

The Shadow of Tallystick Valley
PART 4

OPI AND THE PHANTOM DRAGONS

ACTIVITIES:

- ▶ Best-Laid Plans
- ▶ Build-a-Beastie
- ▶ My Shadow Dice
- ▶ A Conversation with Opi





Millie and Theo ducked down as low as they could go in the balloon's basket knowing full well that they couldn't hide. The Phantom Dragons WOOSHED past the balloon causing it to spin and sway, its passengers clinging on for dear life.

The dragons veered round and came at the balloon once more. This time swirling in circles faster and faster creating a tornado of fog, ash and goo that wrapped itself around Millie and Theo.

The tornado lifted them higher and higher until they were way above the valley.

The higher they went the thicker the cloud around them became. So thick in fact it felt like a grey sticky candy floss.

The thickening cloud gradually began to slow the spiralling dragons and the balloon down, until it stopped entirely and hovered as if being held by an unseen force.

In front of them perched on a cloud was Opi, the tails of the phantom dragons draped around his shoulders like a ghostly fur scarf.





Millie and Theo peered over the rim of the basket and beckoned for Opi to help. But he just sat there, eyes white and in a trance, seemingly unaware of their presence.

As they drifted closer Opi let out a swift snarl, baring his teeth. The dragons responded by continuing their swirling this time faster, flinging the balloon across the valley.

The balloon, with Millie and Theo still in its basket, flew through the air only to come crashing down on the edge of the Giant Bamboo Forest.



Wreckage from the balloon was scattered around the area, where Millie and Theo lay on their back looking up at the sky. They hadn't realised until now how much they missed the feel of fresh green grass on their feet.

They made their way to the edge of the valley and could see from way up here the devastation and chaos the Shadow had caused.

Behind them the edge of the Giant Bamboo Forest was lush with greenery and the bamboo that they had been seeking.

So they began to build.



Bit by bit Millie and Theo crafted a growing tube that they would feed to a nearby lake and somehow pump water into the valley to clear the Shadow.

As they worked they could see the darkness of the Shadow edging ever further out of the Valley. This could be their last chance, if it didn't work then the Shadow had won.

All of a sudden, an almighty whoosh roared from behind them as the Phantom Dragons came crashing through the bamboo, destroying what Millie and Theo had built.



Both dropped to their knees with their head in their hands. They looked on at the destruction of their work, the last hope to save Tallystick Valley, their friends and maybe even the world.

Opi appeared, being carried by the cloud he sat on and rested in front of them. His eyes were clearer, but sad as he apologised. He explained that he doesn't control the dragons. They control him. According to Opi there was no way to clear the Shadow. But there could be a way to contain it and stop it spreading.

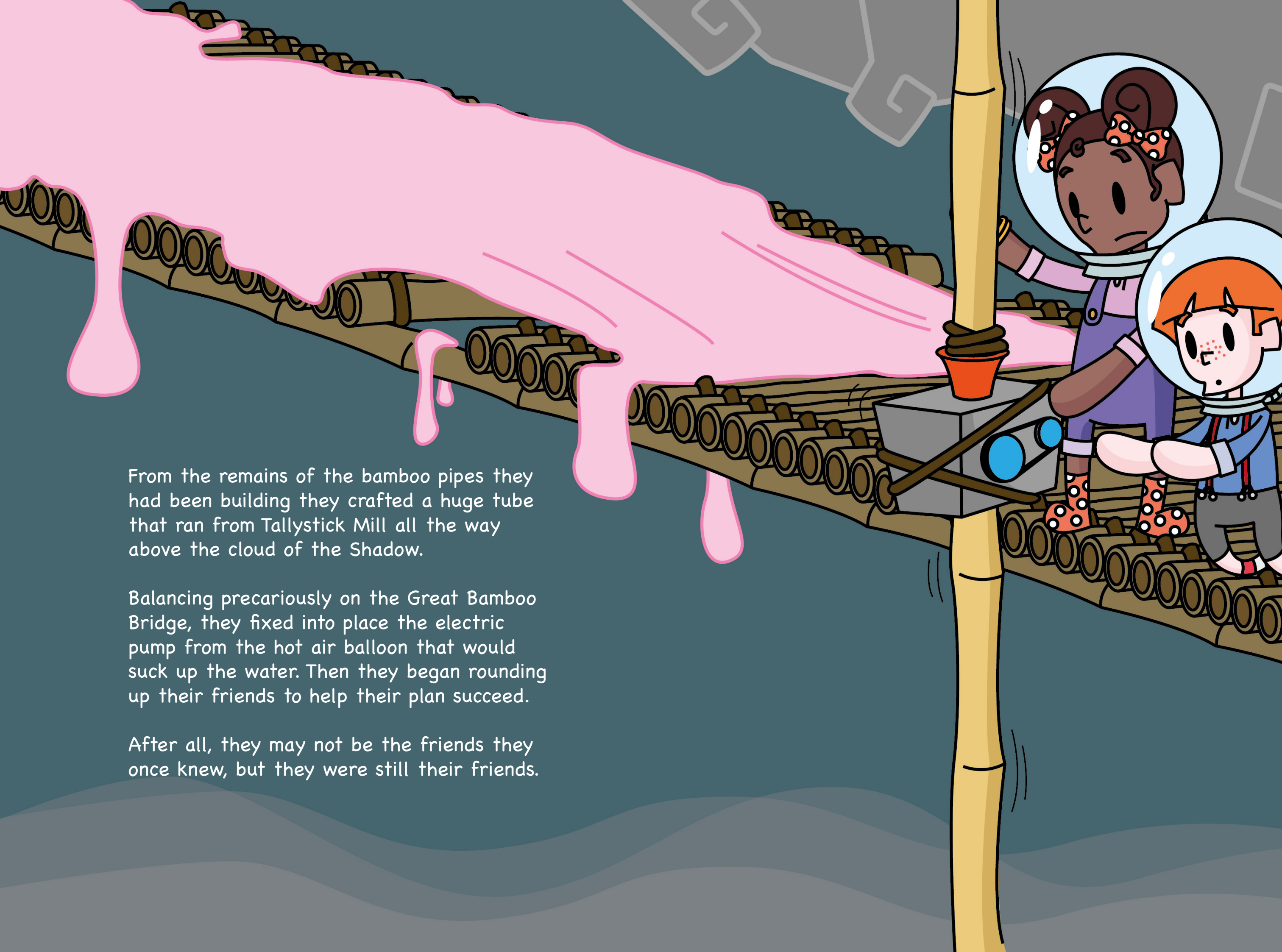




Tallystick Mill may have been overcome by the Shadow, but the natural spring below it had not, Opi explained.

If there was a way to get the water from the Mill at the bottom of the valley into the thick clouds of the Shadow above, then it would constantly rain down fresh water and entrap itself with its own weather system.


Millie and Theo knew what they had to do.



From the remains of the bamboo pipes they had been building they crafted a huge tube that ran from Tallystick Mill all the way above the cloud of the Shadow.

Balancing precariously on the Great Bamboo Bridge, they fixed into place the electric pump from the hot air balloon that would suck up the water. Then they began rounding up their friends to help their plan succeed.

After all, they may not be the friends they once knew, but they were still their friends.



Down at the bottom of Tallystick Valley, Tipple set about churning the mill, and starting the flow of water up to the Great Bamboo Bridge where the pump would take over and push the water to the tip of the pipe.

But the pipe was full of holes and Tipple struggled to make any progress. Just then as if out of nowhere, Ello appeared and began plugging the holes with her sticky goo as fast as her glowing shell could go.

Millie and Theo cheered through tears of joy.



The pair stood fast on the Great Bamboo Bridge waiting to kick start the pump. But when they tried to get it going nothing happened. In a great flash of lightening Tweak appeared and shot out bolts of electricity, causing it to chug to life.

Water sped through the bamboo pipe and burst out the top like a garden hose on a hot summer's day.

With all his might, Opi took control of the Phantom Dragons, which spiralled round and round causing a whirlwind in the Shadow's cloud. Fresh water rain began to fall like tiny diamonds from the sky.

The Shadow was stopped.

Some time had passed since Millie and Theo had visited the valley. Down there somewhere, through the constant drizzle of rain and fog, their friends were working through their own shadows.

They realised that it was not for them to try and save their friends, but to be strong for them. To care for themselves is to care for those around them.

The Shadow of Tallystick Valley may not be the valley Millie and Theo remember, but its echo will live on forever in their hearts.

