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**MY DOG’S A CHICKEN**

MONTANARI, Susan McElroy. My Dog’s a Chicken. illus. by Anne Wilsdorf. 40p. ebook available. Random/Schwartz & Wade Bks. Feb. 2016. Tr $16.99. ISBN 9780385384902.

**PreS-Gr 1**–Lula Mae desperately wants a dog, but Mama tells her that times are hard and she’ll have to “make do.” Without missing a beat, the girl decides that one of the many chickens roaming their yard could make a suitable dog—especially the black-and-white speckled hen who struts around like she owns the place. Blithely ignoring her squawks of protest, Lula Mae calls her new pet Pookie, plops a bright red bow atop the hen’s head, and declares her a fine show dog. When she sees the other chickens running frantically in the opposite direction from the bow-wearing hen, Lula Mae decides that Pookie’s also a terrific shepherd dog. Later, when Cousin Tater tries to scare Lula Mae with a garter snake and Pookie responds with a loud “BAWK! BAWK!” Lula Mae decides that she is a fine guard dog as well. With each declaration, Mama deadpans, “Call it anything you like, but it’s not coming in my house.” When little Baby Berry suddenly goes missing, it’s Pookie who unintentionally saves the day. Wilsdorf’s watercolor and China ink illustrations extend the humor of Montanari’s text through the characters’ comical expressions and some well-placed speech bubbles. Though picture books set in the country featuring traditional nuclear families are in no short supply, it’s the irrepressible optimism of Lula Mae, Mama’s droll responses, and Papa’s befuddled exasperation (“Lula Mae, what are you doing to that chicken!”) that set this story apart and make for an ideal read-aloud that will have kids and adults chuckling. Careful readers will spot clues to Baby Berry’s whereabouts, and keen observers will enjoy the chicken antics on the endpapers.

**VERDICT A lively choice for storytimes, and a great addition to most picture book collections.**

***–Kiera Parrott,* School Library Journal**