












**Michael Molony's paintings for Jacob and the Cassowary, a fatidic tale from West Papua
Bard's Apothecary, 24 Crossley Street, Melbourne, Wednesday 22 April : 6pm**

- 1  Jacob Rumbiak jumped on my uncle's cassowary in Nalca, my village in the highlands of West Papua, because he had to get to Jayapura down on the north coast for West Papua's independence celebration.
- 2  The next day, near the Puldama River, the cassowary slipped in the mud and went arse up. Jacob got thrown off and scratched his scrotum on a stick.
- 3  Mummas working in their gardens heard the cassowary hissing. They grabbed their babies out of their noken, and rushed to help. They cleaned and bandaged the cassowary's leg, and told Uncle Jacob he and the cassowary had to rest for a day in their village.
- 4  The next day a pastor came and prayed. Then the mummas cooked breakfast: pork, sweet potatoes, pumpkin leaves, and siyinga, a root vegetable only found in the Papuan highlands.
- 5  Ten days later Jacob and the cassowary reached the Mamberamo River, where all the crocodiles live. Jacob told his friend to walk softly so the crocodiles wouldn't sense them. Next minute, a crocodile walked over and asked if they wanted any help. Jacob was suspicious, but he didn't want to say 'no' because that would be rude, so he said, "Yes, my friend, thank you very much, you are very kind."
- 6  Suddenly the old crocodile stiffened. He'd smelt something. "What's that?" he said as his murky eyes scanned the edge of the jungle. "Wow," he growled. "That's Prabowo." And he was right. The Indonesian president, sitting on his Lusitano stallion, was hiding behind an aibesobin tree.
- 7  When Prabowo's stallion saw the crocodile he bucked and Prabowo nearly fell off. "Do you want me to eat him Dr Rumbiak?" the crocodile growled. "No," Jacob said. "We want to take him to the Criminal Court in The Hague. Do you reckon you can tow him to Holland?"
- 8  "Copy," the crocodile grunted. "I'll get my tribe." And he dived back into the Mamberamo. "Hey bros, come and help," he barked. His mates rallied, excited about getting such a good job. They only took two days to tow the presidents along the river, and then they took off across the Pacific Ocean to The Netherlands. "No job too big for a tribe of Melanesian crocodiles" smiled the cassowary.
- 9  With the river on their right, Jacob and the cassowary continued their journey to Jayapura to celebrate West Papuans' independence as a Melanesian nation. It was good walking quietly along the banks of the mighty Mamberano, but suddenly the cassowary cocked his casque in alarm. There was a noise in the air. "Oh don't worry," Jacob laughed. "That's just Ribka flying in people from Australia."
- 10  In Jayapura, President Benny Wenda and Prime Minister Waromi were welcoming foreign guests. Tabuni, Chairman of the Parliament, hugged Jacob and congratulated the cassowary, which made the cassowary feel good. It had been hard work getting the Foreign Affairs Minister to Jayapura! "What a relief," he said as he rubbed his weary legs, ready for the journey home to his family in the mountains.
- 11  President Prabowo looking over the source of his wealth