

good reading

REVIEWS ANNABEL FROST



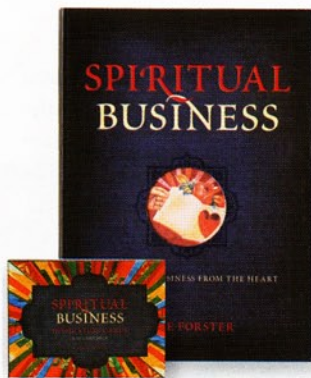
HEY MUM, WHAT'S A HALF-CASTE?

BY LORRAINE MCGEE-SIPPEL, MAGABALA BOOKS, \$24.95

There's a cohort of men and women out there who were educated at bush schools where a teacher's contract was for only two years. A fair number of them will know the anguish that beset Lorraine when a good teacher left and the replacement was interested only in giving children modelling clay to fiddle with. But this is no more than an early fragment of Lorraine's astonishing story. She grew up guessing she had been adopted but unable to persuade the couple she called 'Mum' and 'Dad' to tell her anything about her biological parents. They broke their silence when she announced her engagement: "Your father was a Negro."

This statement wasn't even true. In between bouts of singular achievement and misadventure Lorraine eventually found her birth family, and achieved enough interaction with friends and therapists to figure out why she herself had recoiled from motherhood until it was too late. A host of characters, each of them revealing unexpected contradictions, makes this a story that breaks new ground and banishes stereotypes. Lorraine has the knack of sharing experiences that reach across gender, generation and ethnicity.

I don't think I'm spoiling the plot if I reveal that last year Lorraine was named inaugural Yabun Elder of the Year. In this rip-roaring tale even the most dire villain has an excuse — an undiagnosed brain tumour, a good decision countermanded by invisible others. The moral is that we cannot judge.



SPIRITUAL BUSINESS: CREATING A BUSINESS FROM THE HEART

BY KATE FORSTER, DOGMA, \$49.95

Three years ago Kate Forster was running a successful business from home but "I was working just for the money." This luminously beautiful book, full of rich, dark images combining symbolism and the natural world, is an account of the journey she made to bring an extra dimension into her work and the rest of her life. However mundane (or possibly high-powered) your daily tasks may be, Kate's adventure and the methods she derived from it offer the possibility of being — as she puts it — "open to everything, attached to nothing".

The first few chapters of the book are largely concerned with exercises in self-discovery. These are followed by a more technical approach. The final section integrates the process in which the reader has participated with forward planning. There are further details at the website, spiritualbusiness.com.au

Spiritual Business is accompanied by a separate set of Inspiration Cards (\$29.95, also from Dogma). They work equally well with the book or as a separate tool. Though the internet showers us with blessings, it has also robbed us of some simple pleasures. It replaces newspapers, bites into book-reading time — even solitaire is now played on screen via a mouse. Result: touch hunger. These 45 cards feel so good. They are cool and slippery, and shiny with gold edges. I'm a big fan of using images and principles printed on cards to focus the mind and kick-start the day. You shuffle them, fan them out face downwards and draw a single card.

Today's pick from Kate's deck tells me to "Be the change you want to see in others." Let's see, that would be "Include me in the loop." So, accordingly, I now have to manifest inclusion. Kate's advice is practical: she counsels, "Do what you can and then ask for help."

