**Halloween premiere of the video game Real Vampires, inspired by Polish folklore**

**Poland, not Transylvania, is the homeland of the first vampires – as Łukasz Kozak proves in his book “With Stake and Spade”. It was this anthology of folk beliefs and historical sources that inspired the Copenhagen-based studio Those Eyes to create the video game Real Vampires. The game stands out with its unique combination of humour, horror, and cultural history, and its gameplay invites players on a journey through a world where the boundaries between the living and the dead are blurred. The premiere of Real Vampires will take place – not coincidentally – on Halloween, 31 October 2025.**

**To mark the occasion, on 31 October 2025, the Adam Mickiewicz Institute will make Łukasz Kozak’s publication “With Stake and Spade” available on its website. The electronic version of the anthology will be available for free download, allowing readers to explore the world of Polish vampires at their leisure. The publication will be available at:** [**https://iam.pl/en**](https://iam.pl/en)

**“With Stake and Spade” – a Publication on Polish Vampirism Making Waves Worldwide**

“Most of the ethnographic materials, press reports, and even court records concerning vampires are not found in Transylvania, where Bram Stoker’s *Dracula* is set, in Greece, where Byron first heard about them, or in the lands of the South Slavs. They come from Poland” – [**said Łukasz Kozak in an interview with the Culture.pl portal**](https://culture.pl/en/article/not-all-vampires-wear-capes-polish-folk-mythology-sourcebook-published-by-the-adam-mickiewicz-institute).

**“With Stake and Spade: Vampiric Diversity in Poland”, an English-language publication released by the Adam Mickiewicz Institute and the Evviva L’arte Foundation in 2020**, is an anthology of 78 source texts centred on the theme of vampires. The texts were collected and edited by **Łukasz Kozak**, a medievalist who sought to trace the origins of the first vampire, which he argues originated in Poland.

By compiling ethnographic, historical, and scientific materials, alongside press reports, “With Stake and Spade” allows readers to explore vampires – a widely popular and frequently adapted motif – in a completely new light: as characters rooted in Slavic folk beliefs.

The anthology has also attracted the attention of an international audience, particularly within the academic community. In Kaunas in 2023, on the occasion of Aleksandra Waliszewska’s exhibition “The Dark Arts”, a meet the author session drew a large audience and inspired similar research at the Lithuanian Literature and Folklore Institute (Lietuvių literatūros ir tautosakos institutas). It has also inspired a twin publication by Francesco Paolo de Ceglia (Aldo Moro University of Bari) and a number of artistic projects.

An integral element of “With Stake and Spade” is its distinctive graphic design by **Julia Mirny**. Her illustrations are stylised analogue collages that make creative use of materials from Polish public domain collections available through digital libraries and museum archives.

**Real Vampires – an unconventional storydriven adventure game drawn from Slavic folklore**

The independent Copenhagen-based video game studio **Those Eyes** has announced the release date of its latest project, **Real Vampires** — a game inspired by authentic Slavic folklore about vampires. Blending humour, horror and cultural history, the game brings its world to life through **Julia Mirny**’s analogue cut-out aesthetic. Real Vampires will be released on Steam, App Store, and Google Play on 31 October 2025.

**Inspired by Łukasz Kozak’s “With Stake and Spade”**, the game invites players on a journey through a realm where the boundaries between the living and the dead blur. Guiding players through these layered and often dark tales are Łukasz Kozak himself and his talking dog, Oki. Simple, intuitive gameplay intertwines with historically accurate folklore, offering both entertainment and an opportunity to explore the rich world of Slavic folk belief. From sixteenth-century plague burial rituals to controversial recipes, each story is grounded in documented tradition — yet told with a modern, playful twist.

In addition to delving into authentic folklore, Real Vampires encourages players to share their own local tales of the undead from around the world, contributing to a growing archive of living traditions. The Danish studio Those Eyes will donate part of the game’s proceeds to Ukraine.

**Real Vampires is supported by the Danish Film Institute, the Adam Mickiewicz Institute, and the Creative Europe programme.**

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