

Rabbit Hole



Rob Scott

The following are the first few pages of “Rabbit Hole”

by Rob Scott

Rabbit Hole...

a complexly bizarre or difficult state or situation conceived of as a hole into which one falls or descends especially one in which the pursuit of something (such as an answer or solution) leads to other questions, problems, or pursuits.

Saturday, June 14, 2025 7:02 AM, Kingwood, Texas

Lynda

“Morning Sweetheart”, I spoke softly to my wife, Lynda. It has been five years and five months since she was diagnosed with Angiosarcoma, a cancer that forms in the lining of blood vessels. So far, she has cheated death for 155 days. Any average person would have died from the disease by the end of the fifth year. Lynda didn’t want to be here anymore after the first two months upon treatment. She sure as hell didn’t want to be here today.

“Hi, Bud” Lynda replied softly, “Do you have to get up now?”

“No. I don’t. I can stay here all morning but the garbage man will be disappointed in me.”

“Why, won’t he just enjoy the break?”

“Then our garage will stink for a week and maggots will emerge and then flies will plague the garage. Do you want that?”

“No. Go take out the garbage then.”

On December 11, 2019 we noticed a swelling of her right leg due to the collection of fluid. An MRI showed many

small tumors in her leg and a biopsy procedure, where a small piece of the tumor is removed from the body and looked at under a microscope by a pathologist, and he confirmed it. Most angiosarcomas are high grade tumors that are aggressive and fast-growing, but some are low-grade tumors that are less aggressive and slow-growing like Lynda's.

Angiosarcoma has been associated with exposure to arsenic, which was used widely across Texas ranches since 1940 up until 1955 to delouse cattle of ticks and lice to prevent mange from ruining the hides of the cattle. Back in the day, ranchers would find a low spot in a field near a water supply and fill the low spot with arsenic and water to form a pool about five feet deep and run the cattle through it one at a time, submerging the entire cow up to his neck. Eventually, the ticks and lice became resistant to arsenic dips and the practice was abandoned and replaced by DDT in 1962. Some 1,648 cattle dipping stations existed across Texas ranches. Today only 254 sites have been reclaimed, demolished and made completely clean of the arsenic. The typical way to do this is to excavate the site until the Limestone rock bed is reached, then remove the Limestone to a level where the core samples no longer produce positive test results for the arsenic. Sometimes the excavation beyond twenty feet deep is

necessary. What cannot be reversed is the porousness of the Limestone that allowed groundwater to be leached into it with the arsenic as it filtered down into the aquifers below about two hundred feet below the cattle dips.

Lynda was born in 1972, long after arsenic was abandoned in Texas as a cattle dip. But that pesky leaching Limestone allowing arsenic laced water to seep into the aquifer affects some people more than others. Most people didn't get sick from the well water at the Livingston, Texas homestead Lynda grew up on, but she did. It wasn't like well water was the only problem Livingston residents faced regarding exposure to arsenic. The Dallardsville-Segno Water District supplies water to 500 homesteads and businesses in the Southeastern side of Livingston, Texas. The water district secures its water from a well and processes it to sanitize it before pumping it out to the customers. The acceptable limits of arsenic in water supply is 2.5 ppb (parts per billion). 102 contaminants are tested for but not found in the water district's product. But in 1986 a high reading was noted. That was a year of particular hardship in Livingston, a drought was horrible that year and the aquifer was drained to its lowest level. The dregs of the aquifer were sucked up by all the wells in the area. While over 5,000 people were exposed to the high

level of arsenic that fateful summer, it seems Lynda was the unluckiest and she got the cancer; which manifested thirty-three years later.

Lynda's parents still live on the same homestead they bought in 1971 near Segno, Texas. With a one-acre pond overlooked by a house and barn in the back on five acres of land.

When Lynda graduated from college in 1994, she embarked upon an oilfield tool career with Baker Hughes, in Houston. For twenty-five years she climbed the ranks, an analyst then Purchasing Manager, then Supply Chain Director until 2019 when she became sick with the cancer. It was a very strange year, while she was out, General Electric sold half of its stock holdings in Baker Hughes, allowing it to become more independent of the sinking ship GE had become.

But on April 20, 2020 oil prices went negative, it cost a premium for sellers to find a taker for the oil. A buyer of oil was paid to take the product off the hands of the seller. It broke the structure of oilfield tool makers as no one wanted nor needed oilfield equipment to pay to dispose of the product. A few years back, both Saudi Arabia and Russia had entered into a price war, flooded the global market with the

oil during a time of global pandemic and the price plummeted. The supply of oil exceeded the demand for it and no one wanted to store it at any price and demanded a premium to be paid to them for agreeing to store it in the future. At that point there was no job for Lynda to go back to. Just prior to the event, there were 1.7 million active oil wells in the US. As of April, 2020, they were all shuttered. No one in America needed oil well equipment because no one was producing oil in America.

The world produces 100 million barrels of oil every day. Up until 2020, America consumed the most at 20 million barrels of oil every day. The other 80 million barrels were consumed by the 208 other countries throughout the world. In 2020, the volume of output remained at full bore or 100 million barrels a day but consumption fell to just sixty percent of production. Every day, an additional eight million barrels were required to be stored inside the US. After four months, in April 2020, there were one billion barrels of glut in the United States alone. In just those four months the stored oil exceeded the amount of the Strategic Petroleum Reserves for future use as emergency fuel. On April 20, 2020 there were effectively already more than 100 days of stored oil in excess of needs. At the pace of present production, the amount of

storage space for the oil would be exhausted in less than ten days; on May 1, 2020 the remaining space to store oil would all be gone. Production had to halt in order to not drown in oil, prices went negative to ensure the production did stop completely.

And just like that, oil production in America, fifteen million barrels of oil every day, across 1.7 million well sites, ceased to pump oil any longer. Oil was dead in America. Ten million employees' jobs, earning an average of a hundred and twenty grand a year, \$1.2 trillion in economy support went poof, like the exhale of a toke from a 420 participant.

About Me

So, Lynda worries about me more than anyone on Earth. She worries that I will be sad that we can't do anything anymore. Her illness makes her realize that the good years are past us now and it is just hard, excruciating days ahead of us. It is all borrowed time; she knows she can be gone on any given day. She just wants to know that it is her that I love, not her money, not her representation of form, just that it is her that I want to be with, nothing and no one else.

I don't feel like everyone else, I have autism, the things that most people laugh about or cry about, I don't tend to understand nor feel. Sure, I have cried before, when I was much younger and very hurtful things were said to me. I must have toughened some, or built up some kind of tolerance to insults and what I do not see as the same kind of problem. Life is pretty confusing to me. Well, really, people are confusing to me. I laugh when no one else is laughing. What I find funny, no one else seems to enjoy.

I absolutely love water, ponds, oceans, lakes, streams; I love them all equally. A house on a pond is just as enjoyable to me as a condo on the ocean. The pond house is a fraction

of the ocean condo cost, so it is a much more efficient use of resources. Money is the problem when it comes to waterfront property, in Houston, to live by water is very expensive, with lakefront property selling for \$500,000.00 and more for a three-bedroom, two bath house. A condo in Galveston on the Gulf of Mexico costs \$700,000.00 and more. Try buying a property with a pond on it for less than \$300,000.00 near the city, it is impossible.

Lynda worries that I will lose interest in her because she has become a harder challenge of her previous self, but what she does not understand is that I need challenges in my life to enjoy it. I set after a goal and I do what I can to master it in as fast a manner as possible. The property, just a challenge, taking a large piece of raw land, and making it conform to my wants and desires. My jobs were all problems I signed up to solve. It didn't really matter to me how my boss defined the problem; I saw the problem the way I wanted to see it and I worked to solve it to please me. He may have seen disorganization and transportation cost as the problem, but what I usually saw was too many logistics providers and volumes spread too thin to make capacity work. So, I eliminated a bunch of truckers, fed a few truckers a lot of freight and negotiated down the price of their services. My

bosses have all been pleased with my accomplishments even though they never really understood their problem.

My wife doesn't seem to understand the problem either. She is very sick, and she is not happy, and somehow that translates into extreme fuss over every little thing. She is critical of everyone and everything, it feels like I am the broken thing in her life. To escape the madness, I choose to work on a future a few years ahead in a place I want to be in. I can see the future so clearly, the demands and stresses upon myself and I know the solution will be beautiful to all who behold it. I perceive what is better and work to implement that result in an efficient and expedient manner.

Lynda states she does not want to be too far from good, proven medical care, but two hours is not that far away, really in the grand scope of things being considered. She wants to be kept safe and secure from bad elements; and there are no neighbors within a mile of the property. She wants lower costs of living, we can provide food, water, shelter and taxes for the low cost of just an electric bill. What used to cost \$2,000.00 every month can be just \$300.00 per month. With the savings, we can easily thrive on Social Security income alone. Simplicity has its rewards, sitting on

the back porch overlooking the large pond, sunrises, sunsets, a tractor, a garden, some sheep and rabbits; a country boy can survive.

Lynda states she wants to travel, to go on cruises, to see foreign places and to vacation in faraway places. But none of those things are close to downtown Houston. The problem is not that I don't want to travel but that she can no longer do it.

Amidst problems I tend to make choices and moves that are characterized as self-preservation; the protection of oneself from harm or death, a basic instinct, it is not the act of being selfish at all; in fact, it is all about being selfless with ourselves and others. When Lynda was concerned with losing her job, and my job was not going to cover all the bills, I quickly maneuvered to purchase the property, clear it and dig the pond. I understood that if I did not, it was never going to be allowed to happen. When Lynda got sick, the development was put on the back burner. But thinking about it is what got me through the ordeal. In the event of catastrophe, there was always the property.

Down with the Sickness

Most people who become chronically ill go through a brief adjustment period and gradually accept their new normal. Lynda denied her illness every step of the way, she refused to abide the sickness, as if she had a choice to suffer or not. It just made her terribly frustrated. She asked repeatedly when she would be over it and cried constantly about the ailments that plagued her.

“How are you doing today, Honey?” I asked.

“My head is pounding and there is a buzzing inside of my brain that never goes away.” Lynda complained.

“I think it is the Prednisone causing the buzzing and Carvedilol may be causing the pounding. Prednisone is an immune response suppressant, most people who take it complain of anxiety, shaking and buzzing in their head. Carvedilol is for high blood pressure, which could be causing the sensation of throbbing throughout the body.”

Most people just get used to the side effects, they accept their fate and adjust to the changes that sickness and medicines bring about.

“When will it ever get better?” Lynda cried.

“What if this is as good as it gets?” I quoted from my favorite Jack Nicholson movie. “You know, for cheating death out of 155 days, you sure do presume a lot for granted. I know you don’t want to deal with the sickness and all the pain it brings, but it is what it is. You are at a fork in the road. You can take the path of complaining about it and questioning why it is, or you can take the path of acceptance and making the best out of it every day. I think most people take the acceptance path and very few people choose the other path.”

“Fuck you and your righteous path! You feel what I feel and tell me you can deal with it better than I am! You don’t know what it is like to have this.”

“No, maybe I don’t know what it actually feels like, but I have had to take the paths several times. It is a matter of choices. Either you accept it and move on or you deny it and battle it, to the death. I would choose to live to fight another day, but that is just me and perhaps a billion other people in this world.”

“Really? A billion people have my illness and deal with it better than I do? Are you serious?”

“Over the past thirty years, the leading causes of health loss have hardly changed. Lower back pain, depression, iron-deficiency anemia, neck pain, and age-related hearing loss affects one in five people worldwide.”

“Those don’t sound like cancer ailments to me” Lynda sobbed.

“17 million Americans have cancer. 1.8 million people in America will have a new diagnosis of cancer this year and 1,660 people will die in America from cancer every day. About 10 million people die of cancer every year worldwide.”

“So, I am a member of a big club, how does that help me?”

“It means, Lynda, that you are in good company, that you are not going through all this alone, there are millions of people out there suffering just like you.”

“So, what are you saying? That I need to go to a support group?”

“Well, that is one positive thing you could do. In Texas, 130,000 people will obtain a new diagnosis of cancer this year while 1.6 million people will continue living in Texas with the cancer. It means there are hundreds of people close

by with the same kinds of problems you are facing. There is an Angiosarcoma Facebook support group with 4,000 members. Houston has a few in-person groups. A cancer support group is a safe place to share your experiences and connect with others facing the same challenges. It gives you the space to connect with others dealing with your cancer, talk openly about your feelings, receive practical advice, share resources and contacts, better understand and be able to describe your experience and develop coping skills. Studies have shown that support groups can reduce isolation, anxiety and stress. They can also improve mood, self-image and the ability to cope.”

“Well, I cannot go by myself, you will have to take me to them.” Lynda conceded.

“Absolutely and gladly, Honey.”

“Why is it that when I am having a breakdown, you see me as invisible?”

“What do you mean by that?” I asked.

“When I am crying and when I need you the most, you just ignore me.”

“I let you let it out, to let it pass, to allow you some space to get over it. That is what I would want to do. I know what the problem is, and the solution is crystal clear, just let it out. It is something you have got to do on your own, I can’t help you with your feelings running on extreme overload. Remember I don’t feel like you do, I have Autism. If you need to let it out, then do it.”

“When I married you, I expected you to comfort and to support me. When I am sad, I expected you to hold me until it all gets better.”

“But when you say you are sad, you are really hysterical, yelling, screaming, flailing your arms, you don’t seem like you want to be touched, let alone held.”

“You are supposed to do that, you are supposed to comfort me when I am sad!”

“I understand that women have a preconceived notion that all men are masters of calming women down from irrational fits of rage, gloom and doom. That we all possess magical gifts and talents to instantly soothe an irate woman transforming her into a docile, fluffy version of her former self.”

“Why do you talk down to me?”

“I am allowed to voice my opinion on what I perceive the problems to be. It’s called a discussion. You complain about me, I am allowed to state a different side of the picture you are painting and we have a discussion about it. That’s how conversations work.”

“Conversations are not all about problem solving. They involve feelings and emotions and things that you don’t understand, so why do I keep getting upset about that? My God, I am the definition of insanity!” Lynda laughed loudly, “I am doing the same things over and over again, expecting a different result.”

“So, are you good now?” I asked.

“Didn’t you once say that all of your past girlfriends have visited the psychiatric ward after dating you? I don’t think that makes me good, Bud.”

I hope you did enjoy reading the first few pages of “Rabbit Hole” by Rob Scott. Please note all books can be located for sampling and purchase at:

<https://ereadery.com/lulu/index.html>