Chapter 1

To be named…

There was an eerie silence, the kind of silence that engulfs the land just after a fierce clap of thunder for it had befallen Nancy and Jack as suddenly without the slightest of warnings. Of course, on planet M-DT-0004 code named “Veraque”, there is no perception of sound by the beings that inhabit it because they don’t have any physical auditory receptors, which we humans would normally call ears and the auditory canal. This is a good thing because had they been capable of perceiving sound like us, they’d have been driven to madness and extinction as the world they occupy emits deafeningly loud and cacophonic noises from its surface across a very broad spectrum. Knowledge about this strange phenomenon is scarce and the only theory top scientists have been able to come up with is that the entire makeup of the planet’s crust is somehow a giant amplifier of noise emitted from within its core. Needless to say, humans would need a pair of serious earplugs if they were to visit. “Jack? I think my neu..”, started Nancy. “No, I can’t hear shit either and there’s no way both our neutrans broke down at the exact same time.”, Jack replied cocking his left eyebrow at Nancy, uncomfortably aware of the rapidly rising sense of uneasiness.

The Veraquians are a sentient and telepathic lot and that’s how they communicate without sound. One would think that having the power of telepathy would mean a race would be far superior and advanced than us. But the Veraquians, even though not a primitive race by any means, are comparatively a fledgling species and have yet to learn and unlock the many mysteries of the universe. Also, being a race that is very divided not unlike humans a couple of centuries ago, doesn’t help at all. “This silence is very concerning Nan. It’s as if the they have just stopped talking all at once. How much farther is this damned site?” asked Jack looking at Nancy now with a tone of urgency. “Yeah, it’s been a whole minute of telepathic silence now. Not much farther, 12 meters.”, Nancy replied glancing at the HUD on her contact lenses while tapping her neutran a couple of times just for good measure.

A neutran is more than an average pair of fancy earplugs. It’s a state-of-the-art neuro-telepathic transceiver that was designed specifically for use on missions to Veraque (with this being only the fourteenth) in order to provide humans with telepathic powers inspired from the Veraquians’ own biological anatomy. The telepathy among our antennae clad beings worked like a network that connected to every Veraquian nearby to pass on messages. The higher the density of Veraquians in a place, the stronger the telepathic signals and the network. They have perfected this mode of communication over years of evolution and hence have figured out a way to communicate their thoughts with exceptional synergy. Unfortunately, the neutrans in its current state are still prototypes with the limited capability to only listen to the telepathic traffic around. Transmission of any messages via the neutran to the literal neural network was still a work in progress. There was also no way at the moment to be able to filter out individual communications on the network due to a lack of understanding of their neuro-telepathic language. This meant that at present, the function of the neutran was to simply receive the signals from the neuro-telepathic network when in proximity to Veraquians, which to a human was not dissimilar to the sound of radio static. As a consequence of this feedback, the tool becomes useful in order to map out approximate regions of Veraquian activity and relay it to an agent as auditory and its equivalent visual cues (a crude coloured overlay of these regions on the 3D map that is mapped out by sensors on an agent’s suit). As far as communication among agents was concerned, good old radio was still in commission.

“I would estimate at least a couple hundred of them up there with the amount of static I was hearing.”, muttered Jack. “A couple? I’d wager way more than that. All the more reason for caution. It certainly isn’t normal for so many people to just shut up at once especially considering we’re sneaking below a busy township. Something big has to have caught them all off guard and I don’t plan to find out what.”, said agent Nancy, discovering she was talking through gritted teeth. “Me neither Nan… Speaking of which, looks like we’ve arrived at site designated for P-11.” “Alpha team to Space Hopper: we have reached designated site P-11. Commencing portal initiation procedure, over.” “Space Hopper to Alpha team, copy that. Over.”

**Ideas**:

* A pandemic of depression among the Veraqians threaten to wipe out large populations.
* Introduce a third character who is a furry alien partner of Nancy’s.

You need to feel the blues to know how happy feels like. If you’re happy all the time, how would you even know you’re happy if you don’t have a sad experience to compare with?