



Clem Anderson: A Novel

R. V. Cassill

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“The best novel I know of on the subject of writing, or on the condition of being a writer.” —Richard Yates

Widely recognized as R. V. Cassill’s masterpiece, *Clem Anderson* is the story of an author whose astonishing talents are outmatched only by his capacity for self-destruction. Arrogant, untrustworthy, moody, and narcissistic, Clem is also a brilliant artist capable of astonishing feats of alchemy: His pen magically transforms real life into the stuff of great literature. But the rising tide of literary success is dangerous ground for a personality as unstable as Clem’s, and when he dies at the age of forty, alone and disgraced, it is up to his few remaining friends to pick up the pieces.

The most steadfast and empathetic of these survivors is Dick Hartsell, a former classmate and fellow writer who has long walked in Clem’s shadow. Commissioned by a movie studio to publish a memorial article about his doomed friend, Hartsell struggles to capture the man’s unruly existence in this tidy format. So he sets out to write a novel called *Clem Anderson*, detailing his eponymous hero’s epic rise and fall. From a rural midwestern childhood to early fame as an undergraduate poet to the intoxicating expatriate literary scene in post–World War II Paris and an unhappy romance with a Hollywood starlet, Hartsell tells the story of Anderson’s life. The result is a work of art as singular and unforgettable as its ill-fated subject.

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