Death Foretold

… my Aunt told me. Then he went into his house through the back door that had been open since six and fell on his face in the kitchen.

In this bishop forsaken village many had opportunities to prevent this tragedy. Some did nothing, and a few could have done more. Some confess to their honorable inaction, and some perplexed by Santiago Nasar’s fate blame others. But Nahir Miguel blamed only himself. He was the last person that could have kept Santiago Nasar behind closed doors. He even had the right to detain Santiago Nasar, and demanded an explanation. He owed at least that much to his daughter, Santiago Nasar’s fiancée. He always recalled his last conversation with Santiago Nasar in a bitter sweet manner. On one hand he was proud of the soundness of options he had proposed to Santiago Nasar. And on the other hand he was shameful of not insisting on them. Nahir Miguel, the old man with red beard, had impressed people with the glow of his authority. But he was not able to take charge of Santiago Nasar the way he took charge of his enraged daughter. He saw the confusion in Santiago Nasar’s pale face but allowed him to walk out into the street. Had he already, in the recesses of his mind, convicted the handsome man of cheating on his daughter? Did machismo get in the way of having a more frank conversation about what the Vicario twins were trying to avenge, and the validity of their claim? Nahir Miguel struggled with these questions for a few years and then he died. He never offered a clear reasoning for what had happened that confusing day, nor did anyone else. Only once in his conversations with me did he attempt to shift the blame away from him. I remember, after consuming noticeable amount of cane liquor for a man that age, he turned to me with a conflicting expression on his face. His lips apart and smiling as if he was about to deliver a funny joke, while his bewildered eyes made dim by age and alcohol failing to mask the guilty look. “The American cowboys got it right” he said “leaving their shooting for the high noon” he continued. “Having to deal with honor, justice, crowing cocks, and the dammed floating holiness of a bishop, in early hours of the morning is just not fair” he finished as his voice trailed in sadness. I am sure even the Vicario twins would not argue if the village elders declared “no honor killing before noon”.