



Reading Excerpt from *Allie, First At Last*
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By *Angela Cervantes*

I've had five whole years to make my mark, and each year my rise to the top collapses like an avalanche. In first grade, we had to sell cookie dough for new playground equipment. I sold cookie dough to every single house in my neighborhood and to all the firefighters at my dad's station. Still, I came in second to Ethan Atkins, who sold a hundred tubs of cookie dough outside of church. In second grade, it was the jump-rope-a-thon for the children's hospital. I was jumping for two hours straight to beat the Sendak jump record set by Adriana. Ten minutes shy of the record, I got a leg cramp. Third grade was Sendak's math tournament. I lost in the finale to a word problem! A word problem!

I don't even want to remember my big-time fail last year. It was Sendak's annual fourth-grade "Trash to Treasure" Recycling Contest. All we had to do was collect trash and make something amazing. Most kids went with the obvious and built wind chimes and bird feeders, but I took a bunch of thrown-away plastic water bottles, Styrofoam, cardboard, and empty Capri Sun packages, and made an awesome boat that actually floated! Little did I know that the black-and-white kitten we had just adopted from the animal shelter hated boats. The morning of the contest, I found Secret chewing the Styrofoam and clawing the cardboard to bits like it was made of catnip. I've had five epic years of failure at Sendak. Today everything changes. No more failure for me! I've got a massive volcano, and I plan to be the first in my family to win Sendak Elementary School's fifth-grade science fair. □