

# Contrasting elements in chronicle of a death foretold and the assault

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## **Explore the tensions and/or contrasts revealed in chapter 1 of Chronicle of a Death Foretold**

Because of the influence of Colombian society and culture, Gabriel García Márquez's novella "Chronicle of Death Foretold" is compiled of unique characters priding themselves on honor and traditions. It is these traditions and values in this town's society which result in the inevitable death of Santiago Nasar. In the opening chapter, tension over Santiago's death and contrasts in society are created to prompt suspense in the narrative, which keeps the audience engaged. Through characterization of the Vicario twins and foreshadowing, tension is created over Santiago's death, and characterization of Santiago introduces a contrast between men and women in the society.

García Márquez characterizes Pedro and Pablo Vicario in a somewhat deplorable manner, which raises questions in regards to them plotting to kill Santiago and creates this tension. Both are indirectly characterized as being very determined to kill Santiago; even to the point that they were "still wearing their dark wedding suits." Because they did not even bother to change into more casual clothes, this emphasizes how quickly they made their decision to kill Santiago. Their emotions are bitter, and they acted on impulse. Their determination on killing Santiago is also evident when they are "barely awakened with the first bellow of the boat" but instead are awoken "completely when Santiago Nasar came out of his house." García Márquez uses an aspect of magic realism in characterizing Pedro and Pablo to highlight how driven they were to murder Santiago. Since he did not wake

up to the sound of the boat, something which woke up everyone in Santiago's house, but instead woke up completely when Santiago stepped out, shows how important killing Santiago is to them. By characterizing the Vicario twins as individuals who are so keen on murdering Santiago, this raises questions about their motives, which creates tension regarding the mysterious death of Santiago.

Additionally, García Márquez foreshadows the gruesome way in which Santiago is murdered to build on the tension surrounding the strange murder of Santiago. This is done by alluding to images of what Santiago looks like after the murder through animals. In the chapter, Victoria Guzmán “ pulled out the insides of a rabbit by the roots and threw the streaming guts to the dogs.” This depiction of violence can be linked to the violence towards Santiago as foreshadowing because both him and the rabbit are killed brutally. Along with the rabbit, an image of a pig is also mentioned in the first chapter. Santiago is described as a being “ carved up like a pig.” The comparison of Santiago to a pig and the imagery of violence foreshadow Santiago's death by relating him to the butcherous way in which the pig is described. The violence portrayed by both animals foreshadows to the violence Santiago unfortunately faces, which adds a further layer of mystery to Santiago's death since it is foreshadowed that it is very butcherous. This is another way García Márquez creates tension in this chapter.

Apart from tensions, contrasts are also seen in this chapter. García Márquez characterizes Santiago as a clear representation of machismo. Because of this, stark contrasts between the men and women in this society becomes

more evident, which is an important aspect throughout the narrative.

Santiago's father influenced his interests in "firearms, his love for horses, and the mastery of high-flying birds of prey." He also gained attributes such as a "valor and prudence." The fact that Santiago likes all these activities shows how he fits the mold of machismo since these are considered manly activities in their culture. Santiago is also characterized as someone who treats women disrespectfully, which is normal in Colombian culture. This is evident when he grabs Divina Flor and says, "The time has come for you to be tamed." Santiago assumes that "she was destined for [his] furtive bed..." This act characterizes Santiago as a man with virility because he feels entitled to do whatever he wants to women, just like the way he grabbed Divina Flor. This highlights and sets the contrast between men and women in the society and how men have more freedoms, which plays a larger role in the upcoming chapters.

García Márquez uses tensions and contrasts effectively in his narrative to keep the audience engaged. The characterization of Pedro and Pablo being so determined to kill Santiago raises the question of why they want to kill him, which creates tension. Tension over Santiago's death is again built upon with foreshadowing of it through the images of animals being killed. In addition to tensions, García Márquez also creates a contrast between men and women of this society through the machismo characterization of Santiago Nasar. All these literary devices are used in a clear way by García Márquez to create tension and contrast in the first chapter of *Chronicle of a Death Foretold*.