

*“The Lost Winter Of Lyla Strauss” - A.H. Scott  
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### *Book Description*

*In this coming of age story, set in the Yukon of the year 1850: fur trapper and orphan he raised come face to face with the transformative dimensions of their relationship, from tragedies through time’s passage.*

*Escaping the world of his past, Dancy Ruelaix ventured into the solitude of wilderness. Wanting to evade opening his heart to another human being, he always thought he never needed anyone.*

*But, there was one person who could not live without him.*

*Her name was Lyla Strauss.*

*A season of change comes in “The Lost Winter of Lyla Strauss”.*

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Excerpt -

Coulton's eyes slowly opened, as a blazing flash of sunlight filled the cabin and he got a first glimpse of life back among the living.

Beneath a cocooning layer of varied blankets, cloths and fur swaths, this wounded man's arms slowly pushed them to one side of the bed as his eyes grasped for some sight which was familiar to him.

Focusing first upon his beard which had become overgrown, Coulton's eyes slowly began to blink and take in a pleasant view.

Across the room from where he was, a nude female of slight form sat on the edge of another bed, brushing long, brown hair with her back situated to him.

In an awakened presence of the angel who he had thought was sent to watch over him Coulton Hollister thought this young waif of only 13 or 14 years of age had been the daughter of the trappers who'd recovered him from the base of that ravine.

Focusing his eyes upon this nude female, he realized she was more mature than being of teen years. She was not a girl, but a woman of tender presence. Probably not the daughter of the trapper, but a young bride of a mountain man was the thought which filled Hollister's mind about this beauty.

Coulton's labored grunt filled the air, as each footstep brought him closer to where she sat upon the bed. Using a branch located near his bed as a crutch to stabilize his balance, he moved slowly.

Hearing him stir behind her, this young woman wrapped a white cotton garment around herself in front of this stranger, "You certainly know how to scare a person, Mister". She spoke with an anxious smile.

Not wanting to frighten this young woman as he approached, Coulton spoke in a low tone, "Where am I?"

Buttoning this billowy, white garment closed completely, she replied to him, "You are at the Ruelaix cabin at the trading post outside of Callaway".

Having had only a trace of memory of what had happened at Banyon Pass and confusion over this present moment, this bearded man breathlessly began rapidly questioning her, "How did I get here?" Some sense of explanation was wanted from the woman standing in front of him, "What happened?" Insistence of anxiety overtook him, as he looked around the cabin, "Does your family own this place?"

She revealed to him who owned this cabin and the trading post where he gathered bearings of revival, "This land belongs to Dancy Ruelaix".

About to say something, he sighed, "Whoa, I feel so light-headed".

Soft hands clasped his hand, as she tried to steady him, "Please, come and rest yourself, Mister", Seeing how weak this man still was, she helped him sit down on the bed's edge.

Simple conversation between them continued, until she heard the sound of the approaching owner of the cabin directly outside.

Lightness filled her voice as she stood up and spoke, "I think I hear Dancy coming this way right now", Taking a few steps towards the cabin door, she smiled back at the man sitting on that bed.

Even as he drifted in and out of consciousness over those many days and nights Coulton Hollister caught faint flickers of a woman and man speaking to one another.

Having already met the female half of this duo, Hollister was more than eager to show his gratitude to the aforementioned owner of this unlikely haven of recuperation.

Cabin door slowly opened, as a cold breeze and Ruelaix entered that warm space.

Young woman of soft voice and skin greeted this older man, "Thank God you are back, Dancy", Hugging him gently, "He is finally awake", Nodding in Coulton's direction, both of them slowly began to walk towards the bed.

Dragging a sack of wood and other goods behind him, a man in his mid-year of 55 was over six-foot tall with a fit build, dark brown beard placed this large package by the cabin door. He took four cut pieces of lumber out of that sack and held them in his arms.

Older man of 55 and young beauty of 20 may have not been an unusual sight for anyone to view. Yet, this pair was an oddity.

Coulton Hollister was speechless in the presence of Dancy Ruelaix, as he did not know what to say to him.

Younger man's reaction to him was more than enough in words not spoken, for Dancy Ruelaix lived with this reaction all of his life.

Dancy Ruelaix was a Negro.

As he walked further towards the fireplace with a fresh supply of wood in his arms, a somber cloud of observation wafted from the area where the injured man stood.

Lyla was in the same cabin as these two men, but didn't comprehend that weight of this moment.

She was blind to what was right in front of her eyes, while this Negro was not.

He knew that look.

Dancy Ruelaix had seen the look in a white man's eyes more times than he could ever forget. Being a male of height and obvious presence, Dancy Ruelaix knew the feeling of seeming as tiny as the wisp of an eyelash in the denigrating eyes of a white man.

Without a word being said; that look of inhumanity, hatred, judgment, belittlement, and bypass settled onto the being of Dancy Ruelaix.

Rolling the pieces of lumber and twigs into a medium sized pile next to the right side of the fireplace he waited for the stranger in his home to speak first.

Out of the side of his left eye, Dancy saw that words were not the primary mode of communication by this injured man; for Coulton was slowly reaching for the branch next to that bed, which he was using as a crutch to assist in walking.

Dancy's internal radar picked up on that twitch of fear radiating from Hollister, as that quaking hand began to cradle that branch.

Ruelaix wasn't going to flinch or cower in his own home, for he had worked too long and too hard to establish himself on the trading post and in Callaway.

In the end, if there was one man leaving that cabin it sure as hell wasn't going to be the person who put his blood, sweat, tears, and tenacity to survive the bitterest of nature's elements over those many years.

Coulton Hollister's mind wasn't as clear as his eyesight in seeing this Negro before him.

Dancy decided to clear the air and the cobwebs of the man who he and Lyla had saved, "So, what's your name, stranger?"

At the bottom of that ravine at Banyon Pass, it was Coulton Hollister who hadn't a clue of who pulled him out of death's jaws.

Caught off guard in hearing Dancy speak to him, this man didn't know how to react and was silent for a few moments.

"My name is..." His back stiffened, as he remained in mental fog of coming to terms with what happened and how to ended up in this cabin, "...Coulton Hollister, sir".

"Well", Dancy placed a few twigs onto the fire and added, "It's good to see you are still among the living".

She spoke softly, “Death’s door is where you were when we pulled you out of that ravine”, Smiling at him.

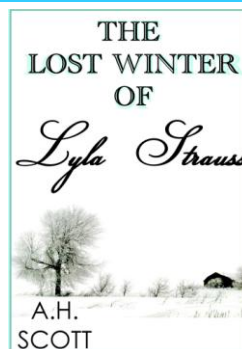
Coulton breathed deeply, “I felt like I was dead, Miss...” He smiled back at her.

Young woman of 20 years old with long, brown hair and eyes to match was cloaked in a billowy white garment and conveyed a caring way to this bruised man.

Only having slight contact with him since he’d woken up she made an introduction to this man, “I’m Lyla...Lyla Strauss, Mr. Hollister”.

Hearing her name was quite pleasurable to his ears, as he returned the courtesy of this woman’s kindness and care, “Please, after everything you have done for me, call me Coulton, Miss Lyla”.

Lyla laughed, having never been called Miss by anyone before. “Just Lyla...I am just Lyla”. Feeling slightly out of sorts in that label he just said, she tightened a white sash around that robe to express her modesty in the moment with a man she did not know.



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