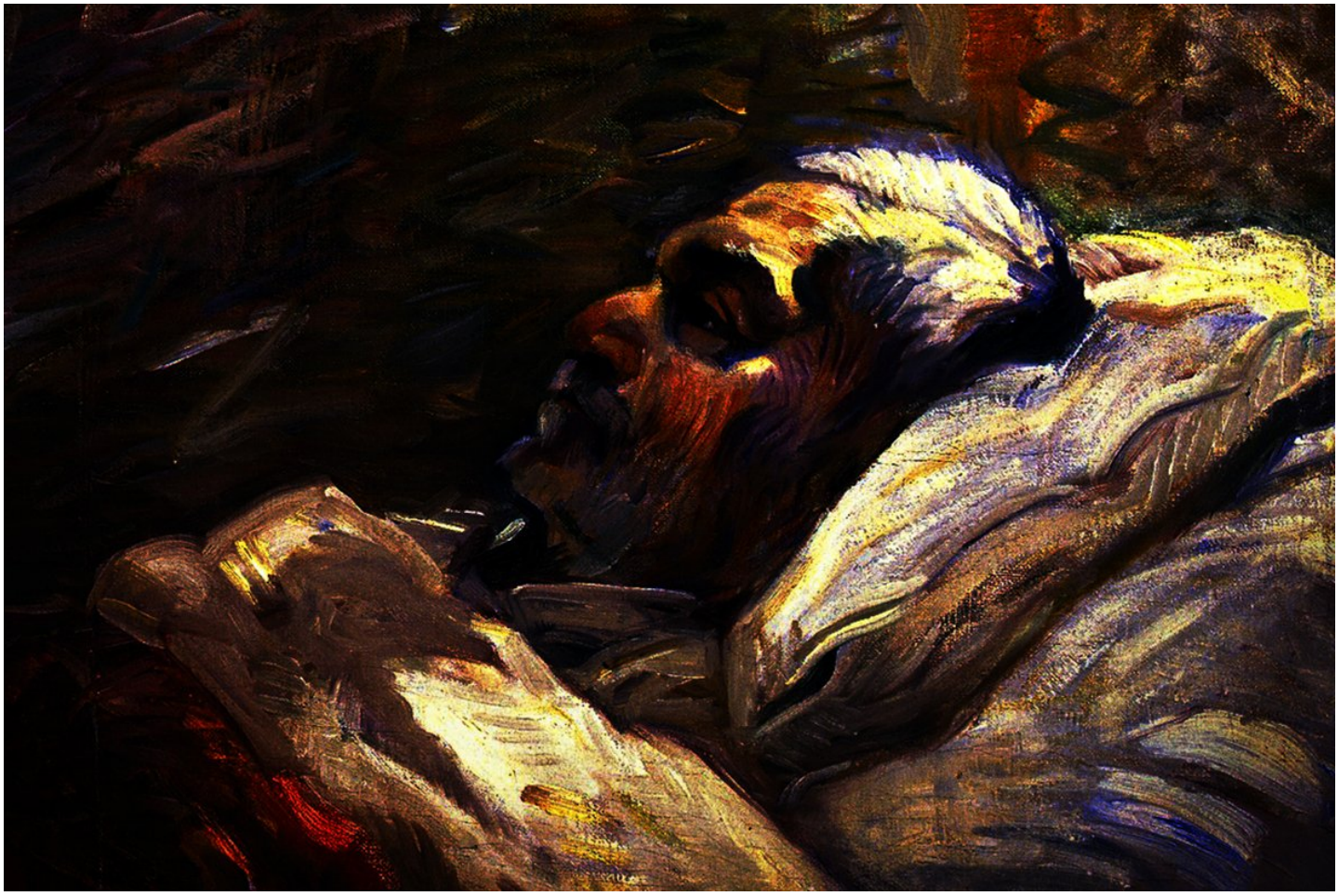
# Twitter Thread by Dr. Cam ■■ ■■ ■■■■■■ ■■

**Dr. Cam ■■ ■■ ■■■■■■ ■■**
@DrCamRx

**1/"Despite our Disneyland culture, some men around thirty-five or forty will begin to experience ashes privately, without ritual, even without old men. They begin to notice how many of their dreams have turned to ashes…**



2/ A young man in high school dreams that he will be a race driver, a mountain climber, he will marry Miss America, he will be a millionaire by thirty, he will get a Nobel Prize in physics by thirty-five, he will be an architect and build the tallest building ever.

3/ He will get out of his hick town and live in Paris. He will have fabulous friends... and by thirty-five, all these dreams are ashes. At thirty-five his inner stove begins to produce ashes as well.

4/ All through his twenties, his stove burned with such a good draft that he threw in whole nights until dawn, drinking parties, sexual extravagance, enthusiasm, madness, excitement. Then one day he notices that his stove doesn't take such big chunks anymore.

5/ He opens the stove door and ashes fall out on the floor. It's time for him to buy a small black shovel at the hardware store and get down on his knees. The ashes fall off the shovel and onto the floor, and he can see the print of his bootsoles in the ashes.

6/ Robert Frost said of the "Oven Bird": The question that he frames in all but words, is what to make of a diminished thing. - Robert Bly, Iron John

7/ Ashes present a great diminishment away from the living tree with its huge crown and abundant shade. The recognition of this diminishment is a proper experience for men who are over thirty. If the man doesn't experience the diminishment sharply, he will retain his inflation…

8/ and continue to identify himself with all in him that can fly: his sexual drive, his mind, his refusal to commit himself, his addiction, his transcendence, his coolness. The coolness of some American men means that they have skipped ashes.

9/ The next step in initiation for men is finding the rat's hole. The rat's hole is the 'dark way,' the one that Williams or Haverford doesn't prepare one for, the trip that the upwardly mobile man imagines that only lower-class men take, the way down and out.

10/ With initiators gone from our culture, we do not receive instruction on how to go down on our own. We could use the phrase going into grief for the conscious act of descent, but one sometimes feels that in the United States a man is supposed to feel grief only at a funeral.

11/ Our story simply says that after wandering around a while, having no "craft," the young man at last got a job in the kitchen--which is traditionally in the basement--of a castle.

12/ The story [of Iron John] says that after all the gold fingertips and hair [the rich life experienced by the young protagonist before], what is proper next for the man is the whirlpool, the sinking through the floor, the Drop, what the ancient Greeks call katabasis.

13/ When katabasis happens, a man no longer feels like a special person. He is not. One day he is in college, being fed and housed--often on somebody else's money--protected by brick walls men long dead have built, and the next day he is homeless…

14/ …walking the streets, looking for some way to get a meal and a bed. People know immediately when you are falling or have fallen: doormen turn their backs, waiters sneer, no one holds the subway car door for you. The inner masculine self changes.

15/ While one is still grandiose and naive, a young man lives inside, shiny-faced, expectant, hopeful, dandified, a prince. After the Descent begins, an old man takes the place of the prince. To one's amazement a helpless, anti-social, brittle,

isolated derelict takes over”

14/ It’s as if life itself somehow ‘discharges’ him. There are many ways of being ‘discharged’: a serious accident, the loss of a job, the breaking of a long-standing friendship, a divorce, a ‘breakdown,’ an illness.

16/ The descender makes an exit – from ordinary and respectable life – through the wound. The wound is now thought of as a door. If his father abandoned him, he now truly becomes abandoned; during this time he has no house, no mother, no woman.

17/ If shame wounded him, through sexual abuse, physical beating, or by ingesting a shame-filled parent, this time he lives the shaming out – he associates with men and women who are chronically shamed, puts himself down and out where he will be shamed fifty times a day.

18/ The way down and out doesn’t require poverty, homelessness, physical deprivation, dishwasher work, necessarily, but it does require a fall from status, from a human being to a spider, from a middle-class person to a derelict. The emphasis is on the consciousness of the fall.

19/ Heraclitus said “The road up and the road down are the same." Virtue and vice are the same. The high road and low are really the same. But we experience them differently. Those on the high road who never notice where it’s low have a tendency to assume things about themselves.

20/ They think they are virtuous. They think their moral success is a sign of moral superiority. Then disaster strikes, and they are on the low road all of a sudden (wondering, "how the heck did I get here? where is Jesus now that I really need him?

21/ Why does everybody who used to praise my virtue now hate me?"). The truth is that they were always there, in the one road that exists for human experience, and circumstances turned against them. Katabasis for me, is about recognizing that circumstances always turn against us.

22/ There is no such thing as medicine that is not also poison (the Greek word "pharmakon" means "drug" and "poison"). There is no such thing as virtue that is not also vice (and vice versa).

23/ Katabasis is about facing the reality that you cannot hide from failure (even if you get lucky and never see any until the very end of your life, but what kind of life would that be?).

24/ Katabasis is about embracing failure and learning from it, moving past the worst experiences that life can give and finding something good on the other side.

25/ The weak wait for katabasis to find them (praying that they can avoid it). The strong seek it out (knowing that it will find them anyway and wanting to pre-empt it--fight it their own way).

26/ All of us are sometimes petty, stupid, bitter, resentful, and so on. If we want to avoid being this way in a manner that ruins our lives, we must confront our pettiness, our stupidity, our bitterness, our resentment.

27/ We must stop running scared from it. We must embrace it at least enough to see what virtue lies hidden in its vice. We must face the flinch.

28/ The morally strong people are not the ones who never acted petty, stupid, bitter, resentful, etc. They are the ones who noticed their pettiness, their stupidity, their bitterness, their resentment, and turned them into magnanimity, erudition, sweetness, humility.

29/ That transformation is not an easy thing, and it is never achieved by avoidance (though of course we want to avoid behaving certain ways with certain people in certain situations).

30/ Katabasis is about learning to face yourself--honestly, openly, entirely, with the aim to understand before you seek the power to transform." - Julien Smith. The Flinch

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