



DUPPIES

In Caribbean folklore, particularly in Barbadian and Jamaican culture, duppies are malevolent spirits or ghosts of the dead. These spirits are believed to roam the earth at night, causing mischief or harm to the living. The term duppy originates from West African spiritual traditions, where ancestral spirits play a significant role in daily life, and it was integrated into Caribbean culture through the transatlantic slave trade. According to the folklore, duppies are often the souls of those who died in improper circumstances or with unresolved issues, or they may be the spirits of wicked people. Some versions of the lore suggest that when a person dies, their spirit splits—one part finding peace, while the other remains as a duppy.

Duppies are typically associated with graveyards, abandoned places, or crossroads, and they are often described as shadowy, ghostly figures, sometimes appearing monstrous or disfigured. In Jamaica and other parts of the Caribbean, people have developed various rituals to prevent duppies from causing trouble. These practices include ensuring proper burial rites, sprinkling white rum or salt around homes, placing a glass of water by the door, turning shoes upside down to confuse the spirit, or lighting candles and burning herbs to ward them off.

Duppy stories often serve as cautionary tales, teaching lessons about morality. For instance, one common story involves a person who wrongs others during life, only to return as a duppy to suffer or seek vengeance. Encounters with duppies are frequently described as eerie and dangerous, with people relying on rituals or protective charms to escape their influence. These spirits also appear in traditional Jamaican storytelling, particularly in Anansi tales, where they interact with the clever trickster figure, Anansi. Today, duppies have found their way into Caribbean music, literature, and film, representing the deep cultural connection to the supernatural and the unknown.