



**Tom & Emily's Incredible  
Adventure to the World  
of the Gossamerians**

**And**

**Return to Gossamer: Threat of  
the Crustaccans (a sequel story)**

**Plus**

**A Time Traveller's Story:  
Journey to Edwardian England**



*This charming collection of children's/juvenile stories features fights with dragons, battles with alien creatures trying to take over the world of Gossamer, and small people mistakenly seen as 'fairies' by Earth children. These are intricately interwoven with a plot featuring real events happening in the early 20th century, culminating in an interesting read for all children. A can't-put-down book with an unrelated bonus story of a time traveller travelling back to the Edwardian age.*

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**David J. Price**

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Second Edition

## **Tom and Emily's Incredible Adventure to the World of the Gossamerians**

Tom Hargreaves was a lonely boy. He lived in a rambling Edwardian house in Staffordshire, England. His parents were often away from home for weeks at a time, because of their professions. His father was a botanist and was frequently out on field trips, collecting flora to illustrate a book he was writing. His mother was a teacher in a northern boarding school for girls and was away during term time and sometimes in normal school holidays, being responsible for her students. Tom's father had made provision for his son's care, by employing a housekeeper to prepare meals and look after the house during these periods of absence. But she was often too busy working, to spend much time in amusing and entertaining this solitary boy. And so it was in that warm summer of 1903 that Tom lay in the grass of the rambling garden, surrounded by the tin plate pieces of his 'Mechanics Made Easy' construction kit. He was building a small model crane that could winch sticks into a model lorry he wheeled about in the grass. His thoughts were preoccupied in imagining full size versions he had seen on the train journeys when visiting his mother.

As time passed, Tom became aware of a low-pitched muttering which seemed to be coming from the direction of some shrubs at the bottom of the garden. He decided to investigate and crept forward on hands and knees, until he was directly behind the tallest shrub and peered over the top. The sight that met his eyes was amazing. There before him stood three little people about ten inches tall that could only be described as fairies. Two were male; one older than the other and there was a young female. They looked tired and their wings hung bedraggled on their backs, like dragonflies newly emerged from their chrysalises. They were deep in conversation, apparently dismayed that something was missing that had been there before, at a time when the older fairy said his father had last visited...

At that point a twig snapped under Tom's foot as he attempted to move closer. Crack! It sounded. Startled the three fairy people looked up in surprise to see this giant boy looking down at them.

"Don't be frightened", Tom said, "I won't hurt you".

Kneeling down to look less menacing to them, Tom stammered out the question, "are you fairies?" "We are Gossamerians!" answered the older male fairy, "and my name is Bron". "What is your name Earth child?" Tom introduced himself and Bron told him that his two companions were called Chia and Serenia.

Bron explained that 50 years before his father had travelled to this world the humans called Earth, when Gossamer, their home world, had last been threatened. They had found the rare bluebell flowers growing near the portal then, but now this house had been built and gardens now covered the area that was once woodlands. They needed to gather a quantity of these sacred flowers, from which liquor could be distilled and a magic crystal grown from the essence, to combat a dragon that would shortly awaken from a long hibernation. Chia took up the story of their plight, telling how their world of Gossamer existed in another dimension. They had entered our world through an inter-dimensional portal, the physical entrance to which was in the inconspicuous rock at the bottom of Tom's garden. They were exhausted by their journey and although they could fly on their home world, the gravity on Earth was too heavy to allow them to do so now for long periods.

Serenia interjected at this point and pleaded with Tom to help them locate more of the blue flowers, as time was short. She said they would not have been so bold as to tell their story so soon, but their ancestors had travelled to Earth before, to enlist the help of human children. Children had an affinity for magic and could believe in the little people that they called 'fairies'. A bond of trust could easily be established with them, unlike the adult humans who were sometimes unpredictable and untrustworthy. "Can you help us this time", Serenia asked?

Without hesitation, Tom said he knew of woods nearby where the bluebells grew in abundance. He could lead them there and help gather and bring the flowers back to the portal.

"We will need something to carry them in", said Bron, and Tom returned to the house emerging shortly with an empty cardboard box. Serenia suggested that Tom place all three of them in the box and carry them to the woodland quickly.

Tom set off with the box under his arm. At the bottom of the road he took a dirt track, crossed a stream over a hump-backed bridge and entered the fringes of the woodland. Soon he located the area where large swathes of bluebells covered the forest floor like a blue carpet. Selecting a patch of freshly flowering specimens, he gently set the box down on the ground.

Bron, Chia and Serenia flew out and settled themselves to cutting down the sweet smelling flowers, using knives they had brought with them in buckskin bags, slung over their shoulders. These cuttings they collected in heaps, which Tom in turn loaded into the box. So immersed were they all in their labours that they were unaware that they were being watched. Not that is, until a questioning voice said aloud, "are those creatures really fairies?"

Tom was quick to assess the situation. Seeing no one else around but this lone girl, he asked, “who are you?” “My name is Emily Fleming”, the girl said. “How long have you been watching us?” Tom asked. “I was playing behind those trees when you came here”, Emily said. “We have important work to do here and can't be delayed”, Tom said. Emily asked if she could help? Tom asked her if she could keep a secret, and she said she could. A brief discussion between Serenia, Tom, Bron and Chia reached the conclusion that time was a too short for explanation that they had to trust Emily, so they should take her along with them.

The group retraced their steps back through the woodland; Tom carrying the box now filled with flowers, with the little Gossamerians riding on top of the load. Emily trotted along trying to keep pace with Tom, whilst Bron took the opportunity to enlighten her on the threat now facing Gossamer. They had only four days to journey to a remote mountainous region of their world and take the sacred blue flowers to Tagus, son of the deceased wizard Vissmathr, in the hope that the young apprentice had learned sufficient magic skills, to create a blue crystal. Then they must journey to the Pillar of the Holy Syzygy, to capture the light from the rare conjunction of the orbits of Gossamer's two moons. Concentrating this light through the power of the blue crystal, and refracting it to bathe the cave of the sleeping Styx dragon, set in an adjacent cliff, to prevent its arousal from hibernation.

Bron had arranged for their transport once they were on Gossamer. Chia, Serenia and himself would use flying creatures called Dolrays. Whilst in anticipation that they would bring a human child to help, Bron had sent for a Roc, a giant bird, being domesticated and quite harmless, but capable of lifting heavier weights in flight.

Tom and Emily were both concerned that their parents would worry if they were away so long, and their explanations as to where they had been, would be too fantastical to be believed. Bron reassured them that such was the phenomenon of travelling through the portal and back that only minutes would have elapsed on Earth, when days had passed on Gossamer. Nevertheless, on returning to the garden of his house, Tom went first to his father's study to borrow a spare pocket watch from a desk draw and glanced at the time, making a mental note. They were now all set to make the journey and congregated around the stone at the bottom of the garden. Chia took a pink crystal from his buckskin bag and passed it across the face of the granite rock. The rock began to glow with a pink aurora and the face surface turned translucent. “Now push yourselves forward into the portal”, Bron said, “Chia first, then Tom, Emily, Serenia and I will follow last”. “Tom will carry the box of the sacred flowers”.

Chia entered the portal and was gone. Tom followed holding the box ahead in his outstretched arms. The sight that his senses took in was breathtaking. Clouds and stars appeared to spiral round and be sucked into a never-ending vortex, like water flowing down a waste pipe. Tom fell after these objects, being buffeted from side-to-side, and was conscious of the figure of Chia far ahead of him. Time seemed to have no meaning as he fell (if that was the word, for there was no up or down). But eventually there appeared to be a white point of light ahead, like light at the end of a tunnel. The next moment Tom spilled out into a distinctly alien world.

His immediate sensation was one of feeling very light in weight; this must be the difference in gravity he thought. Chia was now flying energetically around and was soon joined by his fellow winged friends. Emily was getting to her feet and looked as perplexed as Tom, as they took in their first impressions of this strange world. The sky on Gossamer varied in colour from magenta at its horizon, through blues and greens at mid-altitude, too metallic silver in the upper atmosphere. The sky was dominated by two moons, one larger than the other, being in a closer orbit. Both moons were heavily cratered and spectral in appearance. The landscape was flat in the fore to middle ground and the horizon was framed with jagged mountainous peaks. In the air, crystallised bubbles drifted aimlessly past. There were earth-like trees and foliage, but they were drained of colour, being drab in this kaleidoscope of surreal colour. A group of perhaps six structures were located ahead of them to the right side; these were on first impression globes, but on closer inspection made up of octahedron (eight-sided) panel sections. Transparent panels taking the form of windows and solid sections being doors. They were clearly houses, as little winged Gossamerians stood outside these dwellings, smiling and awaiting the outsiders' arrival.

Growing larger in the sky with their approach were three strange flying creatures that seemed to be a hybrid version of a dolphin head, grafted onto a manta-ray body. These were guided by Gossamerian riders. These must be the Dolrays Bron had described, thought Tom. Behind these creatures a huge orange-feathered, eagle-like bird, flew to complete the formation, and from this distance Tom could see that it was harnessed with a saddle and reins in its beak, and being led by the piloted Dolrays. This creature must also be the timid Roc that would serve as the air-borne transport for Emily, and myself Tom concluded. The Dolrays hovered above them and their riders motioned them to descend and they landed silently. The Roc was motioned to do the same and it

descended with a flapping of wings and was content to peck at the ground, while the pilots secured their reins.

Bron flew over to Pax, the elder of the village of Eon and was in discussion for some time before returning. He came back saying the Dolrays had been provisioned with rations for a five-day journey, as he had instructed and their journey could commence. Tom and Emily would ride the Roc, and Serenia would accompany them initially to instruct them how to ride the bird. Bron and Chia would each ride their own Dolray, the other carrying the provisions, being Serenia's transport on the return journey. They each mounted their animals. The Dolrays made silent vertical take-offs, motioned by Bron and Chia. Whilst Serenia pulled on the Roc's reins, urging it skyward with a frenzy of powerful flapping wings. The intrepid group were now on their own.

Villagers below could be seen waving, as the aerial formation gained altitude. Soon the village of Eon became no more than a dot as the group headed out across the Verdant Flatlands. The afternoon passed and by dusk they were gaining height to pass over the Muramund Ridge. As nightfall came, Bron indicated by gestures that they should land and make camp. The animals were tired now and they needed resting. On landing, the Roc was fed some maize corn and tethered for the night. Whilst the Dolrays drifted inches above the ground and grazed on Hydro weed, which Chia later told Tom around the camp fire, they digested to fill their bloat sacks with lighter-than-air gas, which enabled them to fly. The next morning they awoke early and after breakfasting on Kibbel-seed bread and honey, washed down with Sufu fruit cordial, they climbed refreshed back onto their saddled mounts and prompted their animals skyward. After several hours they passed over the town of Vivax, which was probably only three times larger than Eon. Below they saw the familiar octahedron globe dwellings, interspersed with crystalline structures resembling floral petals.

This was the town that had seduced Tagus with its pleasures and had distracted him and caused him to question briefly, his true vocation as apprentice wizard to his father Vismathr.

As the day wore on the Tufa Mountains remote on the horizon got nearer. The home of Tagus and the laboratory of his father were located there on a plateau on the third peak. Bron had told the party that they would accept the hospitality of the young wizard on the second night. Allowing Tagus to distil the essence from the sacred blue flowers that night and grow the crystal, taking all the following day.

Another dusk approached as the group flew high over the peaks of the Tufa Mountains, and there as promised, they saw the plateau on the third peak and made their descent. Tagus was there to welcome them as the Dolrays landed silently and the Roc followed with a flurry of beating wings that stirred up air currents, chilling the mountain air further on the exposed plateau.

Introductions were made and Tagus led the group into his home where a comforting fire blazed and the appetising smell of a braybrox goat stew wafted through the house. After the meal was cleared away, Tagus said he would have to work for many hours into the night to boil up a concentrate of the blue flower essence. Tom and Emily could help him in removing the flower heads and boiling pans of water, whilst he set up his distillation equipment. Meanwhile Bron, Chia and Serenia pored over a piece of parchment, drawing diagrams on how to position the crystal at the time of the conjunction and the equipment to take. Tagus was now the keeper of the Golden bow, shield and arrows of the legendary human Lycidas, inherited after the death of his father. These were essential if the Styx dragon was to be defeated, for Tom was now the chosen one to re-enact the stories of the feats of Lycidas, centuries ago. As a further insurance, Chia removed the Roc eggshells used for water bottles on the outward journey, drained them, and refilled them with lamp oil. Then he inserted torn strips of rag into the holes to act as fuses and secured these with softened wax. If all did not go well two nights hence, these devices could be thrown as firebombs.

Several hours' later humans and Gossamerians were all collapsed in a heap of hay, exhausted and asleep, all except one.

Tagus watched the steady drip-drip of the distillation column as the liquid passed through the filter and the volume of blue liquor increased. Periodically he would reach into a string tied leather pouch and sprinkle a quantity of golden dust into the mixture, the product of all the magic formulations learned at his father's side. When the rest of the group awoke the next morning, Tagus was found lying fast asleep on the table and next to him was a conical clay mould, filled to the brim with a hard, blue, glassy material. Tagus was roused from his slumber and the others assisted him in removing the wired clay sections of the mould. A beautiful blue crystal emerged that even before polishing, sparkled as the rays from the early morning sun through the window fell on its moulded facets. All of the next day, Tagus was bent over his grinding wheel, polishing the facets of the crystal and it was clear that they would all spend a second night under his roof. Bron, Chia and Serenia took the opportunity to outline the plan of action to Tom and Emily, laying out the parchment and explaining the

diagrams they had made the previous day. The conjunction of the two moons would occur at the twilight on the evening of the next day. Proximare the larger of the two moons would be high in the evening sky at that time, and Minutus the smaller moon would be behind it, and at the exact time of the conjunction, the strength of moonlight would be double. Before this happens, the blue crystal must be set up on a tripod located on the Pillar of the Holy Syzygy to concentrate the ray with double-strength moonlight.

This single ray will hit the entrance to the cave of the hibernating Styx dragon, beneath Hellebore Peak. Tom must be on the ledge before the cave entrance holding the polished shield of Lycidas, too reflect the concentrated moonlight into the back of the cave, where the dragon will be awakening. If all goes well, the Styx will be subdued and shrunken in size, falling back into a deep hibernation that will last for another fifty years. If things go wrong, there are covering rocks at the cave entrance and Tom will have the golden bow of Lycidas and a quiver of three arrows dipped in venom. When these will be used to hit a gland behind the head of the Styx, the dragon will be drugged into a sluggish state, but this will last no longer than ten minutes.

Emily and Serenia will be circling above on the Roc, equipped with flammable liquid bombs to offer Tom extra protection.

The afternoon passed, the crystal was finished and its brilliance reflected the firelight as it sat on the table and they congregated around the fireside. The braybrox goat stew had been spiced up by Emily and Serenia and provided them with another meal and they were well fed and content.

Tom was curious about the legend of Lycidas and how another human could have visited Gossamer centuries before and asked Bron if it was true. Bron told Tom how Lycidas had accidentally stumbled through a portal in the time of ancient Greece in Earth history. That the Gossamerians had given him sanctuary, as he had been a slave on his own world, and at their time of need at an earlier period when the Styx dragon rampaged through their villages, he had fashioned the golden bow and subdued it. They could never kill the Styx, as Lycidas had wanted to do, for in this land of natural magic and spirits inhabiting everything, its death would bring about an imbalance in the natural order, to create more catastrophes. The golden bow could only be pulled back by an adult human when Lycidas made it then, but it was aged now, had been re-strung several times since, and should not be beyond Tom's capability to fire it now. With thoughts preoccupied on their individual roles in the events of the next day, they each scooped comfortable hollows in the heap of hay and one by-one fell asleep.

The next morning the three Dolrays were loaded with the equipment they had listed. Bron took charge of the blue crystal and stored it safely in his buckskin bag. The polished shield, the Golden bow, the quiver of three venom tipped arrows, were slung in netting, distributing the weight evenly on the backs of the animals. Serenia, Chia and Bron would each ride their own Dolray. Emily was now a proficient Roc flyer and she took control now of the giant bird, with Tom as her passenger holding her around the waist. Suspended from the bird's saddle was a bandoleer of the Roc egg firebombs. They arranged to meet Tagus back in Vivax on their return and hand back the artefacts of Lycidas and hopefully report on the success of their mission.

For now, all that remained was to say their farewells, and Tagus waved to them as the three piloted Dolrays, rose silently, vertically, skyward. Emily and Tom followed on the Roc, which spiralled upwards to gain altitude.

They flew on over the minor ridges of the Tufa mountain range until this petered out, giving way to desert. Then on the horizon they saw a hazy projection, a finger of wind eroded rock, standing out in isolation from the flat desert around it. This was the Pillar of the Holy Syzygy.

It was late afternoon when they arrived at the pillar; they had perhaps two hours left before the twilight to set up the crystal, before the time of the moon's conjunction. Bron, Chia and Serenia guided their Dolrays in to hover on the flat-topped pillar. They quickly unloaded the tripod and set this up with the crystal retaining clamp. Reaching into his buckskin bag Bron took out the blue crystal, pausing to admire this thing of beauty briefly, before securing it in the retaining clamp. Serenia stayed with the crystal, whilst Bron and Chia descended with their Dolrays and unloaded the polished shield, bow and quiver to the base of Hellebore Peak.

They signalled to Emily when they were finished and the Roc swooped in, landed and Tom dismounted. Tom donned the bow and quiver, placed his arm through the shield strap and began the short climb to the covering rocks, on the ledge of the cave of the Styx dragon. Emily now picked up Serenia on the Roc, so that she could ignite the fire bombs, if called upon to do so.

Bron and Chia were in position now at the crystal; all they could now was to wait.

Minutes passed and the sun slowly sank low on the horizon. Proximare and Minutus moved equally slowly in their celestial orbits to the moment of the conjunction. The moons were now aligning and Chia signalled from the pillar

to Tom to make ready with the shield. Stirrings could already be heard from within the cave, that the Styx was arousing from its hibernation.

Bron made finer adjustments to the angle of the crystal on the pillar, as the moons became fully aligned. The double-strength moonlight now entered the crystal and a concentrated beam shot to the surface of Tom's shield, as he reflected it into the depths of the cave.

The moaning of the Styx within diminished as the blue light played over it. Then suddenly, the light went out. A thick bank of clouds was moving across the face of the moons and they had been blotted out. The roaring of the Styx started again and it began to lumber its way to the cave entrance. Tom could now see the beast in its entirety. A horned head with webbed spike protrusions, a gaping mouth with dagger sharp teeth, from which hung a forked tongue, an evil red reptilian eye, surmounted a long scaly neck and it looked back at him with menace in its eyes. With a violent thrashing of its head to and fro, it extended its neck and shot out a torrent of flame at its antagonist. Then unfolding huge bat like wings, each bony rib of the webbed, skin-stretched canopies tipped by single claws, beat to raise the dragon into the air. It saw the Roc circling above and directed another plume of flame at it, but the bird was out of range. It was now raised on its hind legs walking, its shorter arms tipped with razor-sharp claws thrashing around, seeking its prey. The scaly hind legs then crouched and the long spiked tail made ready to launch itself again from the cave entrance. Emily swooped down on the Roc, Serenia lighting fuses; she hurled a firebomb at the dragon, which exploded on the cave rim near its head. Distracted, it shot another plume of flame, but the bird was well out of reach. Chia shouted, "use the bow, Tom!" which brought Tom back to his senses. He laid aside the shield, took a tipped arrow from the quiver, loaded it to the bow and pulling the string back released the projectile, aimed at the gland in the dragon's neck. It missed and bounced off the armoured points along the spine of the Styx.

While Tom reloaded the bow with the second arrow, Emily swooped in again on her Roc and launched another firebomb, which burst into flame, on hitting the dragon's head this time. Tom released his arrow, which hit its target but did not penetrate deep. Several seconds later Tom shot his third and last arrow and this time it penetrated the neck much deeper and the Styx showed visible signs of becoming sluggish. Above them the clouds were beginning to break and the light from the moons began to re-appear. Chia shouted again, "use the shield, Tom, the time of the conjunction will soon be over!"

Tom armed himself again with the shield and as light flooded down through the crystal, he reflected that light at the Styx. Bathed in the full power of the

concentrated moonlight, the Styx began to visibly shrink in size. Smaller and smaller, it was reduced in size, reversing its primordial evolution in minutes, until it was no larger than a toad. Finally, it changed into an egg.

The battle was over and it was won. Bron and Chia were jubilant and they brought their Dolrays over to hover at the cave ledge. Tom was asked to take the Styx egg back into the depths of the cave and bury it there in the nest. Everything was now at one with the natural order of things. The Dolrays were turned loose to graze at the base of the peak, where the Roc was also tethered and fed a ration of maize corn. The group spent that last night in the cave of the Styx around a campfire, telling stories, blissfully happy that their ordeal was over.

In the morning they broke camp, packed their possessions and headed back on a shorter route to Vivax town. Tagus was there when they arrived back; the mayor was present, and a group of Vivax citizens were eager to offer their thanks to these heroic outsiders. Garlands of flowers were placed around the necks of Tom and Emily and they were given the freedom of the town in appreciation. The artefacts of Lycidas were returned to Tagus, and he expressed a desire to linger a while in Vivax to look up some old acquaintances. After refreshment and resting Bron, Chia and Serenia accompanied Tom and Emily back to the village of Eon, where a similar ceremony of congratulations and thanks had to be gone through. At that point in a quiet moment alone with Tom and Emily, Bron said he would not be coming back with them through the portal. He said all Gossamer was in their debt and as a token of their eternal gratitude; he gave them an amber crystal and a map. If they were ever in trouble, they could pass the amber crystal over the surface of a portal and they would see the world of Gossamer and be able to communicate with its inhabitants. The map showed locations of other portals on the Earth, and those in the country where they lived - the British Isles!

Tom and Emily then met up with Chia and Serenia and were escorted back to the portal entrance. Chia retrieved the pink crystal from his sling bag, and passing it over the rock surface, opened the portal to its familiar pink aurora. "We'll go first", said Chia and he flew into the swirling vortex. Serenia followed. Emily squeezed Tom's hand and dived in headlong. Tom followed behind.

Clouds and stars spiralled down the core of the vortex and the buffeted quartet of companions fell earthward. One by one, they tumbled out of the portal exit, in momentary flashes and crackles of energy, into the garden of Tom's house.

Getting to their feet and dusting themselves off, Chia said they must say their farewells and each go back to their own lives. Tom asked what Chia and Serenia would do when they got back? Chia said that thanks to their heroic friends, their province on Gossamer was now safer with the Styx subdued.

He and Serenia had become close on the adventure and might marry and have children of their own. In which case, they would tell them stories of the exploits with their friends on earth. Serenia was tearful and flew up on Emily's shoulder, hugged her face and kissed her cheek and said, "goodbye, Emily". Chia flew up to Tom and hovered at his chest height, and using both his hands shook Tom's large hand in shared appreciation.

"Thanks for everything, Tom, and now we must say goodbye". In an instant there were flashes and energy crackles at the portal, the pink aurora faded and they were gone.

Tom and Emily stared at the portal for some minutes and then suddenly became aware of somebody calling. It was the voice of the housekeeper, Charlotte. "Your dinner's ready, Tom!" she shouted. Tom felt the watch in his pocket and took it out now; the time displayed was 4.00 p.m. He remembered it was showing 3.00 p.m. when they first left the garden.

Could this still be the same day, minutes passing as days on Gossamer? As Bron had said, such was the phenomenon of travelling through the portal. Indeed it was a fact that Charlotte testified to his being very quiet the last hour in the garden, allowing her to get on with her work. Tom introduced his new playmate and asked if Emily could stay for dinner? "I'm sure we can make the meal go around three, but go and get cleaned up first", said Charlotte.

Tom had a pressing priority first, and took Emily to his father's study. Getting out an atlas of the British Isles, Tom spread the map that Bron had given him and cross-referenced the marked portal locations with the atlas. In addition to the one they knew about in Staffordshire, there was another in Ayrshire, Scotland and the second nearest in England was in West Yorkshire, a village called Cottingley, in the rural suburb of Bradford to be precise. Tom noted the name briefly, but thought he was never likely to be near that location, and as it was of no significance, dismissed it from his mind. He showed Emily where she could wash her hands and they went in for their meal.

Later, when they had finished, Tom told Charlotte that he would walk Emily home, as she only lived a few streets away. Tom walked with Emily towards her home, they didn't say much, but their thoughts dwelled on their shared adventure and both felt very close to each other. At Emily's garden gate Tom

was bold enough to give her a small peck on the cheek in saying goodbye. “Can I see you tomorrow?” Tom asked. And Emily said he could. They became firm friends after that, and Tom ceased to be the lonely boy he'd previously been.

And what of Gossamer? It would long remain in their thoughts of course, but it would not be the last time they heard from it. But that's a story for another day....



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