


# SLOPPY JOE

by **Dave Keane**

illustrated by  
**Denise Brunkus**







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**For my six sloppy brothers—Bird, T-Roll, Crust, Snowy, Gumby, and Slim  
—D.K.**

**For Rosemary—a neat inspiration  
—D.B.**

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**M**om says I'm the first kid in history to take a school picture with gum stuck in his hair.

You can barely notice.





My room looks a little bit messy,  
but I know exactly where everything is . . .





... everything except my bearded dragon, a few of his crickets, and a grilled cheese sandwich I lost last summer.



When you're sloppy, people are always telling you what to do.

*Stand up straight.*

*Clean out your nose.*

*Comb your hair.*

*Tie your shoes.*

*Pull up your pants.*







I'd rather be raised by alligators.



I've always been good at being sloppy.



I slurp, spill, slouch, talk with my mouth full, and put my elbows on the table without even trying.





Dad says I'm a natural.



So do Grammy and Big Grandpa.



They spread newspapers all around me  
when we eat dinner at their house.





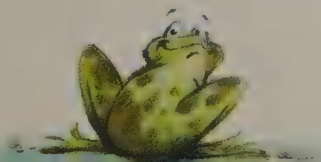
How did they know a meatball could roll that far?



But I'm not just good at being sloppy. . . .



I can catch more frogs than any kid on my street.







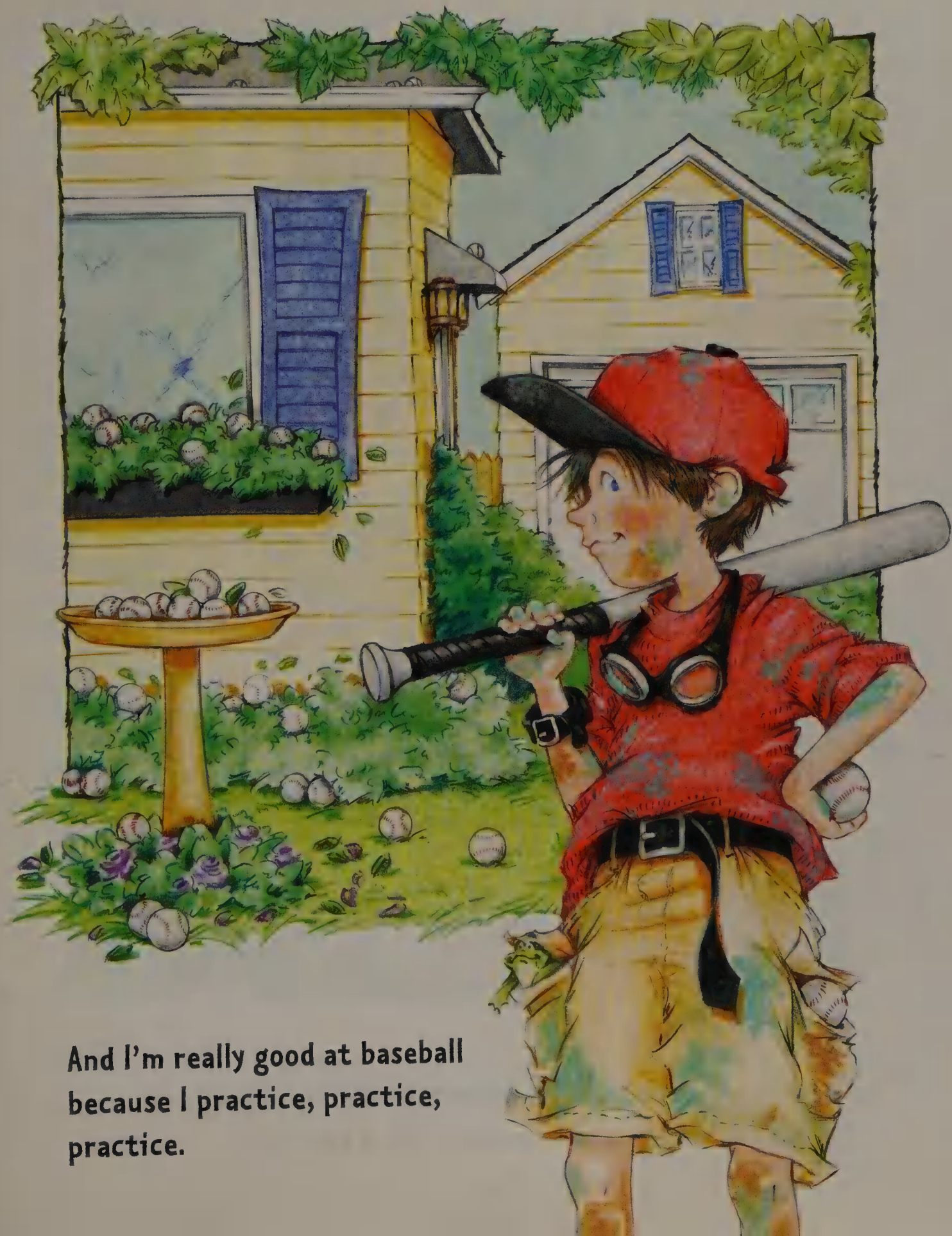
Just ask my mom.





I know how to help my dad in the yard.





And I'm really good at baseball  
because I practice, practice,  
practice.



But sometimes I wish I wasn't so sloppy. . . .



Like when my friend's mom doesn't let me come in the house.  
"Just wait here. I'll send Jimmy out," she says.





**But I wiped my feet!**



**"What kind of pet does the sun have?"**



**A hot dog!"**

**"Hey, Mom,  
what did the taco say to the burrito?"**



**Where have you bean?"**



**When being sloppy gets me in  
really big trouble, I just try out  
my newest jokes.**





Sometimes even my best jokes  
don't work.



So I decide something has to change.



That's when I make up my mind to not be sloppy anymore.





Starting tomorrow, I'll be Neat Joe.





The next day, I give the dog a shower.





I clean my room. I find that lost grilled cheese sandwich.  
It's so hard I almost break my teeth.





I set the table for dinner.  
I even find one of my lost crickets.



This being-neat stuff isn't as hard as I thought it would be.  
But nobody cares about all my neatness because . . .





... everyone in my family has the flu.



**I tell them not to panic. This is a job for Neat Joe.**





So I bring cold socks for their foreheads.  
I cover everything with germ spray.  
I even make soup.

I try to cheer them up, but my jokes only make them groan louder.

"Hey, guys, what kind of dog wins every contest?  
**A wiener dog.**"



Get it? Wiiiiiiiiiiiiener dog!  
What's wrong with you people?





By the time Grammy gets here,  
I have everything under control.





**"So what do you think of the new Neat Joe?" I ask my family.**





**"He reminds me of the old Sloppy Joe," Dad says.**  
**"And he's a very special kid," Mom says.**







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