

HAUNTED CANADA

The Second Terrifying
Collection

Joel A. Sutherland

illustrations by
Norman Lanting

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For Colleen.
I owe every page in this collection to you.

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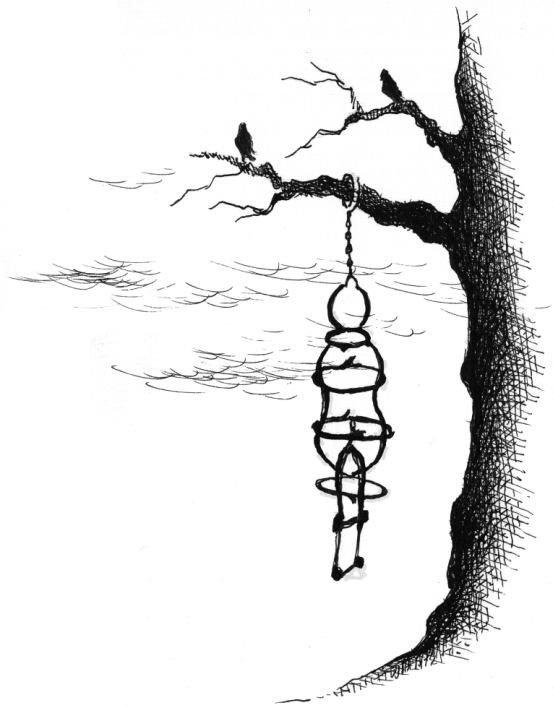
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ROTTING IN A CAGE

Lévis, Quebec

“There is scarcely any woman in all of Canadian history who has a worse reputation than Marie-Josephte Corriveau.” So reads the opening sentence of Corriveau’s entry in the *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*. In life, Marie-Josephte Corriveau was a beautiful woman, but in death she became something vile and heinous, a sickening reminder to the people of Lévis to obey the letter of the law.

Born in Saint-Vallier, Quebec, in 1733, she married her first husband, a farmer named Charles Bouchard, at the young age of sixteen. They had three children and remained together for eleven years despite whispered rumours that theirs was not a happy, peaceful union. The townsfolk believed that Charles was mean and abusive to his young wife. Marie-Josephte was miserable, and many

thought she might be better off on her own. Nevertheless, no one suspected the woman of any wrongdoing when Charles was found dead in 1760, nor did it seem strange that Marie-Josephte should remarry a mere fifteen months later. The times were tough and she had to put the well-being of her children first, assuring they'd have a roof over their heads and food to eat.

She married another farmer, Louis Etienne Dodier. All seemed well at first, but it wasn't long before cracks began to appear in their relationship and it would soon come to a deadly end. A mere year and a half after the wedding, Louis was found dead in his own stable. Marie-Josephte argued that their horse must have kicked and trampled her new husband — his head was caved in and his face covered in lacerations — but the locals were no longer so trusting of the young woman. An inquiry was launched by the British military authorities who had recently conquered New France. It was quickly ruled that the horse played no part in Louis's death.

It was well known that Marie-Josephte's father, Joseph, did not approve of his daughter's second marriage and was on bad terms with Louis. The military tribunal found him guilty of the homicide and sentenced him to hang, while Marie-Josephte was found to be an accomplice and sentenced to sixty lashes and to be branded with the letter M on her hand.

Neither punishment was carried out. On the eve of his execution, Joseph finally admitted that he had wanted to protect his daughter from the hangman's noose and therefore hadn't proclaimed his own innocence, but in reality he had played no part in Louis's death. The guilt, he confessed with a heavy heart, lay entirely upon his daughter's shoulders.

A second trial began and Marie-Josephte testified to striking her husband twice on the head with an axe while he slept. She then dragged his body from the house to the horse stable to make the murder look like an accident. No one knows why she decided at this time to admit the truth. Perhaps her guilty conscience was too much to bear. Perhaps, like many serial killers, she craved attention. But with the admission of guilt came new speculation about the mysterious and sudden death of her first husband. And her legend has grown over the years to falsely claim she had as many as seven husbands, all of whom she murdered in gruesome fashions such as poisoning, strangulation and impalement with a pitchfork. It's even been said she boiled one of her husbands alive.

The charges against Joseph Corriveau were dropped and Marie-Josephte was sentenced to hang for her crimes. But that punishment alone would not be satisfactory for such an evil and treacherous person who some were now coming to believe was a sorceress with dark powers. After hanging, her corpse was ordered to be placed in an iron cage in the shape of a human body and strung up for public display.

The terrible act was carried out in 1763. Her cadaver was hung in the cage at a busy crossroads in the woods that would later become known as La Corriveau Forest. The cage — body and all — was left swaying in the wind for thirty-eight days to serve as a warning. Her skin blackened and peeled away from her bones. Her hair fell out, and animals picked at her flesh. The stench was atrocious. But as her body withered away, so did the belief that Marie-Josephte could no longer harm the living.

The eerie sounds of grinding metal and clattering bones kept most late-night travellers from venturing near

the cursed intersection. Those who weren't superstitious or easily spooked, and passed the swaying cage, arrived at their destinations with pale faces and stories of the rotting body that had opened its eyes, lunged for them with decaying hands and whispered their name with a guttural voice. With every passing day, the stories grew wilder and more frightening. Marie-Josephte's body was finally moved to a nearby cemetery, but no one was brave enough to free it. Cage and Corriveau were buried together.

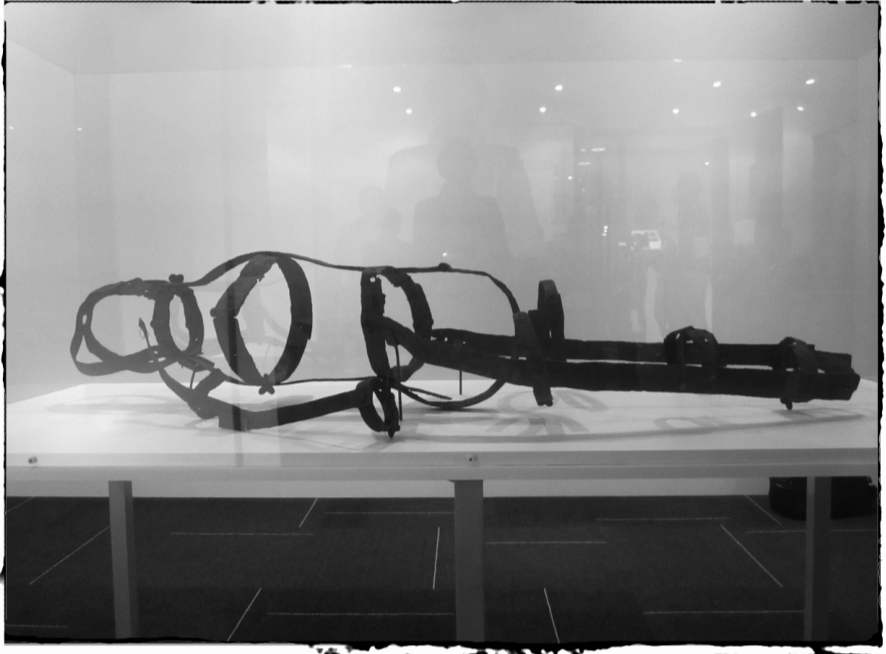
The townsfolk had hoped that'd be the last they'd hear of Marie-Josephte, but they were dead wrong. Not long after she had been buried, an upstanding young man named François Dubé was travelling home to his wife. When he passed the tree where the cage used to hang, he saw an odd vision across the river. Demonic figures danced wildly around the crackling flames of a blue fire. Just as François turned to flee, a pair of bony, slimy hands clutched his throat from behind and held him in place.

"Take me across the river, Dubé," the rotting corpse of Marie-Josephte hissed in his ear. "I cannot pass the blessed waters of the Saint Lawrence unless a Christian man carries me."

François fell to the ground as he tried to free himself from Marie-Josephte's supernaturally strong grasp. As he pulled at her arms, her maggot-ridden flesh ripped off her bones and wriggled in his hands. François finally succumbed to extreme fright and fainted in a heap on the side of the road. His wife found him there the next morning, nearly paralyzed with fear but thankful to still be alive.

Reports of the ghost of Marie-Josephte rising from her grave to torment passersby in La Corriveau Forest still creep up today. Those who remember her tale — and it's

nearly impossible to forget — are wise to get off the roads, out of the woods and into the safety of their homes long before nightfall in the city of Lévis.



The cage that held Marie-Josephite Corriveau's body



RED EYES IN THE NIGHT

Roche Percée, Saskatchewan

Some ghosts are peaceful, others are mean-spirited. But regardless of their disposition, most seem unable to do much physical harm to the living. That couldn't be further from the truth when it comes to the rugeroos that haunt the abandoned Roche Percée mines. According to legends that date back hundreds of years, rugeroos are spirits with red eyes that cut through the dark. They are monstrously huge and can appear as a mix of man and animal, most commonly the coyote. And they guard their territory fiercely, attacking anyone who dares to venture too close.

Roche Percée is a small village southeast of the city of Estevan. Translated from French its name means "pierced rock," which describes the odd geological formation. The