



# TOITOI

## STORY SEARCH

Write a story or poem inspired by 12-year-old Rose Hodge's incredible artwork published in Toitoi 19.

You may submit in English or te reo Māori.

Send it to [submit@toitoi.nz](mailto:submit@toitoi.nz) and include your name, age, school and a parent or teacher's name and contact details.

**Submissions are due on July 3, 2020.**

We will publish the best story in Toitoi 21 with additional illustrations by Rose.

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#TOITOISTORYSEARCH





## Calling Agent Silver Swan

The tree bark is rough against my hands and the branches are flimsy beneath my feet. I climb higher, my head coming above the thick mass of green leaves. I look up at the full moon and then at the square shape of my house on the hill.

I glance around. Penny should be arriving soon. I scuttle back down the tree and run to the rock where I left my backpack. I fumble around and find the zip. I pull out my torch and turn it on, sweeping its light across the surrounding area.

Penny said she had seen the thing last night. She said she had been unable to get to sleep and had noticed it when she went to get some water from the kitchen. She said it was a flying saucer, though I'm sceptical. She was tired. Of course, she ended up roping me into this crazy night-time plot, which I'm still rather annoyed about, but you can't have everything.

**She ended up roping me into this crazy night-time plot, which I'm still rather annoyed about**

A voice crackling with static comes from my bag.

"Agent Falcon — come in. This is Silver Swan — come in. Over."

I roll my eyes and pull out a small green walkie-talkie.

"Penny, we're not agents."

"It's Agent Silver Swan — and you have to say 'over' at the end of each message. Over."

I sigh.

"Agent Silver Swan," I say, deciding to play along. "Please confirm your location. Over."

"I am standing where the crow flies to morning. Over."

"What? Over."

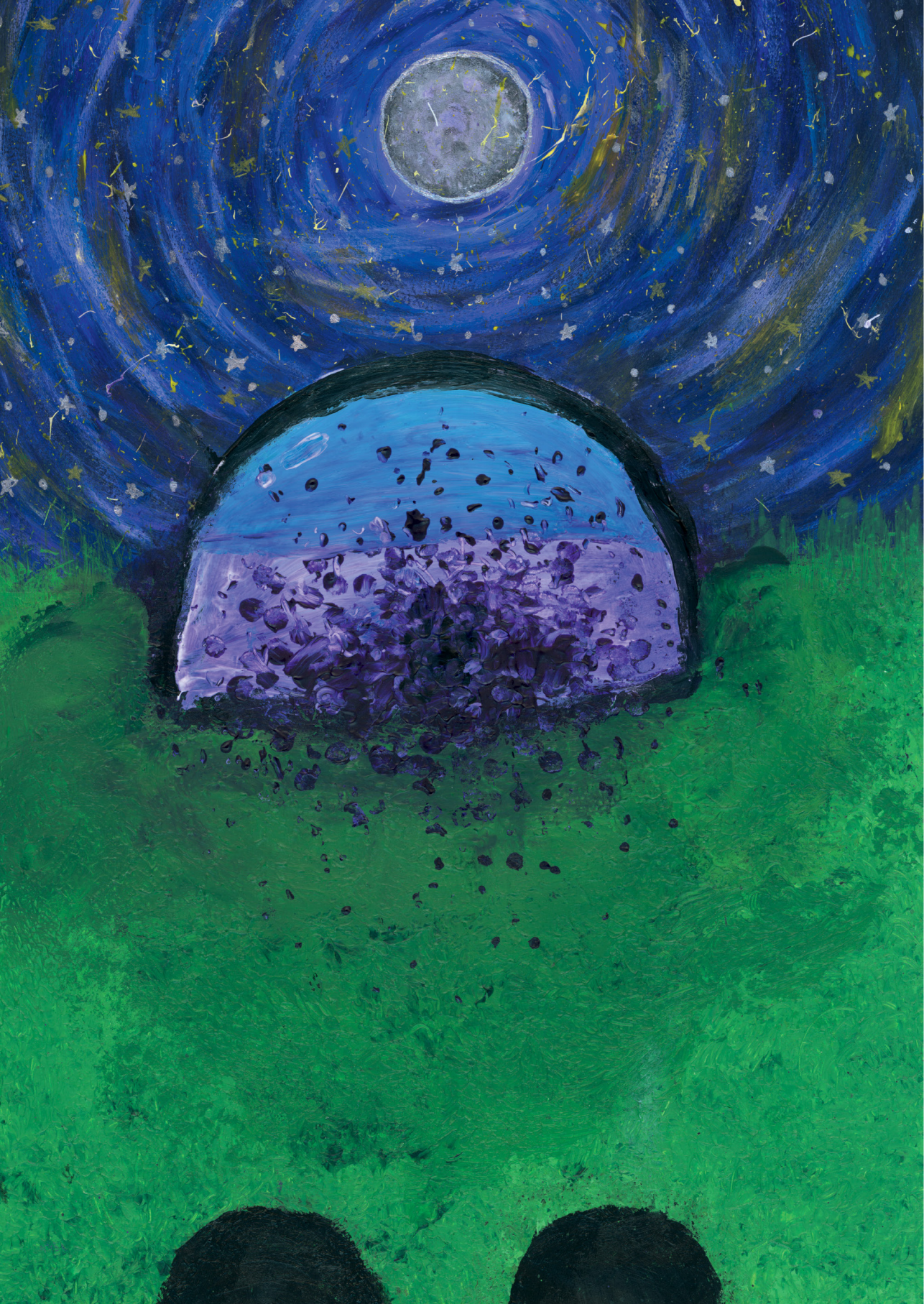
"The hill, duh. Over," replies Penny.

I look towards the black shape of the hill. A small figure on top is waving its arms.

"Agent Silver Swan, are you the waving figure? Over."

I look again. The figure is gone.





"Yes, I was."

I jump. A figure walks into the beam of light coming from my torch, facing away from me.

"Penny?" I say.

The figure spins around to reveal my best friend, Penny Copper. Her frizzy red hair is tied in a ponytail. She is wearing a black hoodie, blue jeans, a white T-shirt and black trainers.

"Have you seen anything strange?" Penny asks.

"Nope," I reply.

Penny looks at the sky, scrutinising it.

"What's that?" She points upwards, craning her neck.

"A shooting star. Duh."

"Oh," Penny sighs.

A loud buzzing sound fills the quiet night.

Penny gasps. "This is the sound I heard before I saw the flying saucer..."

"What you *thought* was a flying saucer."

The buzzing gets louder and I clamp my hands over my ears. Blue light floods the area. I take my hands off my ears to shield my eyes.

"It would have been nice of you to mention the blue light while you had the chance," I shout.

I don't hear Penny's reply. The wind picks up and whips my hair around my face.

"Look!" Penny shouts.

I look up. A white sphere is plummeting towards us.

"Aaaaaaah!" Penny screams.

I run, arms outstretched, and bash into her, pushing us both into the safety of the trees. The object hits the ground. The earth shakes, flinging Penny and me further into the bush. The buzzing stops.

A black-tinted glass door located at the top of the ship opens. A plume of dust erupts from the door, catapulting purple pollen all over Penny and me. Penny sneezes, then coughs, then sneezes again. I stand up and brush myself off. The purple dust floats down and touches the ground.

At first, nothing happens. Then a small red shoot starts to grow. I look in shock. Plants are meant to be green, not red. I continue watching. All around me red shoots break the earth, growing taller by the second.





Penny stands up next to me and gasps. The shoots have turned into buds. I watch as they bloom into giant purple and yellow flowers.

"Cool," whispers Penny. She reaches out to touch the petals.

"No!" I grab her wrist. "They could be toxic."

As if to prove my point, the flower to my right sprays green goop on to the ground.

"Gross," Penny gags.

A sizzling sound comes from beneath my feet.

"Penny, look."

She notices the worried tone in my voice.

"I think that green stuff was acid."

"It can't be. I mean, it's a flower." Penny doesn't want to believe it's true. "This can't be happening," she says, starting to panic. "Pinch me."

"What?" I stare at her.

"Pinch me. I'll wake up and realise this is all a bad dream."

I pinch her.

"Ow! Not a dream!"

My walkie-talkie crackles. We stare at it in horror.

"Agent Silver Swan. Agent Falcon. Come in. Over."

The message repeats again and again. I look at the spacecraft. A figure is waving its arms.

"Agent Falcon. You see me. Very good. Over."

"Who are you?"

Oh my gosh. I just talked to an alien.

"I'm you. Over."

But I have a feeling this isn't over. It has only just started...