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We don't know how long we spent wandering the dark, happily consuming what sustenance we could, our manifold minds animating our single, hard-shelled body, before the soft-shells came. In fact, we don't really remember exactly how we came to be -- as far as we can tell, we're *sui generis*, an improbable intersection of host and symbiotes that somehow achieved a gestalt mind. It's lonely down here, but we have so much to discover and ponder that we keep busy.

Before the softshells came, we mostly tried to survey and observe our deep, dark ocean trench, searching for others like us. The arrival of those odd creatures from far above, swimming down in their metal outer shells, heralded a new area of study for us. We observed in fascination as these strange creatures began building a gigantic structure, bringing materials down with them from their distant home. We were intrigued by this idea -- unlike the fellow creatures we'd seen using shells they'd found as protection, these ones made their own -- brilliant!

As we watched, we were able to see the creatures themselves inside their shells -- bipeds in a range of colours, peering with their two front-facing eyes through the transparent exoskeletons of first their mobile shells and later their giant dwelling. We were excited to see multiple intelligences in one shell -- just like us! -- but soon realized that the large shells they used were mere covers and their minds lay solely within their soft-looking inner shells. We'd sometimes see them in smaller, individual outer shells swimming around, but only rarely.

Eventually, after observing from a distance and gleaning as much as we could, it was time to make contact. We weren't sure how -- it was a very intimidating experience, being one creature approaching a nest of many -- so we decided to try a slow approach. We would leave messages for them and see how they reacted. If they tried to hunt, we could keep our distance, but perhaps we could offer a satiating prey to calm them.