My Dog Never Says Please by Suzanne Williams

We all know about sibling rivalry, but leave it to Ginny Mae Perkins to be jealous of the family dog! He doesn't have to say please, he doesn't have to clean his room, or wear shoes, or deal with a tattling little brother, or ... The solution: Ms. Perkins moves to the dog house to see how the canine half really lives, and discovers that a dog's life is far from the ideal existence it appears to be from the human side of the leash. Especially when there are pork chops for dinner.

My Personal Review:
Ginnie Mae's got a tough life. Her ma's picky about things like saying please and wearing shoes. Her little brother, Jack, is so perfect "he ha[s] a little halo over his head." Her dog, Ol' Red, seems to have things a lot easier. "My dog never says 'please,'" muses Ginnie Mae, "and no one thinks a thing about it." Finally, after a night of being told to mind her manners, eat like a lady, clean her room, and put on her shoes, Ginnie Mae declares she'd rather be a dog. Humored by her parents, she moves in with Ol' Red, to a life of treeing cats, digging holes, sleeping in the doghouse, and begging for scraps. "Ol' Red's real good about sharing. . . I think he's even given me some of his fleas." Kibbles can't compare to her ma's cooking, however, and when it starts to rain, Ginnie Mae starts to reconsider her care-free lifestyle. "Pa says I can go back to being myself anytime I've a mind to. So maybe I'll just saunter on in and wash up for supper," she decides.

This story has some great comic moments that make my four-year-old laugh out loud, and even bring a smile to his oh-so-sophisticated six-year-old sister's face. I like the fact that even though the story is told through Ginnie Mae's voice, Ma and Pa are presented as perfectly reasonable parents. More importantly, the author, Suzanne Williams, lets the story play to its logical outcome without moralizing. She allows her readers to draw for themselves the conclusion that good manners are a fair trade-off for the blessings of civilization. Tedd Arnold's illustrations are priceless, adding wry humor to an already amusing story. He gives us Ginnie Mae at the dinner table, the food flying everywhere, and Ginnie Mae and Ol' Red sitting side by side on their
haunches, scratching at fleas. Funniest of all is the teeth-baring grin
Ginnie Mae gives her annoying little brother at the end of the book, and
his startled reaction to it.

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