

GRAPHIC NOVELS

I Survived the California Wildfires, 2018



by Lauren Tarshis (text) & illus. by Cassie Anderson

Scholastic/Graphix. (I Survived Graphix: Bk. 13)

Feb. 2026. 160p. adapt. by Georgia Ball. Gr 4-7

★ Gr 4-7—Josh Wallace travels with his mother from New Jersey to Northern California for a tech-free getaway while his father deals with a “computer glitch” at his bank—which Josh later discovers is

actually a criminal arrest. While Josh visits extended family at the reptile shelter they run in California, he and his cousin Holly are trapped in the path of the 2018 Carr Fire. The duo must navigate a maze of fire, outrun a terrified mountain lion, and utilize an old zip line to cross a river to safety. This graphic novel adaptation of a 2020 entry in Tarshis’s “I Survived” series is relentlessly suspenseful, blending personal drama regarding family trust with the visceral terror of a natural disaster. The back matter is exceptionally robust, providing history on the deadliest U.S. wildfires, the science of controlled burns, and safety measures like fire shelters. Anderson’s illustrations are essential to the storytelling, using light and vibrant hues to contrast the peaceful forest with the flaming wasps of the embers. The panels effectively convey motion and scale, from the towering trees to the claustrophobic, smoke-filled escape route. Real photos of the Carr Fire’s aftermath ground the fictionalized survival story in historical reality. Josh appears to be mixed race, with tan skin and red hair; his mother and Holly have brown skin; and the firefighters and other characters reflect a diverse range of backgrounds.

VERDICT An intense, educational, and visually striking addition to any school library. This is a must-have for fans of Tarshis’s “I Survived” books and anyone who enjoys high-stakes, gritty graphic novels.

Reviewed by Richard Winters , Jan 16, 2026