

NOBLE ROT

by

John Scherber

An excerpt of the Prologue

San Miguel Allende Books

San Miguel de Allende, Guanajuato, México

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Any book starts as an idea, and by its completion becomes a joint effort.

Thanks to all the following:

Lander Rodriguez for the cover design.

Julio Mendez for website design.

Thanks to Nancy Howze for assistance with locations.

Thanks to Prof. Henry Beckmeyer for assistance on medical issues.

For the cover painting, *Revelación*, (2010) thank you to Santiago Corral.

For editing and many valuable suggestions: my wife, Kristine Scherber.

Copyright 2016 by John Scherber. All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced or stored in an information and retrieval system without the prior written permission of the copyright holder. Reviewers may quote brief passages in a review.

This is a work of fiction. Any resemblance to actual persons, living or dead, is entirely coincidental.

PROLOGUE

Sebastian Cavaletti stood at the top of the two-story staircase with his arms crossed over his chest. His face was burning and his hands gripped his shoulders as if to literally pull himself together. He could not recall the last time he'd been so angry. How could this have happened? Coming into the room, he had turned the music up a notch to

help calm his mind. It was one of his favorite Vivaldi pieces, the guitar concerto in D, but it hadn't helped.

Forcing himself to focus on other things, his eyes scanned the upscale room searching for order, for peace. It was worthy of a person of his stature. The furniture was elegant with classic lines. The art was from several periods, none recent. The staircase at his feet was worthy of a coronation. Uninterrupted, and flanked by no handrails, the limestone treads and risers were formal and unadorned. He could appreciate its classic look, but at the same time it seemed more ceremonial than practical. What about older people? What if they had a momentary dizzy spell? There was nothing to grip to break their fall. The owners of this house he had rented must be young and very rich.

He froze for moment as rage flashed back into his mind. He thrust the thought aside. It was not worth a heart attack or a stroke. It had been a stroke that killed his father fourteen years before.

Sebastian Cavaletti was a wealthy man himself and could've also afforded a grand house like this, but his own winery residence in Northern California was a single story, a rambling and gracious adobe hacienda with tall ceilings. He had opted for comfort over display, a contented informality over grandeur.

Still, this house he was renting was quite suitable for the month he'd be in México, checking out properties to add as a southern branch to the Cavaletti Vineyards. An involuntary smile crossed his face as he caught a favorite passage in the background guitar music. He had tried early in his life to learn the guitar, but without success. Perhaps his absorption was why he didn't hear the soft rush of footsteps behind him. Nor did he feel the impact of the weapon that struck him at the back of his head. The force of it drove him down the long flight of limestone stairs head over heels, but he was beyond feeling anything by then. His head sharply struck the limestone treads three times before Sebastian Cavaletti ended his life in a misshapen pile at the bottom of the steps.