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Lapin the Trickster Rabbit

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Lapin the Trickster Rabbit Legend

Informant: Jason Swan is my father and is the youngest son of Susan (Sam) Swan. Jason was born in Tacoma, Washington but was raised in Eugene and Bend Oregon. When he was 8 years old his mother, Sam, got re-married to a man named David Swan. Jason was an excellent student and loved to ski. He Graduated high school in 1988 and served an LDS mission to France. He then came here to Utah State to study history. He switched his major several times, and finally graduated in 1998 with a bachelor degree in Instructional Design. He continued his education and gained a masters in Instructional design in 2001. He married Jamie Swan in 1993 and together they have 5 children; 4 daughters and 1 son. I am the second eldest. He now works for a company called L-3 Communications, which has brought him and his family to live in North Carolina for several years and now to Arlington, Texas where they have been for nearly 7 years. Jason is a proud father and is a wonderful provider and patriarch of the home. Family is his everything, and traditions among family are something he holds very dear.

Context: I interviewed Jason last week over FaceTime. As he lives in Texas so it is hard for me to visit all the time. He was wonderful enough to agree to FaceTime me to help me collect this piece of folklore. I was at my office at work when we started the call, and he was at his home in Arlington in the living room. In this interview my Dad told me the story of how he came by Lapin, the trickster rabbit. Growing up and hearing this story all the time, I always thought it was something he picked up in France when he lived there as a missionary. Because the story had French/Creole influences. But as the interview went on, I learned that in fact it was not from France, but from a local book store at that. The stories that my dad shared with us will live on forever in my mind and heart.

Text: M: um can you tell me about Lapin? *pronounces luh-PAN*

J: Lapin? [corrects pronunciation to *LAH-pan*] Uh yeah. Lapin is a trickster rabbit comes from Cajun or Creole southern, actually... actually trickster lapin comes from western Africa and the slaves that were brought to the united states from Africa brought their tradition of the trickster rabbit. So, you have Lapin and Brer rabbit and a couple other uh characters that are that kind of came out of that tradition. Bugs bunny maybe. Uh so Lapin we found lapin in a bookstore there

in Logan in downtown Logan. We were walking by and we saw lapin had these lovely wonderful illustrations and I just I wanted that book for my kids and I don't think we got it. I think Jamie went back and got it or something if I remember right.

M: awesome. So, once you had the book what would you do with it when you had kids?

J: oh, I just read the book to you guys and you guys loved the book and the pictures and did do the voices but not very well. But I tried. And then when you got older I started reading them to your classes, to your elementary classes. You know for all of you *clears throat* I always go in at least once a week for your classes with you teachers and one time for at least once for each of you I'd go in and read Lapin to your class with you students and your friends.

M: it's one of my favorite memories is you'd come and reading to my classes.

J: cool! I wish I could come in now. Mom hasn't had a chance to have me come in yet, but hopefully soon.

M: you should., that would be awesome. Um. yeah just as you were saying that I remember the feeling of being in class and watching you walk through the door and just my heart leaping up and I'd run up and give you a big hug and show you off to my friends.

J: I tell yeah, I tell all my friends I tell them if you ever wanna feel like a Rockstar, go to a go to your little kids' elementary school class.

M: yep. You're definitely a Rockstar, still are. *giggles*

J: well thank you

M: okay this one's really important I need you to sample the voices of each character..

J: right now?

M: I need to hear the voices... *laughs* Do the voices!

J: I can't just do them without. I gotta have a prop or something. *long pause* Well. uh... you know mon Cher- *breaks accent with a chuckle* I can't. It's hard I can't do it without seeing it. Uhh gosh...

M: *giggles* go get the book. Isn't it on the bookshelf right there?

J: it's not down here. I don't know where it's at... I used to have a drama teacher in high school and I never actually took drama and the guy actually bugged me, I can't even remember his name but I remember I had a photo assignment to take pictures of his class once and he had these big white oven mitts and he always used to say the only time he could do a mickey mouse impression is when he was wearing those oven mitts. I was like that's just stupid. Now I know why... I can't do Lapin without looking at the book, I have to have something. I'm sorry I can't do it. I'm sorry.

M: that's so funny

J: Madame tortue, monsieur alligator, I can't do it

M: it's okay, it was mostly just for my enjoyment *laughs*

J: I figured. I'll read it to you when you come for Christmas, how about that?

M: deal.

Texture: At the beginning of the interview call we laughed and joked with each other for several minutes before actually getting into the questions. He was sitting in his favorite armchair and wearing his "old man" glasses he despises so much. It has gotten to the point where he needs them to even see my face as we video chatted with each other. From the angle of the camera I got a perfect view of his "silver chin". He wears his facial hair as a goatee and his wisdom (not age of course) has turned his normally raven black hair to silver with spots of white in the center of his chin. We often tease him about it, but truthfully it is something that endears him even more to us. Throughout the interview he clears his throat a lot, he may have caught a bit of the December bug. As we spoke of this story, I was reminded about how much my dad was involved with my life and how much he cared for us. My dad reading to us kids, and also our school classes, is such a fond memory for me. Lapin was something that I loved to read

and hear about. My dad's voices and characterizations were on point and brought so much joy into my childhood. I'm so grateful for my Dad and his love for us, and this interview was a great way to connect with him again.

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