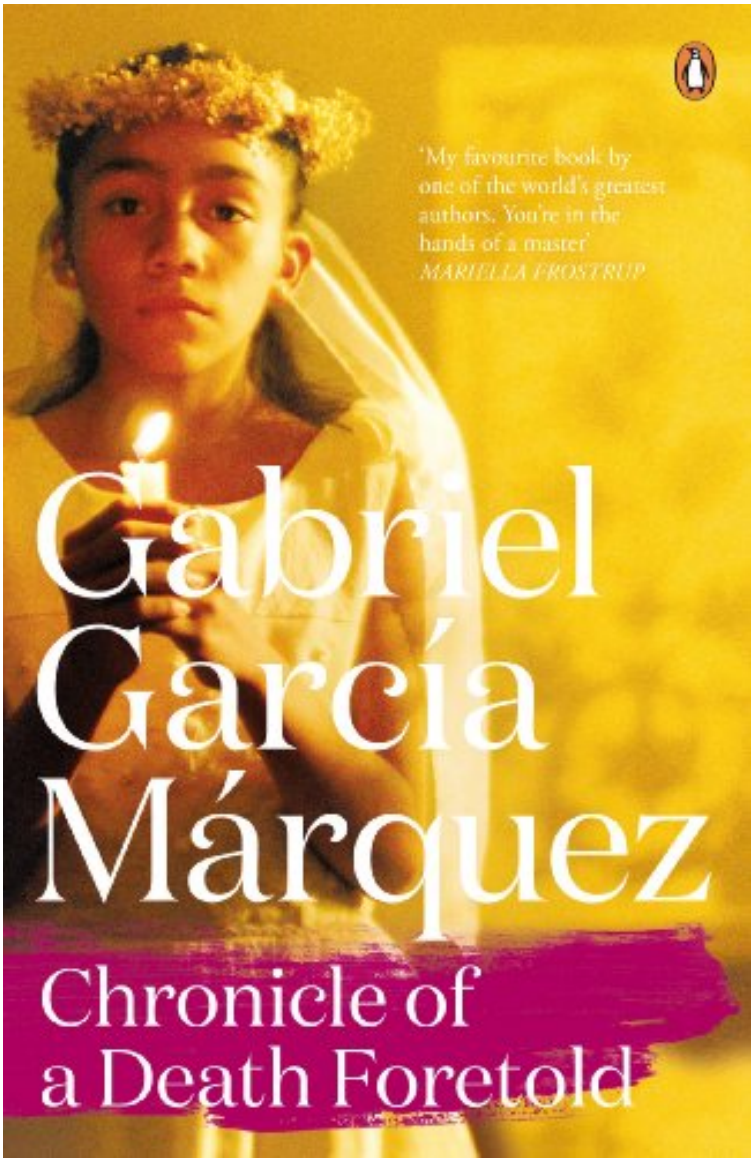
Chronicle of a Death Foretold



Par Gabriel Garcia Marquez
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[PDF] Chronicle of a Death Foretold

Par Gabriel Garcia Marquez : Chronicle of a Death Foretold before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Chronicle of a Death Foretold:

Description :

Prsentation de l'diteurChronicle of a Death Foretold is a compelling, moving story exploring injustice and mob hysteria by the Nobel Laureate Gabriel Garcia Marquez, author of One Hundred Years of Solitude and Love in the Time of Cholera. 'On the day they were going to kill him, Santiago Nasar got up at five-thirty in the morning to wait for the boat the bishop was coming on'Santiago Nasar is brutally murdered in a small town by two brothers. All the townspeople knew it was going to happen - including the victim. But nobody did anything to prevent the killing. Twenty seven years later, a man arrives in town to try and piece together the truth from the contradictory testimonies of the townsfolk. To at last understand what happened to Santiago, and why. . . 'A masterpiece' Evening Standard'A work of high explosiveness - the proper stuff of

Nobel prizes. An exceptional novel' The Times'Brilliant writer, brilliant book' GuardianExtraitON THE DAY they were going to kill him, Santiago Nasar got up at five-thirty in the morning to wait for the boat the bishop was coming on. He'd dreamed he was going through a grove of timber trees where a gentle drizzle was falling, and for an instant he was happy in his dream, but when he awoke he felt completely spattered with bird shit. "He was always dreaming about trees," Plcida Linero, his mother, told me twenty-seven years later, recalling the details of that distressing Monday. "The week before, he'd dreamed that he was alone in a tinfoil airplane and flying through the almond trees without bumping into anything," she said to me. She had a well-earned reputation as an accurate interpreter of other people's dreams, provided they were told her before eating, but she hadn't noticed any ominous augury in those two dreams of her son's, or in the other dreams of trees he'd described to her on the mornings preceding his death.Nor did Santiago Nasar recognize the omen. He had slept little and poorly, without getting undressed, and he woke up with a headache and a sediment of copper stirrup on his palate, and he interpreted them as the natural havoc of the wedding revels that had gone on until after midnight. Furthermore: all the many people he ran into after leaving his house at five minutes past six and until he was carved up like a pig an hour later remembered him as being a little sleepy but in a good mood, and he remarked to all of them in a casual way that it was a very beautiful day. No one was certain if he was referring to the state of the weather. Many people coincided in recalling that it was a radiant morning with a sea breeze coming in through the banana groves, as was to be expected in a fine February of that period. But most agreed that the weather was funereal, with a cloudy, low sky and the thick smell of still waters, and that at the moment of the misfortune a thin drizzle was falling like the one Santiago Nasar had seen in his dream grove. I was recovering from the wedding revels in the apostolic lap of Mari Alejandrina Cervantes, and I only awakened with the clamor of the alarm bells, thinking they had turned them loose in honor of the bishop.Santiago Nasar put on a shirt and pants of white linen, both items unstarched, just like the ones he'd put on the day before for the wedding. It was his attire for special occasions. If it hadn't been for the bishop's arrival, he would have dressed in his khaki outfit and the riding boots he wore on Mondays to go to The Divine Face, the cattle ranch he'd inherited from his father and which he administered with very good judgment but without much luck. In the country he wore a .357 Magnum on his belt, and its armored bullets, according to what he said, could cut a horse in two through the middle. During the partridge season he would also carry his falconry equipment. In the closet he kept a Mannlicher Schoenauer .30-06 rifle, a .300 Holland Holland Magnum rifle, a .22 Hornet with a double-powered telescopic sight, and a Winchester repeater. He always slept the way his father had slept, with the weapon hidden in the pillowcase, but before leaving the house that day he took out the bullets and put them in the drawer of the night table. "He never left it loaded," his mother told me. I knew that, and I also knew that he kept the guns in one place and hid the ammunition in another far removed so that nobody, not even casually, would yield to the temptation of loading them inside the house. It was a wise custom established by his father ever since one morning when a servant girl had shaken the case to get the pillow out and the pistol went off as it hit the floor and the bullet wrecked the cupboard in the room, went through the living room wall, passed through the dining room of the house next door with the thunder of war, and turned a life-size saint on the main altar of the church on the opposite side of the square to plaster dust. Santiago Nasar, who was a young child at the time, never forgot the lesson of that accident.The last image his mother had of him was of his fleeting passage through the bedroom. He'd wakened her while he was feeling around trying to find an aspirin in the bathroom medicine chest, and she turned on the light and saw him appear in the doorway with a glass of water in his hand. So she would remember him forever. Santiago Nasar told her then about the dream, but she didn't pay any great attention to the trees."Any dream about birds means good health," she said.She had watched him from the same hammock and in the same position in which I found her prostrated by the last lights of old age when I returned to this forgotten village, trying to put the broken mirror of memory back together from so many scattered shards. She could barely make out shapes in full light and had some medicinal leaves on her temples for the eternal headache that her son had left her the last time he went through the bedroom. She was on her side, clutching the cords at the head of the hammock as she tried to get up, and there in the half shadows was the baptistry smell that had startled me on the morning of the crime.No sooner had I appeared on the threshold than she confused me with the memory of Santiago Nasar. "There he was," she told me. "He was dressed in white linen that had been washed in plain water because his skin was so delicate that it couldn't stand the noise of starch." She sat in the hammock for a long time, chewing pepper cress seeds, until the illusion that her son had returned left her. Then she sighed: "He was the man in my life."I saw him in her memory. He had turned twenty-one the last week in January, and

he was slim and pale and had his father's Arab eyelids and curly hair. He was the only child of a marriage of convenience without a single moment of happiness, but he seemed happy with his father until the latter died suddenly, three years before, and he continued seeming to be so with his solitary mother until the Monday of his death. From her he had inherited a sixth sense. From his father he learned at a very early age the manipulation of firearms, his love for horses, and the mastery of high-flying birds of prey, but from him he also learned the good arts of valor and prudence. They spoke Arabic between themselves, but not in front of Plcida Linero, so that she wouldn't feel excluded. They were never seen armed in town, and the only time they brought in their trained birds was for a demonstration of falconry at a charity bazaar. The death of his father had forced him to abandon his studies at the end of secondary school in order to take charge of the family ranch. By his nature, Santiago Nasar was merry and peaceful, and openhearted.On the day they were going to kill him, his mother thought he'd got his days mixed up when she saw him dressed in white. "I reminded him that it was Monday," she told me. But he explained to her that he'd got dressed up pontifical style in case he had a chance to kiss the bishop's ring. She showed no sign of interest. "He won't even get off the boat," she told him. "He'll give an obligatory blessing, as always, and go back the way he came. He hates this town."Santiago Nasar knew it was true, but church pomp had an irresistible fascination for him. "It's like the movies," he'd told me once. The only thing that interested his mother about the bishop's arrival, on the other hand, was for her son not to get soaked in the rain, since she'd heard him sneeze while he was sleeping. She advised him to take along an umbrella, but he waved good-bye and left the room. It was the last time she saw him.Victoria Guzmn, the cook, was sure that it hadn't rained that day, or during the whole month of February. "On the contrary," she told me when I came to see her, a short time before her death. "The sun warms things up earlier than in August." She had been quartering three rabbits for lunch, surrounded by panting dogs, when Santiago Nasar entered the kitchen. "He always got up with the face of a bad night," Victoria Guzmn recalled without affection. Divina Flor, her daughter, who was just coming into bloom, served Santiago Nasar a mug of mountain coffee with a shot of cane liquor, as on every Monday, to help him bear the burden of the night before. The enormous kitchen, with the whispers from the fire and the hens sleeping on their perches, was breathing stealthily. Santiago Nasar swallowed another aspirin and sat down to drink the mug of coffee in slow sips, thinking just as slowly, without taking his eyes off the two women who were disemboweling the rabbits on the stove. In spite of her age, Victoria Guzmn was still in good shape. The girl, as yet a bit untamed, seemed overwhelmed by the drive of her glands. Santiago Nasar grabbed her by the wrist when she came to take the empty mug from him."The time has come for you to be tamed," he told her.Victoria Guzmn showed him the bloody knife."Let go of her, white man," she ordered him seriously. "You won't have a drink of that water as long as I'm alive."She'd been seduced by Ibrahim Nasar in the fullness of her adolescence. She'd made love to him in secret for several years in the stables of the ranch, and he brought her to be a house servant when the affection was over. Divina Flor, who was the daughter of a more recent mate, knew that she was destined for Santiago Nasar's furtive bed, and that idea brought out a premature anxiety in her. "Another man like that hasn't ever been born again," she told me, fat and faded and surrounded by the children of other loves. "He was just like his father," Victoria Guzmn answered her. "A shit." But she couldn't avoid a wave of fright as she remembered Santiago Nasar's horror when she pulled out the insides of a rabbit by the roots and threw the steaming guts to the dogs."Don't be a savage," he told her. "Make believe it was a human being."Victoria Guzman needed almost twenty years to understand that a man accustomed to killing defenseless animals could suddenly express such horror. "Good heavens," she explained with surprise. "All that was such a revelation." Nevertheless, she had so much repressed rage the morning of the crime that she went on feeding the dogs with the insides of the other rabbits, just to embitter Santiago Nasar's breakfast. That's what they were up to when the whole town awoke with the earthshaking bellow of the bishop's steamboat.The house was a former warehouse, with two stories, walls of rough planks, and a peaked tin roof where the buzzards kept watch over the garbage on the docks. It had been built in the days when the river was so usable that many seagoing barges and even a few tall ships made their way up there through the marshes of the estuary. By the time Ibrahim Nasar arrived with the last Arabs at the end of the civil wars, seagoing ships no longer came there because of shifts in the river, and the warehouse was in disuse. Ibrahim Nasar bought it at a cheap price in order to set up an import store that he never did establish, and only when he was going to be married did he convert it into a house to live in. On the ground floor he opened up a parlor that served for everything, and in back he built a stable for four animals, the servants' quarters, and a country kitchen with windows opening onto the dock, through which the stench of the water came in at all hours. The only thing he left intact in the parlor was the spiral staircase

rescued from some shipwreck. On the upper floor, where the customs offices had been before, he built two large bedrooms and five cubbyholes for the many children he intended having, and he constructed a wooden balcony that overlooked the almond trees on the square, where Plcida Linero would sit on March afternoons to console herself for her solitude. In the front he kept the main door and built two full-length windows with lathe-turned bars. He also kept the rear door, except a bit taller so that a horse could enter through it, and he kept a part of the old pier in use. That was always the door most used, not only because it was the natural entry to the mangers and the kitchen, but because it opened onto the street that led to the new docks without going through the square. The front door, except for festive occasions, remained closed and barred. Nevertheless, it was there, and not at the rear door, that the men who were going to kill him waited for Santiago Nasar, and it was through there that he went out to receive the bishop, despite the fact that he would have to walk completely around the house in order to reach the docks.No one could understand such fatal coincidences. The investigating judge who came from Riohacha must have sensed them without daring to admit it, for his impulse to give them a rational explanation was obvious in his report. The door to the square was cited several times with a dime-novel title: "The Fatal Door." In reality, the only valid explanation seemed to be that of Plcida Linero, who answered the question with her mother wisdom: "My son never went out the back door when he was dressed up." It seemed to be such an easy truth that the investigator wrote it down as a marginal note, but he didn't include it in the report.Victoria Guzmn, for her part, had been categorical with her answer that neither she nor her daughter knew that the men were waiting for Santiago Nasar to kill him. But in the course of her years she admitted that both knew it when he came into the kitchen to have his coffee. They had been told it by a woman who had passed by after five o'clock to beg a bit of milk, and who in addition had revealed the motives and the place where they were waiting. "I didn't warn him because I thought it was drunkards' talk," she told me. Nevertheless, Divina Flor confessed to me on a later visit, after her mother had died, that the latter hadn't said anything to Santiago Nasar because in the depths of her heart she wanted them to kill him. She, on the other hand, didn't warn him because she was nothing but a frightened child at the time, incapable of a decision of her own, and she'd been all the more frightened when he grabbed her by the wrist with a hand that felt frozen and stony, like the hand of a dead man.Revue de presseMy favourite book by one of the world's greatest authors. You're in the hands of a master (Mariella Frostrup)A work of high explosiveness the proper stuff of Nobel prizes. An exceptional novel. (The Times)A masterpiece (Evening Standard)Brilliant writer, brilliant book (Dan Rhodes, The Guardian)