

DISCOURSES OF THE VANISHING

The BKA man ignored Maude's obvious provocation. Not that he wasn't interested, but he was at work, which meant that he was also under surveillance. And he needed to keep this job. Most Americans didn't realize, or care, that the Bureau of Kami Affairs was staffed almost entirely by gig workers, whom the government still forced, somewhat sarcastically, to pay for their own health insurance, Internet, and rent. *Grab your mat and let's get started.*

"Ma'am, the secret record."

"Call me *bitch*," Maude snapped. Hell of a pronoun. Her bra had found its way onto the floor alongside her shirt. She squeaked out a career limiting yell, kicked over a chair, and laid all the way back, spread-eagle on the kitchen table. By all appearances ready to rock.

The BKA man made a sudden, sad face inside his bear mask. He could see now in his visor that he'd just been retasked with an unrelated job clear across town, even though he wasn't finished here, even though several of his coworkers were already positioned nearby the pending service address, actually much closer than he was, and were in fact at this moment standing idly by, waiting for an assignment.

And just like that, he was out of the apartment.

OPENING THE THIRD FRONTIER

Maude's basic programming statements were very simple and easy to understand. *The friend of her friend was her enemy, and consent was implied.*

It took her a few minutes to realize the BKA man had gone.

This didn't happen every day.