



## Sparky's Electrifying Tale

**Janelle London**

**Matthew Metz**

**Ilya Fortuna, Illustrator**

Mascot Books (Aug 31, 2021)

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*A brother and sister are prompted to discuss environmental care in the wise picture book Sparky's Electrifying Tale.*

In Janelle London and Matthew Metz's picture book *Sparky's Electrifying Tale*, siblings and their hamster learn about the dangers of gasoline and renewable alternatives to its use.

Rory's father gives him a hamster, Sparky. Later, while he's looking for a fun hiding place, Sparky climbs into a car's exhaust pipe. Rory's sister, Tina, is appalled, asserting that the soot in the tailpipe is bad for Sparky. She also details the myriad ways that gasoline is bad for the planet, from air and water pollution to global warming. Sparky is inspired to perform a feat of magic: he makes an electric car appear. The children and their father enjoy the car while the book relays its closing moral: "For a planet that's green, we've got to stop using so much gasoline."

The book conveys its complex moral and scientific information in a straightforward, accessible way. Tina details the origins of fossil fuels, their extraction, and the mechanisms and effects of global warming in a warm, passionate manner. She's depicted as around ten years old, and speaks as such, but she also answers her younger brother's exuberant questions well. They are a sweet and relatable pair. However, the source of Sparky's magical abilities remains a mystery.

The text, which is presented in a small font on the page, comes in rhyming couplets with consistent, bouncy rhythms, though the book's strict adherence to this form sometimes results in awkward dialogue. The book's bright illustrations better complement its educational messages: they are thorough and detailed, showing swirling smoke rising from oil refineries, depicting refugees in a poignant manner, and dreaming of a green climate utopia with windmills, solar panels, and electrical lines.

The picture book *Sparky's Electrifying Tale* merges educational material with a fun story line to convey an environmental message.

AIMEE JODOIN (September 30, 2021)

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