



Italy | Turin

“The Black Panther Afoot in the City”

A few weeks ago I was walking in the center of Turin when I suddenly saw a visibly jittery young couple approaching at high speed on a scooter. They stopped abruptly at a nearby bar and began excitedly to tell of a black panther they had allegedly spotted in Pellerina Park, northeast of Turin. The barkeeper, who knew the couple, told them to sit down and calm themselves while he brought them a glass of water. In December 2005 a black panther had already been sighted in a suburb of Turin. My curiosity therefore impelled me to approach the young man, who was slowly recovering from his shock. He told me that he had gone into the park to picnic with his girlfriend when he suddenly saw a black blur among the trees, which was swiftly moving in their direction. When they saw that the black blur was a big panther, they left everything where it was, quickly jumped onto the scooter and drove off. News of this sighting soon spread throughout the city. Three days later, a traffic cop from Collegno finally managed to get a photo of the wildcat while it was running among the bushes. Another policeman claimed he saw the panther in the streets of downtown Turin. In a short time there were many reports and testimonies, and the hunt for the panther began. Traffic cops, police officers, firemen, the entire police force and special task forces took part in the pursuit. They carried rifles suitable for boar hunting and guns with soporific projectiles. Yet there were no further traces of the panther. At first, it was conjectured that the animal came from a Moscow circus that was currently performing in the Pellerina Park, but the circus management immediately denied this, explaining that the circus had no panther, but only dogs, camels and horses. It was also odd that nobody ever filed a missing report about such an animal with the police.

Truth or legend? Nobody really knows. Yet no one any longer goes for a walk in the park without now and then looking over his shoulder ...

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