

“She caught herself on the thing’s folded, jointed arms, pivoted and clung there, watching the swirl of debris. There were dozens of the arms, manipulators, tipped with pliers, hexdrivers, knives, a subminiature circular saw, a dentist’s drill ... They bristled from the alloy thorax of what must once have been a construction remote, the sort of unmanned, semiautonomous device she knew from childhood videos of the high frontier. But this one was welded into the apex of the dome, its sides fused with the fabric of the Place, and hundred of cables and optic lines snaked across the geodesics to enter it. Two of the arms, tipped with delicate force-feedback devices, were extended; the soft pads cradled an unfinished box.”

“Eyes wide, Marly watched the uncounted things swing past.”

“A yellowing kid glove, the faceted crystal stopper from some vial of vanished perfume, an armless doll with a face of French porcelain, a fat, gold-fitted black fountain pen, rectangular segments of perf board, the crumpled red and green snake of a silk cravat ... Endless, the slow swarm of spinning things...”