

Love on a Blue Afternoon

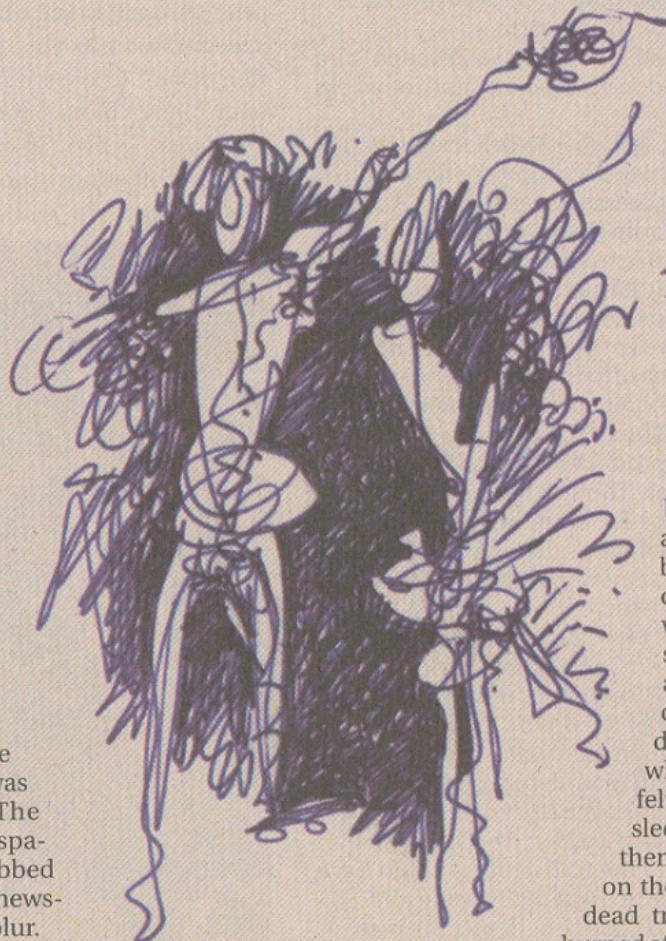
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(Concluding Part)

She could not write more; an inexplicable numbness, it seemed, had grasped her body. She got up, sat on the rocking chair and skimmed through the newspaper. A train of thought shuffled on, badgering her with an uneasy feeling. She knew something bad was in the offing, something grotesque and grisly. She stared vacantly at the sheets of paper she was gripping so tightly. The small print from the newspaper hurt her eyes; she rubbed them and looked at the newspaper. Everything was a blur.

She waddled across and lay on the bed. Nasser was awake but he did not move. Shormi held him from the back and touched his eyes; his eyelids fluttered. He grasped her hand and sighed.

Exasperated, she closed her eyes and saw Bobby walk lazily on the rag with a kitten. It was drizzling outside and it would start pouring heavily soon as she saw a wisp of cloud shading the skyline. The sun was at its low, though it was early in the afternoon; none of them could see



anything. She and Nasser were wading through what looked like a hill of sand; the cat followed. Then the path grew musty and it started to rain heavily. They looked up the sky; suddenly a flash of light came across and they had to close their eyes, dazed and startled. They opened their eyes and an oasis was on the horizon. They thought their steps were so light that it was possible to fly; it was possible to be both body and spirit. Then just as suddenly it had come into being, the oasis dissolved into a dune. Without even knowing where to go; where to hide themselves and from whom, a man and a woman along with their cat walked through. They walked days and nights and at times where day and night looked and felt the same. They did not feel sleep; neither could hunger touch them. They ate everything they got on their way; they peeled the bark of dead trees and ate beetle-grubs, and burped after having grasshoppers.

They did not stop when they reached that elusive oasis. They did not cross the path of any humans; neither did they see any living being. The yellow mosque that they came across was empty of any human presence; she saw the dead, shrouded in cere-ments, waiting for the funeral party to arrive.

They sped out of the mosque and ran through the desert. They ran as if there was no tomorrow. As if nothing but their existence was true. ■