



Picture: GRANT NOWELL

Lucky lady in Love

WORK can start at about 6 in the morning. "And it's just an absolute joy," says Kirsty Brooks. "I'm one of those lucky people that look forward to going to work on Sundays."

There are no weekends off, no holidays for Brooks unless the laptop computer goes too.

She is a writer, bound to the craft with chains she kisses. However, Monday nights she does take off. "That's when all my favourite TV shows are on, like *Alias*, that inspire my writing.

"At least that's what I tell myself: it's all story-telling, it's all escapism."

These are qualities she tried to pack into her first novel, *Lady Luck* – which she wrote, and wrote again, on the dining table in her Adelaide city apartment.

Upstairs there's her office, but that's for her book editing business, for the "other side of the brain".

The creative stuff is all downstairs, dangerously close to the snacks and coffee in the kitchen.

At that table, she is halfway through her next novel, *The Vodka Dialogue*.

Brooks, born in Whyalla in 1971, can at last feel she has the career she wanted.

Not that she's always so open about her

An Adelaide author has found her perfect career – and cannot get enough of it.

STORY / PAUL LLOYD

beloved profession. When she does go out to the pub for a beer, there's always some bozo trying to latch onto the blonde bombshell.

"I actually tell people I'm a secretary because as soon as you say you're a writer, you have to end up explaining your life away when all you want to do is get away." She giggles, repeatedly, and pushes her hair back with jewelled fingers.

The itch to write can be traced back to childhood, to a teacher mother and a doctor father who promoted reading and curiosity.

"If I hadn't been encouraged to read I think it would have been a different story. That was a frightful pun. Sorry about that," Brooks says.

Mother's ambition was that daughter should become like television journalist Jana Wendt – "perhaps with better hair". So, after some "really ratty teenage years" at the Wilderness School and doing visual arts and journalism degrees at the Uni-

versity of South Australia, Brooks tried journalism. She also tried waitressing, which, she confesses, she was bad at.

It seemed almost inevitable, "because I knew so many crappy bosses", that she should be working for herself, and that it should have something to do with books and writing.

Brooks's first two books were reportage: *Hitching: Tales from the Byways and Superhighways* and *Mad Love*.

She developed board games based on such TV shows as *Sex in The City* and *Big Brother*. She took over a book-editing business (which is supposed to provide some income, since writing itself usually doesn't, as well as keeping her fresh as an author). Now her first novel, *Lady Luck*, comes from the Wakefield Press.

It's a story of Phoebe, a rather human, drug-dealing, sex-fantatising hero who has to find redemption from a moral dilemma while also allowing the author to live vicariously through Phoebe's almost ob-

scene capacity for junk food and poor dress sense.

There are doubtless influences of Brooks's favourite authors, including Sue Grafton and Anne Tyler. There are, of course, influences of the novel's setting, Adelaide, "because I'm sick of reading crime books set in Sydney and Melbourne.

"And I love Adelaide. I try to travel all the time. I love road trips and writers' conferences and festivals. But Adelaide is gorgeous, my family's here, my friends are here, my little niece is here. And it's quiet. I don't get too distracted."

Adelaide provides the characters for *Lady Luck*. They are actually products of the author's more general curiosity about people (which is not a million miles away from why people read novels in the first place).

So now, as Brooks does the round of writer promotions, as she balances her writing and her editing business with some nights off, she can feel she has taken a path in life that was not traditional – although, for her, it was never really going to be anyway.

She sees her future as a writer in "light-hearted, women-oriented crime ... so I can write for a person just like me – sassy, confident, independent".