius Marcian's father

Samuel Ben Zechariah: Arria's former slave and manservant

Licia: Arria and Garic's adopted daughter, age 7

Vodamir & Basina: Garic's cousin and his wife, a Hun healer

Catalina: Arria's handmaiden

Brother Bruno: A monk from the monastery of San Petrus in Brundisium (Brindisi, Italy)

Justus & Telemachus: Emperor Marcian's royal bodyguards

Marcella: Arria's half-sister

Nerian: A Saxon mercenary and Marcella's lover companion

Accipiter: An Egyptian merchant in Jerusalem

Corvus & Jax: Mercenaries for hire

Valeria Azarian: An Armenian merchant and trader in artifacts

Kalev Ben Jonah aka Goliath & Alexander Kronus: A Jewish merchant from Constantinople

Milvus: An Armenian merchant in Jerusalem and Valeria's brother

Anna: Milvus' cousin and widow

Porcius Festus: A Roman procurator and Anna's lover

He/Nemesis: Psychopath and villain

Leo: Centurion under Tribune Lucius Marcian

Seneca & Sharpie: Soldiers under Lucius Marcian

Leah: Kalev's wife

Joshua: Kalev's son

Atticus: Valeria's bodyguard

Tygran: Caravan master

Babajan: Accipiter's servant

Rachel: A Jerusalem wine maiden

Urban: Swordsmith in Caesarea

Father Audric aka Father Prior: Prior of the Monastery of the Cross

Brother Evander and Brother Primus: Monks at the Monastery of the Cross

Patriarch Juvenal: The Patriarch of the Church of Jerusalem

Bishop Anastasius: Bishop of the Church of Jerusalem

Father Isaac: Secretary to the bishops and patriarch in Jerusalem

Erasmus: Emperor's older servant

Zoran: Milvus' servant boy

BYZANTINE JERUSALEM



A.D. 326-638



Prologue

A Husband, a Sword, and a Curse

AD 447: Roman Province of Dacia Ripensis (Bulgaria)—Month of Julius

Waves of burnt grass fell away as Lucius Valerius Marcian stomped through the battlefield. Behind him, his surviving cavalry soldiers—the Roman VIII Augusta Equites—found their horses abandoned when the fighting went to foot. Marcian stopped and looked around.

Toward the west, bold yellow rays stretched from the late afternoon sun across gray clouds gathering overhead. They shined with an ominous brightness that rattled through him, making him uneasy—on guard. The battle against the Huns had been fierce. Both sides suffered heavy losses, but their Roman general had died on the field, a brutal blow for the Romans. Shouting victory, the Huns had moved east toward a nearby city, and greater plunders.

A mild breeze swept past him. He winced. A stench floated from the barbarian and Roman corpses around them. The smell of death wasn't new to him. But even now, after many battles and bodies at his feet, the foul odor, the sight of bloated flesh, and gaping wounds were still difficult to ignore.

Marcian swallowed hard and turned from the wind. He searched the distance. On a small hill, he spied Apollo. The horse grazed beside a cluster of bushes that circled a large oak tree. Sweat dripped from Marcian's curls and onto his brow while splatters of blood and skin stuck to his tunic, helmet, and leather armor. The summer heat had laughed at the slaughter, adding a cruel torment to the battle, but they had persevered, fought tight, outmaneuvered—and lived. He would see Arria again.

The other horses stood farther away, and the men fanned in that direction. Marcian grinned. It was just like Apollo to go in his own direction and very similar to his master, who often struggled with his own independent nature. Even the girl he chose to marry was not the average Roman woman. Arria had been raised unconventionally. Her

father had provided her with a man's education, not just the domestic arts taught to women. As a result, many in Rome respected her for her sharp wit, powers of deduction, and diplomacy. Marcian's friends warned that she might be a difficult wife to control, but he had no desire to rule over her; he just wanted to live with and lay beside her. He loved her tenacity, her keen mind, and most important to him, they laughed together.

Marcian ran up the hill while Apollo continued to graze. Suddenly, he stumbled and went sprawling face down onto the ground. Something solid had tripped him. He rose to his knees and shook his head. Running his fingers over his forehead, he glanced behind him. A small black object jutted out from the grass at an angle.

Scrambling to his feet, he went and crouched over it. To the eye and touch, it looked and felt like an iron ring pushing through the earth, eroded by weather and time. Marcian drew his knife and scratched the exterior. Hardened dirt stuck to the surface, forcing him to chip it away. The more he scraped, the larger the object grew. After several more attempts, the ring appeared attached to a metal slab. Marcian looked around. The field was quiet. Most of his men had retrieved their horses and returned to the field camp. Roman bodies needed to be stripped and buried. Not far from him, he spotted his centurion riding in his direction. He waved, and the Roman soldier trotted his horse toward him. A barbarian by birth, the tall, husky blond Goth, Darius, wore only a tunic with a thick leather belt, boots, and no helmet. He lent a sharp contrast to Marcian's shorter, rugged build and dark coloring.

"Darius, help me!" Marcian stood and shouted. "I've found something odd buried in the grass."

The centurion rode up the hill and jumped from his horse. "What is it, sir?" he asked.

"An iron ring attached to a lid or door, but I want to know what's inside. Tie up my horse. Then go to the camp and bring back two shovels."

Marcian returned to his knees while Darius tethered Apollo and then rode away. Thunder pealed in the distance. He looked toward the sky. A few sun rays still pierced the clouds, but the moving layers looked darker, heavier. He raked his knife faster. With a strong hand, he brushed away the earth. Marcian sat back on his haunches, gazed at the ring, and waited. Soon, Darius arrived with the shovels. They

dug along the perimeter in opposite directions. Within minutes, they uncovered two hinges on what was clearly a bronze frame. Whatever lay beneath the earth was larger than Marcian had imagined.

In unison, they fought feverishly to unearth the mysterious object and beat the threatening rain. With the last layer of dirt gone, both men stopped to rest. Embedded in the hill's grassy slope, a three by six-foot rusted iron door shone dark brown in the light. Darius sat on a nearby rock. Marcian took a breath, removed his helmet, and dropped it on the ground.

"How strange," Marcian commented, pulling a short scarf from around his neck. He wiped his brow and then tied it around his forehead.

Darius nodded, then pursed his lips and scratched his jaw. "Looks heavy, I wonder if it can be opened?" With a quick laugh, he added. "I brought some mead to strengthen us."

"Good man!"

Darius retrieved a pouch hanging on his saddle and tossed it to Marcian, who took a swig and handed the pouch back to the centurion. Darius took a long drink.

Marcian looked at the sky. "The sun is hidden now. Let's open this door—to the devil knows what—and be done before the rain falls." He grabbed the handle, and Darius used the shovel to pry open the door from its frame.

The first attempt proved futile. Their breath labored, they heaved and groaned as thunder rolled over them.

"Balls! This is stubborn," Darius hissed between clenched teeth.

Marcian tugged at the handle. Darius wedged the shovel's blade between the door and the frame. The door hinges creaked, giving them hope. Their muscles straining, they braced their legs, bent forward, and yanked. The door screeched like a warning owl. "Harder," Marcian gasped. Darius bellowed a curse.

The door suddenly gave way, almost knocking Marcian backward. He steadied himself, took a step, and looked down. A dark hole leading into a tunnel gaped back at him.

"*Shit!* What's that?" Darius spat.

"How the hell do I know," Marcian replied gruffly, but I'm going to find out."

Darius nodded, swiped the pouch from the ground, and took another drink. "Will you go first, Tribune?"

Marcian laughed. “Centurion, I won’t let my rank trump your lack of courage.” With a last look into the pit, he jumped in. The edge of the earth came to his waist, and he knelt to crawl in deeper. A few feet ahead of him, he saw bone fragments, a partial jaw with several teeth, and a bundle of deteriorated leather. A shield rested nearby.

Marcian’s heart beat faster. He looked closer. A metal box poked through the bones and animal skin. A sudden rush of dread washed over him. Sweat trickled from beneath the scarf covering his brow. He paused but spied a metal grip. Marcian quickly yanked the box and scurried backward, dragging the case to the opening. Darius gave him a hand, and Marcian jumped out. Together, they reached into the hole and lifted the box onto the ground.

They stood beside it and stared. The box looked about three feet long, a foot wide and half as deep. Marcian tore away the decomposed leather clinging to the outside. On closer inspection, the case proved to be silver, heavily tarnished. A lock secured the lid. Marcian snatched a remnant of the aged leather and rubbed the top of the metal. A short row of engraved and unrecognizable letters or symbols, dulled by time, appeared. He frowned. The case seemed quite old, perhaps ancient.

“Shall we open it?” Darius asked, his eyes shining.

“Better to open it here than in camp with many around us. Use the shovel.”

Darius nodded and swung the blade down against the lock. Yielding to the force of the clanging iron tool, the lock snapped open. Marcian planted his feet firmly behind the box, at the base, and clamped his fingers on the lid’s edge. Darius pressed one foot on the front side and used his knife to pry at it while Marcian pulled from behind. The rusted lid budged a little but groaned its refusal.

“Lift!” Marcian barked, and his jaw tightened. The lid creaked one more time—then gave in and opened.

A *whoosh* escaped the box trailed by a faint odor of eucalyptus. Both men flinched with the sensation and glanced at one another. Inside, an object wrapped in grayed linen cloth fit snugly into the container.

“This gets more mysterious by the moment,” Marcian said softly.

Darius scratched his head. “What is it?”

“Let’s find out; the day is dying, and a raindrop just brushed my cheek.” Marcian kneeled and lifted the bundle from its case. With a

pivot and his arms extended, he gently placed it on the ground. As Marcian unwrapped the object, pieces of the linen crumbled. A soft flash of light burst through the fabric and struck his eyes; he blinked. When he looked again, a sword, simple in form but strangely beautiful lay nestled in the cloth. Gazing at it, he knew it must be an ancient weapon. The gray metal harbored slight flakes of rust and held a matted gloss. The sword was short, more like an old *gladius*, and not as long as the standard *spatha*. The round ivory grip was carved with circular lines. The silver pommel held small, bright-red rubies that sparkled in the light from their tiny recesses. Just below the blunted cross-guard, etched down the center of the blade, gold symbols—similar to those on the surface of the box—flowed in a line.

Darius let out a whistle.

Marcian took a breath and picked it up. “It’s lighter than I thought it would be.” He ran his finger over the flat surface, then gently pressed his thumb to a surprisingly sharp edge just below the tip. “This must be the sword of a king or nobleman, but from where or when?”

“Wherever the sword is from, it could be of great value,” Darius added. “Why else would it be so carefully preserved and hidden?”

Marcian frowned. “Say not a word to anyone in the camp.” Placing the sword back into the silver casket, he closed the box. He slipped the scarf from his brow to his neck, replaced his helmet resting near his feet, stood, and thought, *I’ll take this to father in Constantinople. With his power as a senator, he may be able to help me unravel the mystery surrounding this weapon.*

Marcian ordered Darius to shut the outer door and cover the site with dirt to protect the grave. Regardless if the bony remnants came from a servant, guardian, or nobleman, they would show respect for the dead, even if they kept the sword. Then Marcian folded the pieces of cloth on top of the sword and closed the lid of the box. He carried it to his horse and, with leather straps, secured it to the backboard of his saddle. Both men mounted and proceeded down the hill.

At the base, Darius took the lead and gave Marcian a sly look. “I’d wager the sword is worth something. Or maybe . . . it carries bad luck—the evil eye.”

“I’ll never wager this sword, not for anything, but I bet it’s more valuable than damned.” Marcian grinned.

The centurion let out a hearty laugh. “Are you sure you’ll never wager?” He put the pouch to his lips. Marcian swore. As he watched Darius drink, a swift and sudden *zip* pierced the air and careened past him, almost grazing his ear. A chilling horror gripped him. An arrow struck Darius in the neck, and the centurion slumped over.

Marcian slid frantically from his horse using Apollo as a barrier. Twenty feet away, a wounded Hun rested on his knees, his body hunched, a bow resting in his hand. Marcian grabbed his spear from its case and hurled it with all his strength into the warrior’s chest. The impaled barbarian grunted and fell backward. Marcian ran to Darius. The centurion had survived the battle, but now he sat lifeless in his saddle—bled to death.

Marcian kicked the ground and went to the dead Hun. “Son of a bitch!” he swore, yanking the spear from the Hun’s body and stabbing him again. He circled around, letting out an angry cry, ripped out the spear, and threw it down. Darius the Goth had ridden by his side from Marcian’s first days with the cavalry.

Rain started to fall. Marcian pushed Darius’ body forward and tied him to his saddle. Mounting Apollo, he grabbed the reins of Darius’ horse. His soldier and friend had fought the Huns bravely and lived. But now, by an unexpected twist of fate, he was dead.

Marcian stared at the dark clouds as a brooding premonition shook him. He prayed the sword carried no curse.



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This third book took me on an adventure deeper into the mystery, suspense, and thriller genres, which I feel most at home with as an author. However, love is the heart of Arria and Garic's relationship, and so, threads of their romance weave through the novel. Once again, I must credit the story and muses for leading me through old and new characters and historical details that fell naturally into place.

However, the real work comes in the revision process, and my novel group writers, Janet Souter, Tamara Tabel, and Carol Cosman, helped me through it. We have spent years together, editing, critiquing, enriching, and polishing one another's manuscripts. Thank you so much for being part of my journey.

Also, my most sincere thanks to: My husband, Greg, for supporting my writing goals and acting as a sounding board when I need it; My publisher Angela Hoy and her team at Book Locker Inc., and Cathy Helms at Avalon Graphics; My Beta readers, Linda Hlavacek, India Edghill, and Sheila Bunnell; and the night writers at the Barrington Writers Workshop.

All the experts who have helped me through their written works—especially the histories, *Rome and Jerusalem* by Martin Goodman; *Jerusalem: The Biography* by Simon Montefiore; and *Jerusalem in History* by K.J. Asali. And also, through online sites and forums with direction, suggestions, and quality information, most notably, UNRV Roman Empire Forum; the Jewish Theological Seminary librarians, Deborah Schranz and Ina Cohen; my friend and expert Hebrew character contributor, Marty Kander; Father Nicholas Spencer, Quarr Abbey, Ryde, Isle of Wight; Helen King, Professor Emerita, Classical Studies The Open University.

Omnia ad Dei gloriam: All for the glory of God.

Cynthia Ripley Miller

Thank you for reading my novel. I hope you'll consider leaving a review on the site where you purchased it. I would also love to hear from you and can be reached at: cynthia@cynthiariplemiller.com

Cynthia Ripley Miller is a first generation Italian-American writer with a love for history, languages, and books. She has lived, worked, and traveled in Europe, Africa, North America, and the Caribbean. She holds two degrees and has taught history and English. Her short fiction has appeared in the anthology *Summer Tapestry*, at *Orchard Press Mysteries.com* and *The Scriptor*. A Ring of Honor: Circle of Books Award winner, and Chanticleer International Chatelaine Award finalist for her novel, *On the Edge of Sunrise*, she has reviewed for *UNRV Roman History*, and blogs at *Historical Happenings and Oddities: A Distant Focus* and on her website:

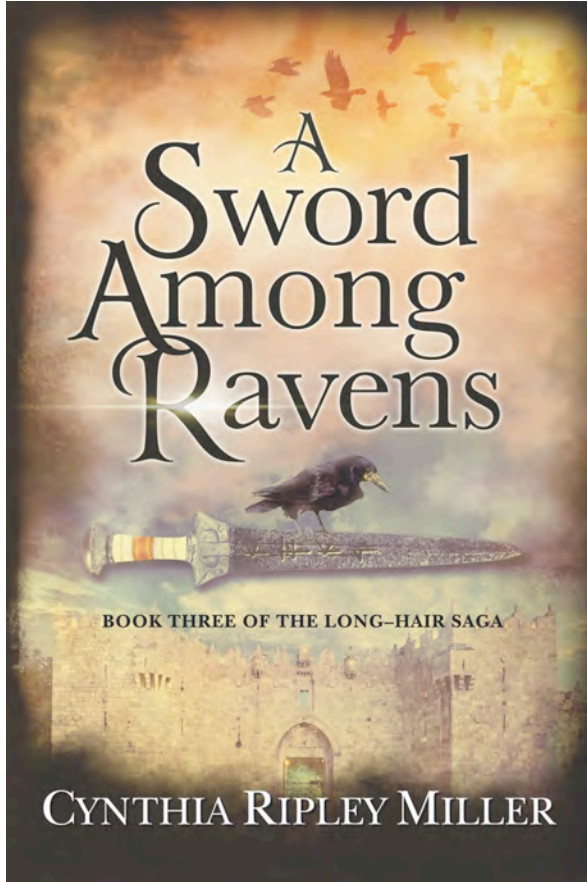
www.cynthiariplemiller.com.

Cynthia lives in a suburb of Chicago with her husband, and their cat, Romulus. Her books are set in Late Ancient Rome, France, and Jerusalem.

The Long-Hair Saga series:

On the Edge of Sunrise, The Quest for the Crown of Thorns, A Sword Among Ravens

Also connect with Cynthia on: Twitter: [@CRipleyMiller](https://twitter.com/CRipleyMiller)
Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/cynthiariplemiller/>



A Roman senator's daughter and her husband embark on a mission for the emperor. They'll deliver the sword of King David of Israel that legend claims carries a curse to Jerusalem. At every turn, they are faced with challenges—and a brutal killer.

A Sword Among Ravens

By Cynthia Ripley Miller

Order the book from the publisher Booklocker.com

<https://www.booklocker.com/p/books/11328.html?s=pdf>

**or from your favorite neighborhood
or online bookstore.**