

# SHORT TAKES

Multidisciplinary artist Kelly Q. Anderson of Glencoe has a knack for creating snappy, compelling works.

BY BILL MCLEAN  
ILLUSTRATION BY BARRY BLITT

Glencoe's Kelly Q. Anderson still doesn't know how to whistle.

"That's just a fun fact about me," she says while smiling and sitting at a table in one of her favorite North Shore spots, Madame Zuzu's, a tea shop/café in Highland Park co-owned by the famed husband-wife team of Billy Corgan and Chloe Mendel.

But the award-winning writer, screenwriter, and artist certainly knows how—or at least aims—to unsettle you in no time. Anderson specializes in short-form art: micro, flash fiction/nonfiction, and hybrid work.

Speaking of short, the mother of two wrote a two-sentence film pitch to friend and then-nascent filmmaker Maggie Meiners in 2022. Anderson had penned a 180-word story about a birthday party that "becomes more cringe than cheer when a grandfather humiliates his granddaughter and her body."

Anderson and Meiners, of Winnetka, then collaborated to make a short, *That Old Beautiful Love*. It lasts seven minutes, or roughly the time it takes to listen to a pair of songs. It premiered at the Midwest Festival in May 2025 at the Chicago Cultural Center and garnered eight film fest nominations/selections.

"I loved working on it with Maggie," says Anderson, adding it took two years to complete the snappy flick on a budget of \$25,000. "I could trust her, and I welcomed her suggestions and edits to my script. Our friendship is strong. To me, she's a 'bonfire friend'—a friend who emits vivid warmth when you're near her, and even after you walk away, you still feel like you're radiating."

They're working on their second short, this one projected to last 15 minutes, cost \$45,000, and wrap this fall. *Dolly's Hand on Me* is "a surreal, transcendent postpartum fantasy in which a new mother hallucinates a glamorous superstar visiting her in the bathroom."

Anderson grew up near the Illinois-Wisconsin border, attending Antioch Community High School and competing for four years as a member of the Sequoits' dance team that finished in the top three at a state competition. She performed at halftime of National Football League Games in Chicago and Indianapolis, as well as at events held at Wembley Stadium in England, Disneyland Paris, and Disney World in Orlando, Florida.

She worked in real estate—three years in brokerage, five years in marketing—after graduating from the University of Iowa with degrees in journalism and communication studies.

After moving from Chicago to Glencoe with her husband, Fitz, she tried her hand at column writing for a local publication on a part-time basis.

experienced bouts of writer's block and discoveries born from writer's release. The latter state of mind permits the writer to dismiss their inner critic.



Kelly Q. Anderson

Her column's title was "City Girl Confessions." It ran for about five years.

She honed her craft as a regular at Winnetka Community House's Off Campus Writers' Workshop.

"It was there where I developed the skill of writing flash fiction, getting to the point quickly, and pushing the accelerator for the reader," Anderson says.

"The workshop has helped me in a number of ways professionally. I met Mary Ruth Clarke (a screenwriter who co-wrote and starred in the original *Meet the Parents*) through it." Anderson has

"I've accepted the challenges of writing; they're not going away," she says. "As a writer, I'm always thinking, 'What is visually going to stay with someone who reads my words?' Reaching that level of writing sometimes has to start with a draft that's hot garbage. It can always be sharpened and edited later."

The artist behind #FlashCardsbyKQA is Anderson, who also paints and teaches yoga. The words on one of her flash cards, "A walking exclamation point," were painted on a sidewalk in Winnetka by an Off Campus Writers' Workshop attendee.

"The cards feature mini-stories with maximalist impact," says Anderson. "They are moments to commit to memory. Keep them, give them away, throw them into a fire while making a wish, or scratch out the words and write your own story."

Some of her other mini-stories:

"An old house keeps old wounds."

"I hate baking; I keep baking."

"I am the bull and the china shop; it really depends on the day."

"Careful, I can breathe fire."

"I imagine Dolly Parton's hand on top of mine."

Kelly and Fitz's son, Wells, is 14.

"He's named Wells because I fell in love with Fitz on Wells Street in Chicago," says Anderson, who has called Glencoe home for 14 years.

The couple's 10-year-old daughter is Augusta, but she likes to go by the name Gus.

"I love the era of parenting I'm in now," Anderson says. "And I love reminding my children how important self-acceptance (the resounding message in *That Old Beautiful Love*) is. I've told them, 'Love what you're able to do with your body while playing soccer or while acting in a play.'"

"We all must be open to loving who we are."

Visit [kellyqanderson.com](http://kellyqanderson.com) for more information about her work, including the short film *Dolly's Hand on Mine*.

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