

# ***THE CURSED MILL***

*Not everyone knows that vampire stories do not begin with Bram Stoker's novel "Dracula" or with Vlad Tepes, better known as Count Dracula. The first stories started from the small village of Zarožje, where the vampire Savo Savanović lived in an old mill by the river Rogačica. Although the water mill has been restored, the villagers still refuse to go near it.*

Slavic folklore is rich with curious creatures, and people in the Balkans are often willing to share a story or two about an obscure event or characters who lived long ago. The most famous story about vampires in



Serbia is that of Sava, the vampire. In the western part of Serbia is the village of Zarožje. The village is famous for being the home of the vampire Sava Savanović. Today, the village is an attractive destination for tourists attracted by the legend of Serbia's most famous vampire. Even though Savski Mlin is at

the top of the list of visits by tourists and hikers, and after the restoration it seems almost idyllic, the locals do not get answers to their questions. And the houses near the mill are also abandoned.

According to legend, Sava lived in an old mill, under the source of the Rogačica river. It was active in the 18th century. It was rarely seen during the day, only visited by villagers who wanted to buy flour. According to legend, they never returned from the mill, writes Spojante Slavane.

One day, a customer who went to buy flour at Sava's mill found him dead. He had two bloody spots on his neck, and a yellow butterfly came out of his mouth. The mill was abandoned and rumored to be haunted.

After many years, the young man Strahinja fell in love with the girl Radojka. He was a poor villager, and she was the daughter of a local merchant, who did not approve of their love due to their different social statuses. However, Strahinja was determined to win the merchant's sympathy and marry Radojka. So he decided to take over an abandoned, haunted mill with the goal of restarting it and eventually making some fortune himself. Although Radojka begged him not to do it, Strahinja revived the mill.

The villagers began to visit the mill more often for grain, so Strahinja's business flourished. But every night there was a strange rumble. Fearing the legend of the place,

he slept in a small, windowless room that he locked and kept a gun by his bed. Although he was afraid, Strahinja was held back by thoughts of marrying Radojka.

One evening the rattling was even louder and more disturbing than ever before. The interior of the mill rattled, the door of Strahin's room rattled until the lock broke and a stranger appeared. Shaken, Strahinja cried out of fear and asked the man who he was. He was Savo Savanović.

Strahinja fired the gun into the man's chest without hesitation. Savo screamed and flew out of the house, while Strahinja screamed for help.

Together with the farmers, he went to the cemetery, to the grave of Sava Savanović. Interestingly, the ground around the grave was wet. Strahinja started digging, got to the coffin and opened it. Inside was a tall man who had visited him at the mill that night. He had a fresh gunshot wound in his chest. Strahinja stuck a metal spike in Sava's chest. A small, yellow butterfly flew out of Sava's mouth, and Savo died forever.



Strahinja ran to Radojka's house to tell her the good news. When he entered her room, he noticed an open window, from which a yellow butterfly flew and landed on Radojka's lips. Before Strahinja could do anything, the butterfly disappeared in Radojka's mouth. She woke up as a vampire with two sharp teeth and attacked the Scarecrow, drinking his blood and turning him into a vampire. And so they can finally be together forever.

It is a story described in a book, told for generations, and a history immortalized in a film. One of the most famous and popular Serbian writers, Milovan Glišić, wrote the book "Ninety years later" in 1880, with which he rooted the story of the most famous vampire in Serbia into literature. It was published 17 years before Bram Stoker's Dracula was published in the UK. The book was made into a movie in 1973. It is called "Leptirica" (translation would be "Female Butterfly") and is considered the first Serbian horror film.



Vampire folklore is deeper than simple legend and, according to research on Serbian vampires, it is rooted in people's beliefs and daily lives. Many anthropologists, writers and ethnographers have researched the topic of vampires in Serbia and collected invaluable stories from the local population.