

THE HIGHLAND STORM

'Twas a chilly spring night in the Highlands of Scotland. The wind was roaring and whining down the mountains and through the glens.

I, dear reader, stood in the shelter of a rock overhang. I could hear the river tumbling down into the loch (or lake) far below. From my shelter, I looked up the ridge to the old castle of the Poo-Marú Clan. As the wind blew the clouds away, I could see the lights in the windows far above me. In my mind's eye, I could picture the crest centered above the large fireplace in the central hall of the castle, the crest of the Poo-Marú Clan, the Highland tiger! On the crest stood a large Highland wildcat, or Highland tiger, hissing and spitting in fury. The Highland wildcat can be as large as thirty pounds and including their ringed tail can be nearly forty-one inches long. It's a fierce symbol for a family crest and fiercer still alive and in the fur.

And that describes our friend and hero introduced to you in this briefing. His name is Catty Poo-Marú, and he's a Highland tiger. He's also a FIGS agent (Felines in Government Service), a detective who serves the people of Scotland, catching thieves and criminals. He and his clan (or family) live at Castle Poo-Marú in the rough and wooded highlands surrounding the castle.

Now Castle Poo-Marú, my bonnie companions, has a history of being haunted. For sometimes on nights such as this, a series of hair-raising, chill bump-chasing screams can be heard in the rocky thickets around Castle Poo-Marú. Though this makes a fine legend and good storytelling, the truth of the mat-

ter is that it's the eerie scream of the Highland tiger. I know this is the case and still I have wondered on such a night as I have described to you.

And on that night, I stood gazing upward as the wind and rain increased their howling down through the ridges. It was loud, fierce, and lonesome, like a thousand babes keening for their mother. The rain blew harder, and the keening grew louder. Then through the thicket I saw a light. There was something on the path through the forest made by the red deer herds. At first the light was close to the ground, and then it would bounce about three feet into the air and come back low to the ground. Down the mountain it flew ever closer. As the wind blew the fog away, I saw the light was coming straight toward me. It was a feat of courage not to take to paw and flee. I felt my fur rise from head to toe. I felt the growl rumbling in my throat afore I heard it in my ears. My clan of catties has never been of the fearful sort but...still. My kit, who was with me, was buried into my fur like a tick on a bear. Closer still the light came. Then I began to chuckle when I caught a good look at what was coming. It was a very large Highland tiger with his tail flying behind him. He was on a motorcycle. He was wearing a 1940s motorcycle helmet and goggles on his big head. I heard the motor whine, and I saw his teeth shinning in the darkness. It was our friend and hero Catty Poo-Maru flying at rocket speed toward me. And he was laughing! You've never seen a Highland tiger laugh and smile like Catty. He slid under the ledge, slinging mud and rocks. He cut the engine. Helmet and goggles were removed, and there stood the most famous FIGS agent of the Scottish Highlands, nay, even the nation of Scotland. Over a high broad chest was stretched a navy blue tee-shirt with the inscription "FIGS Highland Branch." He pulled a matching navy blue cap from his pocket and clapped it on his large catty head and leaned down in my face. "Hoot mon, it's good to see ye again."



And thus, I acquaint you with an agent of honor, courage, and keen intelligence, a friend of long standing.

And who am I? I am Robert the Great, the head of my clan, the Scots Folds of the Highlands. We are fine-looking cats. Our ears lay down forward and flat on our heads like the flap on a pocket. We are brave and true. Beside me on the described adventure stood my eldest son, Robert the Lesser. And though we are not directly in government service, our clan has long been in assistance to those who are. With Catty, we stand united against lyin', thievin', cheatin', and skullduggery in the Highlands. Beware, ne'er-do-wells, of Catty Poo-Maru, the Highland Storm.