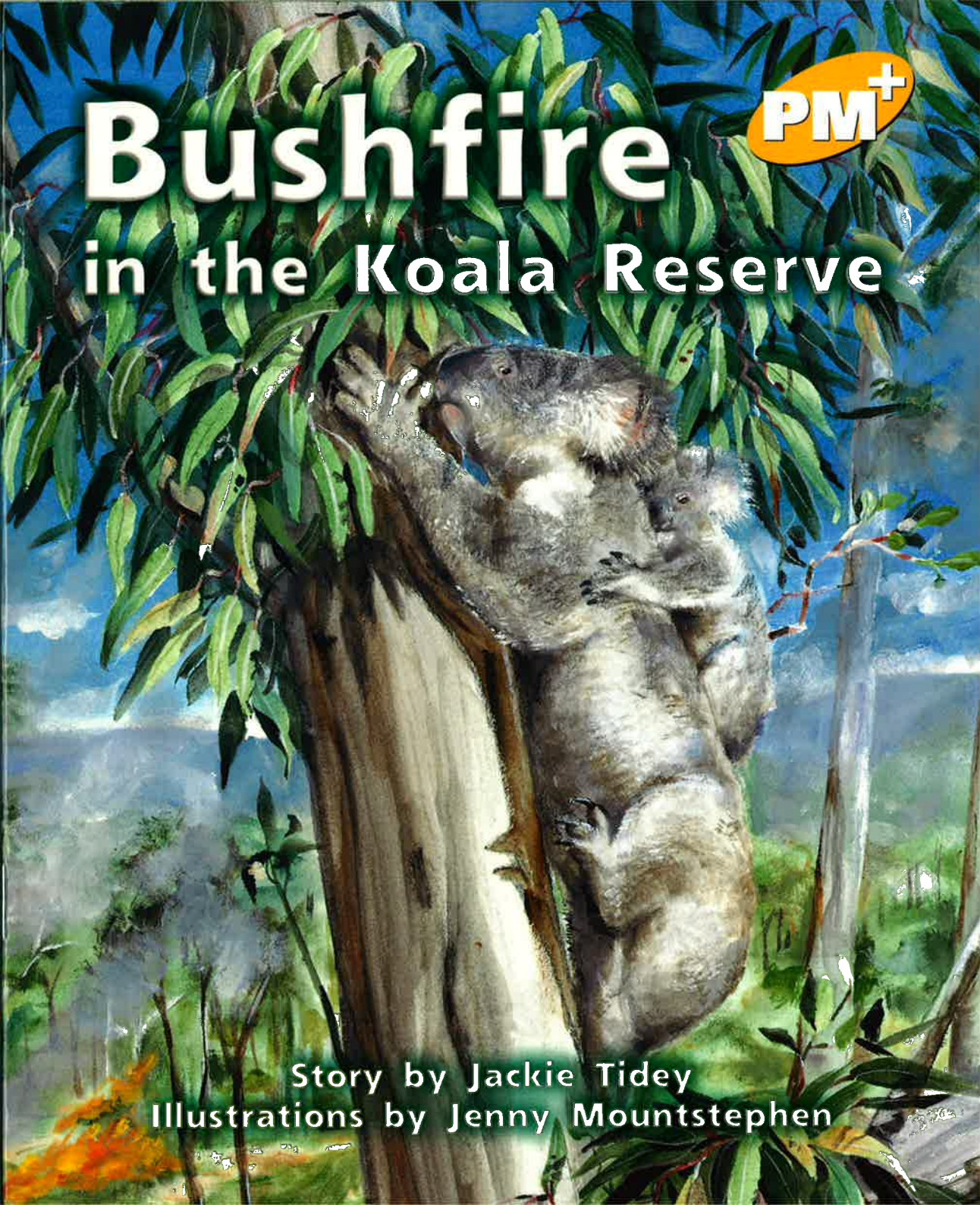

PM+
Bushfire
in the Koala Reserve
Story by Jackie Tidey
Illustrations by Jenny Mountstephen

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One hot summer's day,
a mother koala and her baby
were fast asleep in a gum tree.
They had nestled into the fork
of a big branch,
trying to keep out of the sun.

Just above them,
a warm wind rustled the leaves.
But the mother koala and her baby
did not stir.

Far below in the valley, a long way
from where the koalas were sleeping,
a fire had started.
A burning match had been thrown
into the dry brown grass.



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Suddenly, the grass exploded into flames!
The fire began to spread.
It raced up the trunk of a gum tree
and into the branches high above.

Soon the flames were jumping
from treetop to treetop,
setting the forest alight.
The fire roared and crackled as it burned.
Thick smoke began to rise
above the trees.

The sirens rang at the fire station
down in Spring Valley.
The fire chief
called the Wildlife Rescue Service
straight away.
"We need your help," he said.
"There's a fire moving
up towards the Hilltop Koala Reserve."

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Two of the wildlife officers,
Chris and Tony, jumped into their truck
and headed towards Spring Valley.

"We must save the koalas, if we can,"
said Tony.

Chris and Tony noticed
that the wind was stronger now,
and the smell of the bushfire
was in the air.

"We won't have much time
to search for koalas,
before the fire reaches the reserve,"
said Tony.
"Look how quickly it's spreading."

