

## Servitude

### Costi Gurgu

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*Servitude is a thrilling science fiction novel about debt-based slavery and a married couple's attempt to prevent its global expansion.*

In Costi Gurgu's science fiction series opener *Servitude*, a detective and a journalist are targeted by global conspirators.

In a near future marked by wrist-based computers and advanced medical techniques, environmental crises have led to extreme unemployment. In response, a global union headed by corporations is formed. England begins enforcing servitude, wherein whole families are abducted and enslaved after missed payments on outstanding debt. Their labor is used to advance a secretive technology. In the US, the Republican party overruns the political landscape and plans to enact the Freedom Act for its own version of servitude.

Meanwhile, a married couple vacations in London on a tourist visa: Blake is an NYPD detective and Isa is an investigative journalist. Their visa prevents them from being forced into servitude, but when Blake takes a clandestine meeting in the city, he accepts a task that puts him and Isa at risk: to stop an American businessman who has been poised to monopolize the American slave market. In the wake of his decision, Isa is captured and barcoded into slavery, while the NSA labels Blake a traitor and pursues him.

The book opens in dramatic media res: Blake and Isa witness an innocent family's abduction into slavery and a violent clash between servitude protesters and paid antagonists. The narrative that follows focuses on Isa's incendiary documentary about the Freedom Act, Blake's assignment to investigate servitude abroad, and the couple's misadventures as a fugitive and a slave. As these elements are returned to, the book expands on elements of each, emphasizing events leading up to the Freedom Act and revealing Blake and Isa's motivations to reveal the truth.

Blake's hero status is complicated by his obsessive-compulsive disorder, which both helps with his investigation and, when it's triggered, impedes it. He is developed with more clarity than Isa, though, whose documentary investigation becomes central to her characterization. Through her work alone, Isa is shown to be capable and passionate—qualities that serve her less once she's captured and Blake is positioned as her rescuer. As Blake searches for her, the book's earlier social commentary falls to the wayside; its tension funnels into their singular struggles, which are concluded in the explosive climactic chapters. Torture sequences, shootouts, and car chases overwhelm this ending, though, and the technology that undergirds servitude is left to be addressed in later volumes.

*Servitude* is a thrilling science fiction novel about debt-based slavery and a married couple's attempt to prevent its global expansion.

JOHN M. MURRAY (October 24, 2022)

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