



Biography - Long

She laughs easily, is a double Gemini, a Dragon in the Chinese calendar, and her favorite colors are blue and green. And Kelli Stanley has been writing a long time.

Her first noir (a play) was produced at the tender age of seven. She played the starring role in the crime melodrama for her third-grade class, precociously breaking gender boundaries as a Jimmy Cagney-like gangster. “No grapefruits were used in the production!” she laughs. “From what I remember, it involved a French love interest named Madeline and ended with the anti-hero’s death in a dark alley.”

In the many years since her precocious literary experiment, Kelli’s done a variety of things: the list includes acting, the start-up and operation of a successful retail business with her mom (a comic book/pop culture store), screenplay writing, living in Italy and traveling through Europe, learning Latin and Greek, and earning a B.A. in Art History and Classics and a Master’s Degree in Classics. Eventually, she decided—at long last—to embrace the life inside her ... to become a crime fiction writer.

Where she grew up might have something to do with her eclectic nature and Renaissance woman background. An only child, she moved with her parents from her native Washington State to northern Florida, the Colorado Rocky Mountains to San Jose, California (early Silicon Valley), and finally settled on forty acres in the rugged, rural north—northern Mendocino county.

Kelli lived in Mendocino and attended school in Southern Humboldt, riding thirty miles to school every morning, in addition to helping her parents with a business venture ... a horse-back riding stable. “[Humboldt County is] one of the last bastions of wilderness in California—there’s actually a stretch of coast line called ‘The Lost Coast’—when we operated a riding stable with the State Park system, my father took people on horseback tours through the country, and he had to blaze his own trails.”

During Kelli’s adolescence, animals outnumbered people in her everyday environment. She grew up with redwood trees, which she credits with giving her a sense of perspective. And she grew up without a telephone or the PG&E grid. “There was none of the technology we take for granted—light switches, heater controls. Even the water had to be pumped from a spring, about a quarter mile down a steep hillside. I know it sounds like some sort of fable, but I really did study by a kerosene lamp. Our heat was a wood stove. It’s not that we abandoned the modern world—we had a gas generator and a color television. We just didn’t rely on the technology. We were independent of it, which is a great feeling.”

Kelli claims the experience gave her a sense of focus, creativity and a sympathetic ear to the rhythm of nature, which she’s never lost. But she’s also never lost the rhythm of the city, which she’s heard since her first play.

By the time she graduated from high school, she'd read "everything from Defoe to Dickens." She'd done some acting, and chose to major in Drama at the University of Dallas. UD offered a large, competitive scholarship, and a semester in Italy program, which decided her. She spent a semester in Italy before concluding that she missed California, and returned closer to home.

She moved to San Francisco, where she attended San Francisco State, discovered Classics—which had always been a strong interest—"since reading *D'Aulaire's Book of Greek Myths* when I was in second grade"—and is where she now lives, happily ensconced in writing and a long-time relationship.

She spent several years in the retail business of comic books, writing for trade magazines, appearing in *Entrepreneur* magazine, and earning a coveted spot on the DC National Retailer's Board. "And I still love comic books!" she adds. "Batman was always my particular totem. Those were happy years. I'm always really touched when someone I knew when they were twelve recognizes me from the store. I have to do instant age progression! It's a great thing to be a good part of someone's childhood ... or any happy memory."

Kelli never lost her love of acting, and credits a few years writing screenplays with honing her dialog abilities. She decided to take the plunge into novel-writing while still in graduate school, and soon found representation and publication for her first novel, a combination of classical education and abiding love for hardboiled and noir. In the Acknowledgements to *NOX DORMIENDA*, Kelli credits reading Raymond Chandler with teaching her how to write, and cites Hammett, Hemingway, Fitzgerald, Woolrich, Hardy, and Steinbeck as other strong influences.

Since then, *NOX DORMIENDA* has enjoyed outstanding success, particularly for a debut small press book. It won the prestigious Bruce Alexander Memorial Historical Mystery Award in 2009, is a finalist for a Macavity (Sue Feder Memorial Historical Mystery Award), and San Francisco awarded Kelli a Certificate of Honor for her creation of "Roman noir."

Kelli has realized a dream by her move to a major publisher—Thomas Dunne/Minotaur—for her second series. *CITY OF DRAGONS* is the first title. "Children's Day," a short story prequel to *CITY OF DRAGONS*, will be published in June, in a highly anticipated International Thriller Writer's anthology called *FIRST THRILLS*, which teams the bestsellers of today and tomorrow.

MALEDICTUS (Cursed), the sequel to *NOX DORMIENDA*, is finished ... publishing details will be announced soon. Kelli is currently working on the sequel to *CITY OF DRAGONS* and you can email her at kelli (at) kellistanley.com. Kelli is a member of Mystery Writers of America, International Thriller Writers, Private Eye Writers of America, Sisters in Crime, and the International Association of Crime Writers.

For rights queries, please contact Kimberley Cameron.

For *CITY OF DRAGONS* publicity, please contact Sarah Melnyk, Senior Publicist at Minotaur.