

# Fire Works in Strange Ways

A FireWorks Exordium (Forward)

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## THE FIREWORKS' FUND

### **What is the FireWorks' Fund?**

At the age of twenty, I was alive to witness the aftermath of terrorist attack 9/11, Hurricane Katrina, not one but *two* global financial crises, the ongoing Syrian Civil War, and more recently, a global pandemic, a deadly explosion in Lebanon's capital, Beirut, and the 2019-20 Australian bushfires. Although plenty of amazing things have also happened—like the legalisation of gay marriage—the older generations (including millennials) suggest that the world is the worst it has ever been. *And if it is this bad for me, what will it be like for my children when they're twenty?*

This is why I have created the FireWorks' Fund (FWF). *Our mission is to raise money through the net proceeds of the creative nonfictional adventure book 'FireWorks'.* We want to offer an amazing Australian story, and in return, the donations will help the

environment and make a better future so that our children can live in a world that is healthy, peaceful, eco-friendly, sustainable and equal. This includes our urban and rural ecosystems, our wildlife, our cultures and the norms that accompany them, and our communities.

### **How can you donate?**

IT'S SIMPLE! If you like this short story, all you need to do to donate is BUY FireWorks (2021). The book is designed for a younger audiences between the ages of 8 - 14. However, the FWF can assure you that the Action & Adventure novel is fun for the whole family.

LOOK OUT FOR THIS STICKER.

The book also has a variety of hand-drawn images, several photographs of the bushfires, the Australian animals impacted, the bushland's recovery, and several





facts about Australia. Not only is it educational, but the story is an action-packed rollercoaster with many ups and down. Think Crocodile Dundee meets Lord of the Ring in association with the Australian Geographic.

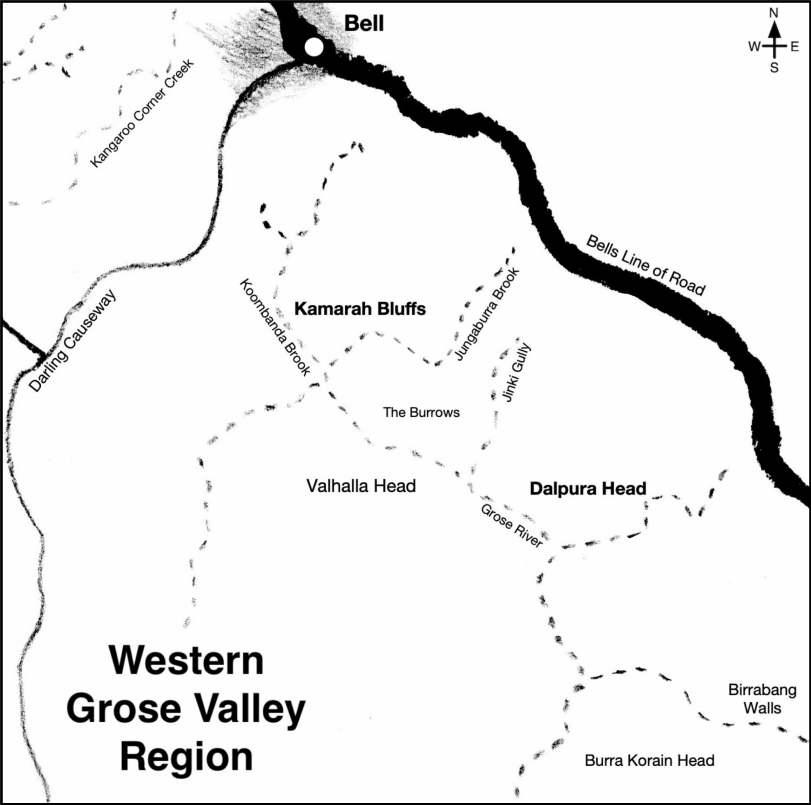
So if you want to learn about the Australian bushfire season, or if you want a fun small read that isn't too long, give FireWorks a go!

Sincerely,  
Oliver Smuhar  
FireWorks' Fund



*"For the best Aussie perks, donate to FireWorks."*







## ALINTA

**T**was the 21st of December, 2019, when I first met Alinta and her scorching hot flames. Their crackling tunes rampaged endlessly, all through the Grose Valley. But we were smart critters; we sheltered ourselves in a wombat burrow west of Jinki Gully. The tunes of the water flow echoed as the skinks, quolls, tiger snakes, short-beaked echidnas, copperheads, wallabies, water dragons and wallaroos hid beneath the humus and sod.

Now I was merely a koala cub at this time, barely knew what the soil felt like. There were whispers of the flames, their boiling orange bodies scarring the tree stumps as a dark shadow entered the burrow.

“Bouddi’s missing! I can’t find him!” called out a young dingo named Kalinda.

The critters inside the burrow were in an uproar. Poor little Bouddi the sugar glider had vanished. And no one was brave enough to confront Alinta and her army of orange lights. No one, except for me, that is!

Leaving the burrow on the dawn of a new day, I tiptoed west, smelling the raw stench of ash. ’Twas like a graveyard for the trees, the land was as dark as a night’s sky without any stars. The hot wind roared, chilling my grey fur. The soil felt warm against my raw paws, the leaves fell like raindrops, and a black sky covered the bushland. Alinta was here, and she was going to destroy everything!

Passing Jungaburra Brook, my left paw got a sudden chill. It made my hairs stiff as I shook off the brook’s water from my claws. The rocks seemed to cry under the sagging blueberry ashes and grey gums. Yet, here, amid my dying home, I could

hear Alinta weep. She was scared of the water, her army of fire howling their lights as though their conquest had just begun.

I had heard the tales of Alinta from my mother, and from the wise old wombats, but I never once believed them—not until now. Mother used to tell me that Alinta only comes upon the change of a blue moon, during Birak, the season of the young.

The wombats also said that this was the time of celebration for the two-legged walkers. They would often stand in large family herds, watching lights explode in the sky. Each light was a different colour, some red, others blue, green, yellow, orange, the list could go on. They thought they could tame the power of Alinta, but she was angry this year; the angriest she had ever been!



Illuka is a koala. These cuddly marsupials are one of Australia's most iconic animals.<sup>1</sup> The koala's biodiverse habitat was significantly impacted by the 2019-20 bushfires.<sup>2</sup> It is estimated that there are less than 80,000 koalas left in Australia.<sup>1</sup>

**FACT: Koalas sleep up to 18 - 20 hours a day!<sup>1</sup> This is because it takes a lot of energy to digest the toxic fibres found in a eucalyptus' gum leaf.<sup>1</sup>**



## ILLUKA

**M**um used to say, “Illuka, if you ever find yourself near Alinta’s gaze, you run, boy! You run so fast you better burn your paws, and have trouble breathing once you stand still again.” *And how right she was.*

After my voyage through the Kamarah Bluffs, and further, over the Koombanda Gully, I reached an unfamiliar land as black as the sky. The Elders called it a *road*. ’Twas what the walkers used to travel long distances, you see. As dark as charcoal, the road had four white lines, two in its centre, and one on each end. Near the lines, there were yellow nobs every few metres that were rugged and bumpy.

Kalinda once told me that only crazy dingos go onto the roads—and they never return. *Never ever!* But if Bouddi was

on the other side, I would need to get across, no matter what happened!

Reaching the road's side, I rubbed my paw along its smooth asphalt, feeling the heat of Alinta. Like a trigger, when my paw left the black, a loud monstrous noise echoed down the valley. 'Twas like this: wee woo, wee woo, wee woo. Retreating behind a mulga fern, blue and red lights cover my eyes. Speeding past was a red monster with circular legs, galloping down the road towards the heart of Alinta's burning anger. As the monster's roar faded, I powered over the road.

On the other side, where the black-she oaks and silver banksias covered the earth, I kept my pace westward. I'll be needing to pass over Kangaroo Corner Creek if I want to rescue Bouddi. However, my detour ended rather quickly as a familiar voice screamed in horror. "Illuka! Illuka! Quickly, Bouddi needs help!"



Raising my noggin, I saw a little peep-wren. With her yellow neck and black wings, she fluttered back and forth as though she had been caught in a hurricane. “Myaree?” I called, turning to the wren’s flight. “What are you doing out here?”

“Coda and I were looking for animals who might be trapped or hurt.” Myaree, the wren, slowed her glide, looking back at a cloud of death and decay. “Bouddi’s trapped in a walker village. You need to help him!”

I nodded. “Okay! Just northward? Don’t worry, Myaree, I’ll help Bouddi. You should go back to the burrow and get more help. Keep low to the ground, it’s too hot near the canopies.”

“Are you sure you want to run off on your own? Coda, Kalinda and I can help,” Myaree said.

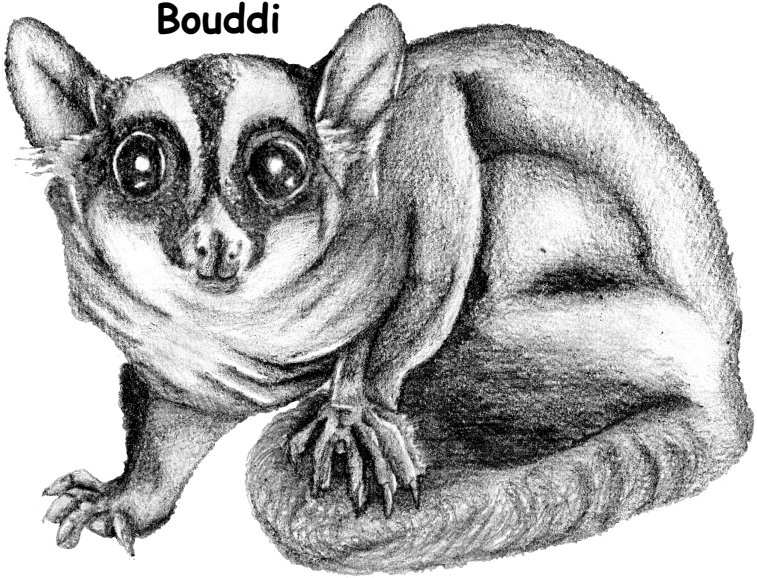
I began to march north. “Yes, I’ll be okay. Someone needs to help Bouddi, and you’ll be faster than me in the sky. Trust me, Myaree. We’ll see each other again when the fireworks fade.”

Myaree nodded. “I’ll be keeping my eye out. See you soon!”

As Myaree flew away, I trampled over dead rice flowers, burning carcasses of fur and boiled blood that smothered the dry soil. I don't know what kind of animal laid victim to Alinta's fury, but their coats reflected the dancing orange lights like a glowworm stuck in a spider's web.

I had never seen the valley is so much pain before. I hope Bouddi's okay! We shouldn't be alone in these dire times. No, we should be together. *Gosh, why did he run away?*

## Bouddi



Bouddi is a sugar glider. In 2020, it was discovered that there are three different species of sugar glider, including the Krefft's glider and the savanna glider.<sup>3</sup> The sugar glider is a BASE-jumper.<sup>3</sup> This means they have a unique ability to expand the skin between their wrist and ankle to glide from one tree to the next.<sup>3</sup>

**FACT: A sugar glider can live on average to 10 - 15 years and can grow up to twelve inches.<sup>4</sup> Six of these inches make up the length of their tail!<sup>4</sup>**



## BOUDDI

**T**he walker village was known as Bell. 'Twas a small town in comparison to others like Lithgow and Katoomba. I remember trotting past a crying sunshine wattle, its green ferns drooping as horrid screams shocked my senses. And that's when I saw it!

The entire town was covered in Alinta's dancing lights, their orange hues towering over the walker's homes. Between the chaos, as Alinta plundered through the town, eating at the homes' canopies, I saw an angel. 'Twas unlike any roo, bandicoot or owl. The angels wore yellow, running back and forth with green snakes that spat out gusts of water. They were protecting the town!

Behind the fighting heroes, a familiar shadow played with the flickering orange that was burning a home's grey brick and plaster. I knew that shadow.

Crawling over a purple mint bush, Alinta kept her strength, attacking the basket grass and kidney weed. The town was dying. A crashing sound made my legs more cautious. One of the homes had collapsed, its canopy caved inwards; Alinta was too much. I needed to find Bouddi now!

Rushing under the brown boots of the angels, I felt the kiss of their water. 'Twas refreshing as my fur shivered at the sight of the flames. They were everywhere. Suddenly, the shadow danced in the firelight. *It was Bouddi!*

My legs took off, towards the edge of Bell where a young yellow bloodwood pushed back the forces of Alinta's fury. Behind the bloodwood's light brown bark, Bouddi's three strips down his forehead and snout appeared. His round black

eyes reflected my gallop as I called his name. “Bouddi! What are you doing out here?”

The young sugar glider spread his arms apart, his skin flaps dangling down to his ankles. “Stay away, Illuka! I’m trying to scare Alinta away. She’s destroyed everything. Our homes, our families, our food. She ... She took ——”

I rushed to his side. “Bouddi, it’s okay! I’m here. We’re in this together. You shouldn’t have to deal with this alone.” I looked back at Bell. The angels had pushed forward, Alinta screaming as their water made the orange lights cold and empty. “The walkers are here to save us. Come on, we need to go back together!”

Bouddi nodded. “Okay. I’m sorry I ran away. Were the others worried?”

“Of course they were worried. Bouddi, we’re a family! We’re all in this together. The walkers may have won this battle, but we’ll be able to win the next.” I offered him my right arm. “Let’s go.”

Bouddi climbed up my side, his weight heavy on my right shoulder. I could hear his sniffles as the fires turned to smoke and ash. The angels had won, saving Bell.

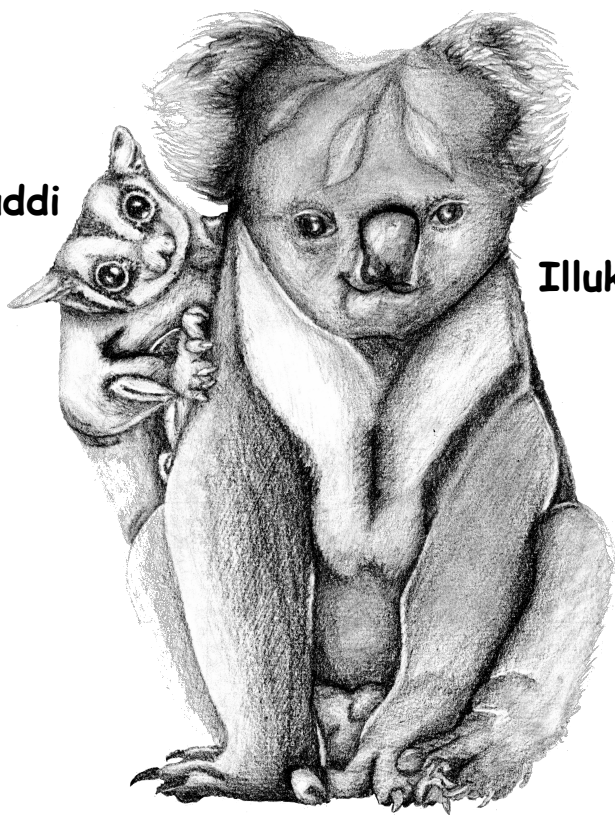
Walking back to the Burrow, a squeaky voice called from above. “Illuka. Bouddi! You’re back!” Coda, the white-striped free-tailed bat, said.

We smiled. Bouddi waved at Coda. “Hiya, Coda! Did you miss me?”

Coda wiggled his wings. “Oh, yes! Quickly, Alinta’s armies are still out and about. We’ll need to go back to the wombat burrow. This way.”

And from then on, no matter what happened, we all worked together. Not as a team, but as a family! Because together, we were strong enough to face Alinta and her scorching orange lights. This was our home! Our land! *Our family!* And no one, not even a fire can mess with family!

**Bouddi**



**Illuka**

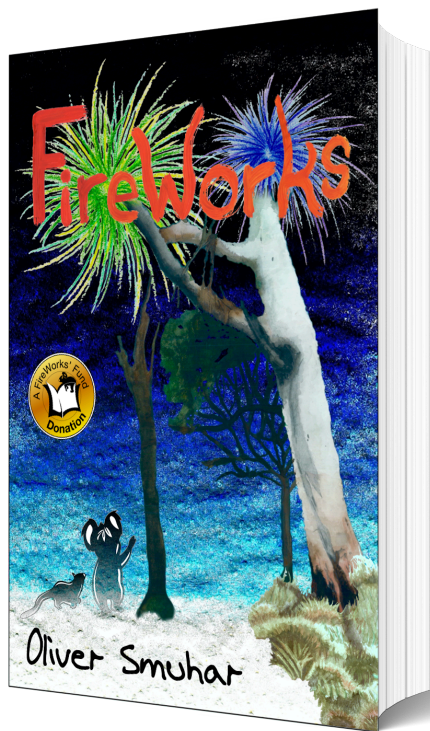
As of the writing of *Fire Works in Strange Ways*, Australia is recovering from the 2019-20 bushfires. The Australian Government has invested 200 million dollars to help the native wildlife and their habitats across eastern and southern Australia.<sup>5</sup> Rainfall has provided enough water to ease drought conditions, restore reservoirs, river flows and soil water for cropping.<sup>6</sup> Throughout all the burnt ash and timber, small plant sprouts are growing, and most of the trees impacted by the fires are still alive.<sup>7</sup> **It is now up to us to take a stand. Together we can help the devastated land recover and create a better future for every animal, plant and person.**



If you enjoyed *Fire Works in Strange Ways*, please  
support the **FireWorks' Fund**.



**BUY FIREWORKS TODAY!**



Available on  
Amazon & Booktopia

## OTHER BOOKS BY OLIVER SMUHAR

# Cold hands.

### A NOVEL INSPIRED BY TRUE EVENTS.

Tyler McBaker is trying his best!

He tries to look after his delusional mother, but she's too drunk to care. He tries to save his best friend, but he's stuck inside an illegal rabbit hole. Most of all, he tries to keep moving forward. Yet, each day passes, and Tyler becomes more sick; he's sick of the melancholy and wants to die.

After a failed attempt at his life, Tyler meets Amberley.

Amberley Gibbon is trying her worst!

She tries to move away from her friends only to miss them once they're gone. She tries to be positive around her parents, but the doctors are stuck inside a medical rabbit hole. Most of all, she tries to stop moving forward. Yet, each day passes, and Amberley becomes more sick; she's sick with sepsis, and she's going to die.

In search of happiness, or maybe a cure, Tyler and Amberley learn the true virtues of what it means to be alive.

But which one's the culprit—the one with cold hands?

# COME JOIN US AND LETS GROW TOGETHER

The Colours of Humanity: Books 1 & 2



## CITATION

**Fire Works in Strange Ways** uses articles, online resources, news media, government papers, journals and magazines to provide accurate and knowledgeable information to its audience in specific sections of the short story. These *facts* are included as captions beneath the three hand-drawn images between the book's three sections. Oliver Smuhar has used footnotes to cite the information used within these *facts*. Below **Fire Works in Strange Ways** would like to reference the authors, publishers, companies, governmental organisations and websites who are the original creators, founders and providers of the *facts* used within the short story.

<sup>1</sup> Australian Koala Foundation. 2020, *Interesting Facts* [website], (accessed 1 February 2021), <<https://www.savethekoala.com/about-koalas/interesting-facts>>.

<sup>2</sup> Speight, N. 4 March 2020, *Understanding the true impact of bushfires on our koala population*, The University of Adelaide, Adelaide, (accessed 1 February 2021), <<https://www.adelaide.edu.au/research/news/list/2020/01/15/understanding-the-true-impact-of-bushfires-on-our-koala-population>>.

<sup>3</sup> Cremona, T., Stobo-Wilson, A., Baker, A., Cooper, S. & Carthew, S. 17 July 2020, *A rare discovery: we found the sugar glider is actually three species, but one is disappearing fast*, The Conversation Media Group Ltd, (accessed 1 February 2021), <<https://theconversation.com/a-rare-discovery-we-found-the-sugar-glider-is-actually-three-species-but-one-is-disappearing-fast-142807>>.

<sup>4</sup> McLeod, L. 24 July 2019, *Facts About Sugar Gliders*, The Spruce Pets, Dotdash, (accessed 1 February 2020), <<https://www.thesprucepets.com/sugar-glider-facts-1237340>>.

<sup>5</sup> State of New South Wales (NSW Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment). 2020, *Bushfire Recovery for wildlife and their habitat*, Australian Government, Canberra, ACT [website], (accessed 1 February 2020), <<https://www.environment.gov.au/biodiversity/bushfire-recovery>>.

<sup>6</sup> Van Dijk, A. 27 August 2020, *Need a mood lift? We've tracked 4 ways Australia's environment has repaired itself in 2020*, The Conversation Media Group Ltd [website], (accessed 1 February 2020), <<https://theconversation.com/need-a-mood-lift-weve-tracked-4-ways-australias-environment-has-repaired-itself-in-2020-144949>>.

<sup>7</sup> Machemer, T. 23 March 2020, *How Australia's Wilderness Is Recovering From Wildfires*, SmartNews, Smithsonian Magazine [website], (accessed 1 February 2020), <<https://www.smithsonianmag.com/smart-news/how-australias-wilderness-recovering-wildfires-180974464/>>.

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