



Illustrated by Tim Bowers
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About Bravest of the Brave

One of the first finger plays I learned as a youth librarian was:

“Way up high, in an apple tree
Two little apples smiled down at me.
I shook that tree as hard as I could,
And down fell the apples (pretend to bite into one in each hand)
. . . hmm, are they good!”

(Author, unknown.)

Usually, I went on to make this a sillier story by doing a verse with bananas (did you remember to peel them?) and donuts in a donut tree. Librarians do this a lot—they take a base story or song and adapt it to the theme of the storytime. So it was not surprising that one day, when I was thinking about starting a new book for kids, I thought of this finger play. I wondered what else could be up in that tree? Animals? And if so, who might be seeing those animals?

This story went through many changes. First I had to figure out who the hero would be. Once I realized that a skunk would be perfect, I had to do a lot of research. I had to find out about the physical defense methods of skunks. Yes, they often stomp the ground. Or they ruff their fur to look large. They do a number of things, not just offensive spraying. Once I realized that, I could gradually intensify the actions of my hero to the point where he feels he has to do *the ultimate!*

It was a lot of fun working on this book. I enjoyed getting to use so many adverbs—a part of speech many writers try to avoid. But in BRAVEST OF THE BRAVE adverbs are important.

I love the spunky skunk Tim Bowers drew for our hero! Also, Tim included many small details that are fun to look for in the illustrations. Did you notice how Tim got our skunk into the forest? And what do you notice near the end of the book—who has returned? What other fun things do you see in the illustrations?

Enjoy BRAVEST OF THE BRAVE—I am very proud of it!

S. C.
January, 2005.