

# PROJECT SALVATION



**A mechanical man,  
a dystopian nightmare, a fight to gain humanity,  
a mission to achieve, Project: Salvation.**

# ROBERT

A man born in mechanical flesh, caught in a dystopian nightmare by a ruthless, heartless government. He tries to discover the truth of his past, as such, there is always the risk of termination.

# 1

The interface blinks and flickers to new life, the sound of silence, a soul that remains in that tomb. Orders formulate into my mind. A yawning chasm, a dark mountainous cave with no sparkles of stars or planets to break up the monotony of the abyss. In an instance, that reality changes. A light inside turns on, suddenly I'm alive with a familiar, pulsating mass of colors as if taken from the lenses of a camera too close to twilight, with autumn sliding against the glass. A grid formulates, focusing my vision.

Appearing in the lower corner of my visor, is the new purpose, the new agenda.

*Objectives -*

- 1. To reinstate a favorable government head in New Mexico.*
- 2. Eliminate all threats to the re-establishment of order.*
- 3. Removal of all evidence that links into activities or crimes committed in securing peace.*

I straighten from the wall, the strings that connect to my mind.

*You have your orders, X-0.*

In the coldness of this grey, lifeless graveyard. I awaken fully from my coma.

At my feet, I can see the outlines of pictures, assimilating and pixelating. I had the bare necessities to form my new identity.

## **NEW MEXICO CITY, 10:38AM**

It is a bitterly cold morning in the middle of May. The collective had given my orders, to close in and eliminate a target that had grown too expressive of their ideals. Had been reaching out to the public, trying to have an impact. A man, tall and faceless, his coloration system changing, testing, and probing at the characteristics of the individuals who fought against the cancerous smoke and dust that swirls across the ground. He advances through the filth, the buildings, stark, molting from red, green,

and gold to a despairing grey, lifeless, with only neon lights splitting the dawn.

X-0 makes his way through the dirty, streets of waste and despair.

The people were rushing inside, eager to rush the coldness from their bones.

X-0 presses on. His consciousness hums, a deeply rhythmic tone.

Within his eyes, the images spread, photos, videos, information formulating as he stands within the night. After a brief pause, sipping quietly, he makes his way through the labyrinth of staircases and stairwells, into a hallway full of precision and detergent.

“You here for another coffee?”

X-0 adopts a smile, unerring and charismatic, “No, no, Carlos, I’m out for a walk.”

“Fair, good sir. I suppose this day has been a tiresome thing. I wish for some excitement, not the same boring day-by-day coffee runs.”

Carlos groans, “You seem to have a more exciting life than I do.”

X-0 shrugs. “There are times I wish it wasn’t.”

Carlos clicks and whirls with the machine. “Life, I’d rather die with excitement than live with boredom.”

X-0 taps the deep espresso. “I suspect it won’t be like that for long.”

Carlos begins the process, turning the milk to steam, with the pang of beans being ground. “I hope so. None of these women have joined their hands with mine.”

Feeling the warmth rush across his palm. X-0 looks up. “I suppose it’s a lucky thing you run this place.”

Carlos bows as dramatically as he can manage. “I thought it to.”

“You’ve got your business trip today, haven’t you? Well, remember me if you need a ballroom dancer. Or coffee, I can do both.”

X-0 takes a long sip. Before replying. "I might get more than just a stage for your performance."

"Anything would be a damn sight better than this place. I'll be seeing you later. Stay sharp."

"Take care, Carlos. Try not to invite trouble onto your doorstep."

"It'd be better than brewing another cup. I might start throwing it. Might pick up service."

Scoffing at his answer, X-0 moves on.

Straightening he takes off down the road, the buildings rise and fall, bright lights and colours of the city contrasting the dullness with the occupants. A decaying, fading rainbow crashing into the ground. A dreary, empty wasteland of festering smoke leaching into the walls. A gloomy sight, with the squat buildings pressing against one another as if to escape a flood that would rip them away. Breaking through the monotony, were flickers of life, yellow, red, dark blue and an ivy green. These apartment complexes stood against conformity, as did the flapping canvas.

X-0 goes on. Seeing the desperation. Pale and lifeless eyes.

The people hold on, in their homes of rotting cement and wooden chippings.

Clotheslines buckling and shaking in the wind.

Rainwater had swept through last night, turning each alley into a shoal.

Weeds peeking through cracks and vines rising to entangle windows.

The desperate know better than to raise their hands at him.

Drawing further away from the neighbourhoods, the city remains a sleepless haven for excitement, the streets are full of street vendors selling food filling the air with the aroma of someone making some mouth-watering asada tacos rich with sauce and freshly cut onion and cilantro topping them off. A sweet smell is in the air, a nearby bakery with the tang of coffee not far behind. X-0 carries on, knowing the way to the

pickup point, where he would be taken to the bedrock of government. Street performers race up and down, trying desperately to be alive in the colourless morning, musicians play their tunes and melodies which bounce lazily upon the doors of the residents and city goers. The rustling of the newspaper echoes beneath his feet, the sizzling of cigarettes being ground down. Almost lost in the silence, the wind turns. Brushing harshly against his face.

Even with whirlwinds of dust and scraps dancing in the air. He walks through it, without pause.

X-0 makes his way down the road with purpose, the bitterness of winter falling deaf against his skin.

Emerging from the shadowy alleyway. A tall man awaits with a newspaper, flicking through the pages with his right hand, whilst fixing up his suit. "Impeccable timing like always."

X-0 casually settles up alongside. "Good morning."

"If only. Carlos has to get a better machine." The man grumbles, downing the last of it in a long gulp.

He walks ahead. Holding out the newspaper. "Want a read?"

"I'll pass."

"Have to say, Antonio, you've done really good work. Haven't made the front page though."

X-0/Antonio gives a side-eye, barely turning his head. "My work includes discretion."

"A good thing it does." The man tosses it into a bin, along with the last speckles of coffee.

"We best get on our way Antonio, don't want to get caught in another contraption by Carlos or those dancing wenches."

As we roll away, the city streams past. Going from the mountainous high-rises to the centre which owes its allegiance to fading ruins of the Aztecs. Drawing outwards, are the low-pitching rooves of Hacienda architecture,

glimmering like a coiling blood-red serpent. The sun starkly hot, turns the walls into a blinding white. Gardens of ivy, flowers, and vines weave over the ruins, but do little to disguise the desperation. Reporters are on the scene, looking lively, a shade lighter than the poor who fight every day for survival. With bleary eyes, drooping shoulders and passion rising to the surface, to carry them through.

It doesn't take long before an outcry can be heard. They were now known to the public.

This protest had been going on for a while. Handful by handful will fade.

Just the way it is. Discipline and re-education, eventually they would get the message.

"Met any hardships on your way here?"

"No. Unless they wish to collect on their life insurance. Most of those rats know better than to squeal."

"I'd hate to find out your policies on insurance, Grant."

"You're far too clever for that. I wish the neighbourhood had more guys like you."

"Reckon I might be one of a kind."

"Hope not. The abundant stupidity makes bitter coffee taste sweet."

The idle chatter ran on for a while yet. Driving further into the centre, the tumbledown, ramshackle slums fade from view. The stark, colourless apartments and hotels fade into the ground.

A bright and fascinating event is taking place, another day, another night of joy.

So, that no one on this side of Mexico would question the cause the protestors were fighting for.

They were vermin. They were hideous.

The sound of laughter and fun moves throughout the city. A roar of cheers erupts from arenas, magnificent shows of athleticism, these free

fighter, these lucha libre jumping between the ropes, spinning wildly like kites thrown violently in the wind. The hecklers cheer and boo, taken in by the sight, the reporters aren't far behind.

Taken into the raucous and excitement. A crowd of colourful masks, bright lights, music, and all of the collective anticipation of thousands of people. Nothing else holds their attention more. This is a source of pride.

X-0 remains stoic and flat. Another distraction.

These events had been of fascination for a brief time. He had been forming his analysis.

X-0 returns his focus to the road.

“Finally, my great brothers arrive. Please join us.”

An expansive palace shone brightly, a fair sight better than the dreary houses and apartments.

Inside, it had the refining makings of a palace, a table of deep, voluptuous oak runs around the expansive great hall in a half-circle. With chairs woven of silk and golden string, with pillars and buttresses of marble linking together into the sky. The sunroof opens up to a heartless sky, flickers of fire breaks through the clouds. Bottles of wine and vodka make their way over the table, glasses set in place with plates shinning with polish.

“Thank you for this.”

“You need not thank me, Antonio. A man of your talents doesn't deserve to be buried.”

Antonio nods quickly. “Of course.”

The boss embraces Grant tightly. “Don't think I forgot about you, my great enforcer.”

After a pause, they both stand at attention. “Now, please help yourself to the refreshments.”

After a moment of tasting fine wine and pastries on tender, thin plates. A voice rang. “I'm here to discuss something quite serious with you all.”



“I assume so, Mr Navarro, I have to say, the public has been getting more and more unruly.”

“Ah, yes. But don’t you worry about that. I have been waiting for this moment to properly seize Mexico.”

“These people will not be made into martyrs. They will be shown for what they are.”

“Uneducated? Unrefined? You seem to have a way with words, Navarro.”

“It cannot be helped. I seek to establish my authority. Which means, all of you are in high demand.”

“Alright, Navarro. What are you suggesting?”

“I wish to make you rich. Call it compensation for your hard work. Funds, resources, and any whims you have will not trouble you. All of you will live like Kings. All I ask is that you keep your word.”

“Our word, Navarro?”

“Yes. Think of it this way, you’ll have palaces, gardens, and women. Any wish, any desire, granted.”

“I assume it’ll be more than a castle with servants that we’ll gain.”

“Of course, those that have been dealt with. I have a need for new men to take their positions.”

“So, we’ll be governors of honour. Always wanted to rule over those dogs.”

“I assume the pound would serve you well. Plenty of opportunities to air your grievances.”

That got a light chuckle from his foes and friends alike. Most sworn in loyally, the remainder wanting benefits and payments for their part in Mr Navarro’s bold plan. The vote would be rolling in a matter of hours, this is his entire focus. Over the last several weeks, X-0 kept a tight record of everyone who would be in attendance.

A television seethes away on the far wall. “You don’t get it. They’re stealing our homes!”

With microphone in hand, the reporter appears in frame. “Stealing. How would you say?”

“We live paycheck to paycheck. They are sacrificing our way of living and we can’t stand by any longer.”

“So, you’re taking a stand.” The cameras pan over the sacrificial ruins of the Aztecs.

“You’re damn right we are.”

“What about the attacks? The damage that has been caused over the last few weeks. Do you think that is impacting your message?”

“We’re frustrated. That’s what we feel. We want our voices to be heard.”

The men upon their thrones turn to the television. A spreading canvas of desolation appears on screen, a cityside view with devilish flames.

Mr Navarro carries on. “Their voices are heard. Now gentlemen, we move in.”

“So, we have shown everyone what they are. What’s the next step?”

Mr Navarro gestures loosely to the screen. “Those who have the means to be leaders. We must give them the opportunity to reconsider.”

“What happens if they misbehave?”

“They go to detention.” Mr Navarro smiles.

He continues, flicking off the television. “We have our methods to silence them.”

“What are these methods of yours?”

“Antonio and Grant.”

“Your underlings?”

“They’ll be in charge of the police force.”

“So, our men answer to yours?”

“Yes. But don’t worry, you will still have control over them.”

The conversation fades into more tiring aspects, amounts owing, favours and business concerns.

“What about the idealists? Those sacrificial lambs.”

“They – will be dealt with peacefully. Showing aggression towards the masses will cause issues.”

“You already have to discipline teachers?”

“I want good grades from all of you. No gaps in attendance. No bad behaviour.”

“A hard taskmaster, Navarro? Your teachers were always this tough?”

“Always.”

Antonio/X-0 nods to the a few of the higherups before fading away.

Hidden throughout the premises, he hid cameras, voice-regulators, and trackers.

At the pivotal moment, a slight hesitation arose in his mind.

Dialect formulates in front of his eyes. *You have a task to complete, X-0. No mistakes, no hesitation.*

The moment soon arrives. Refreshments spread around right on schedule.

It’s time to lie in wait. Time often feels heavy with tension or trepidation, X-0 waits, counting down seconds, minutes. Checking my watch with a quick glance, my final calculations roll through his eyes, accurate estimations of how quickly he’ll need to travel, what trajectory and how much force will be necessary to subdue the guests. Relaxing visibly, X-0 gestures for the waiter, he arrives in a huff.

“Thank you.”

With no glasses left on the tray. He quickly departs.

X-0 looks down.

Police held no fear in this city, but gunshots were different.

The lights had been set to a rotating timer. The first power outage is going to occur.

They'll panic, I'll let them think of rivals. A countdown begins:

*10....9....8....7*

He exchanges courtesies. Tales of success of bringing down those that threaten the election.

*6....5....4*

One last routine check. He scans the room. Everything is ready.

*3....2....1*

The entire room, all the lights go out. A darkness envelopes everything, then nothing but the heart-wrenching crack of gunfire consumes the joyous discussions, despite the safety and relative security of the palace, weapons had been strown. With fear consuming their minds, quivering with that unease before a battle commences, the men have enough sense to locate their weaponry, fear and the sudden rush of adrenaline unsteadies their aim.

They turn and fire. Bullets tinging around the room, trapped in a cup full of bodies.

It tears rents through people, digging through lungs and hearts, crimson exploding in fiery rage.

Their eyes glimmering faintly in the dark. Their cries and anguish, a tortured symphony.

Final breathes crystallise in the air, a strong, overwhelming fog of blood, wine, and smoke.

Low to the ground, X-0 rises amongst the damned.

“What – what happened? Why did the lights go out?”

A sharp crack ends his stream of words.

“Where are the bastards? Are they out there?”

More and more questions that would never be answered.

Reaching carefully into his pocket, he places on a pair of gloves. Taking great care to not expose any skin. Tampering with evidence is not the duty of a faithful servant to the public trust. After a moment to locate the remaining survivors, a quick, efficient strike with the stock of their rifles drives the last into unconsciousness.

Moving within the darkness, the other rooms are caught in the throes of desperation and betrayal.

Voices rise, accusing and vicious. The different cartels had their own agendas.

This attack had affirmed the suspicions of some, that this is a plot to overthrow the leaders and gain control over estates without any authority or forces to curb them. Mr Navarro had every intention for running the election process, but this had been in the cards.

X-0 takes out his weapon, a pistol, standard edition with a no-frills silencer. He considers carrying through to the next room but holsters it.

The rest had been taken out. Those bleeding out. Those breathing in through the smoke.

*All I had to do was convince them was that the prize was worth more than they'd sacrifice.*

Mr Navarro stumbles out of his room. “Antonio, what happened?”

“I don't know, Navarro. Whatever it is. We need to get out of here.”

He grumbles loudly, kicking away at the bodies. “I should've known that their loyalty wouldn't last.”

Grant thunders in agreement. “Most of them are down and out.”

Antonio/X-0 scans his surroundings with his heat-signature optics, showcasing a room of fading red, yellow, and orange halos that seem to fizzle and die out. “Do you want me to finish them off?”

Mr Navarro shakes his head. "No need. Leave them where they are."

Grant looks around, taking off his coat. "What's the next step?"

"The election will finish as planned. The only thing that changes is that I'll be needing men to fill positions."

Grant snorts. "A promotion after a shitshow. I hope this isn't our way of climbing the ladder."

"Seems like it will be. Don't think it'll be changing anytime soon."

"You're right about that, Antonio."

## **Author's Bio**

I wanted to venture into the life of a man that must fight to regain his humanity. He had been made into a tool that ensures that the government will remain firmly in power, silencing politicians that wish to separate and cause issues for the Public Trust. This trust is a domineering body of law, rights and rules that blackmails, re-educates and enlightens the world.

This will also cover the terror of a world that rapidly silences freedom for the sake of security and prosperity.