

MANTA RAY  
*presents*  
THE YEAR  
of THE SNAKE

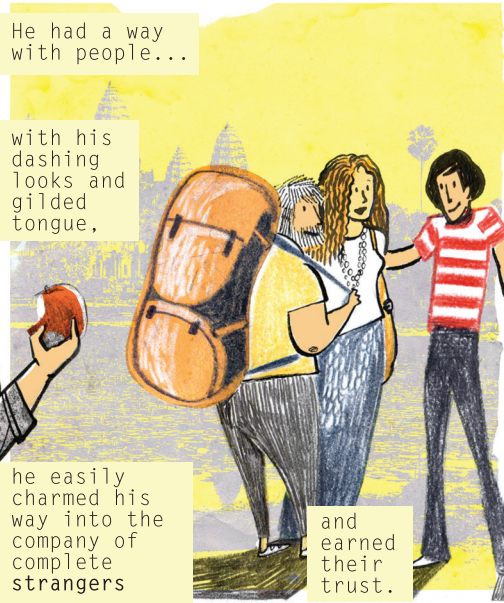


WORDS by  
PRATHEEK  
THOMAS

ART by  
PRABHA  
MALLYA



He was called  
The Serpent.



He had a way  
with people...

with his  
dashing  
looks and  
gilded  
tongue,

he easily  
charmed his  
way into the  
company of  
complete  
strangers

and  
earned  
their  
trust.



He put  
them at  
ease,

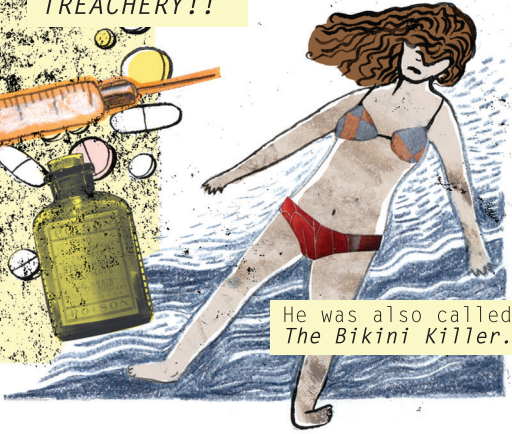
became their  
confidante, a  
trusted friend

and then, at the  
*opportune* moment...

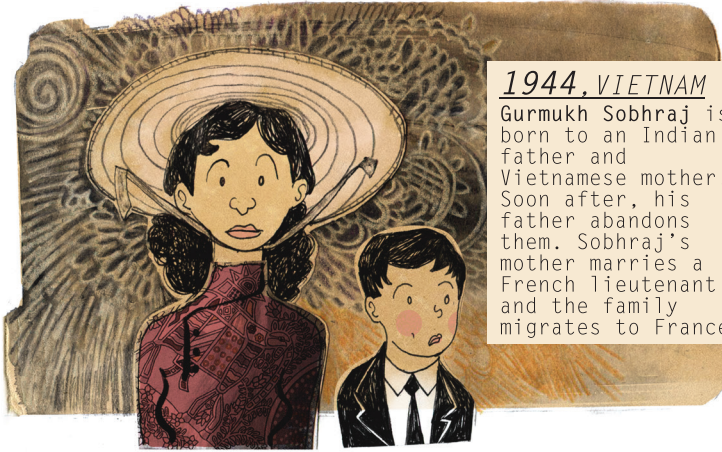


when they were at  
their weakest, their  
most gullible...

**TREACHERY!!**



He was also called  
The Bikini Killer.



1944, VIETNAM  
 Gurmukh Sobhraj is born to an Indian father and Vietnamese mother. Soon after, his father abandons them. Sobhraj's mother marries a French lieutenant and the family migrates to France.



EARLY 1960s, PARIS  
 Sobhraj takes on his Christian name *Charles*. He is sentenced to three years in prison for burglary, released on parole and arrested again sometime later for evading the police in a stolen car.



1970, NEW DELHI  
 Sobhraj is arrested for a failed robbery attempt on a jewellery store in Hotel Asoka. He makes his first escape from the hospital but is captured soon after. After posting bail, he flees to Kabul.



KABUL  
 He runs cons and robs tourists who came east on the hippie trail from Europe. Thrown in jail for non-payment of his hotel rent, he feigns an ulcer and escapes after drugging the hospital guard.



TURKEY.  
GREECE

Sobhraj and his brother André are arrested in Greece after a minor jewel robbery.

Sobhraj pretends to be ill and escapes from the police van on the way to the hospital while André is extradited to Turkey and sentenced to 18 years of hard labour.



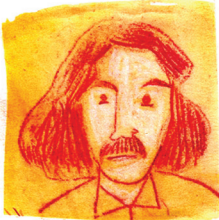
1974 -  
1975. THAILAND.  
KATHMANDU.  
CALCUTTA

Over the course of two years, Sobhraj and his gang are alleged to have murdered ten foreign nationals for their money, passports and travel tickets. They are interrogated twice - in Kathmandu and Thailand - but manage to slip through.



LATE 1975.  
MALAYSIA

Sobhraj is believed to have killed his close confidante and right-hand man Ajay Chowdhury.



1976. NEW DELHI

In July 1976, Sobhraj and his associates pose as guides and attempt to drug a group of French students. However, they are immediately caught and Sobhraj is sentenced to 12 years in prison.



LATE 1986. TIHAR

Indian courts uphold Sobhraj's extradition verdict to Thailand, where he is sure to be put to death.



Dear Richard...\*

...you must have heard what those f---- did. The lousy bastards are going to extradite me.

I didn't think it would turn out like this.

They might as well hang me here.

BAM BAM BAM



Sobhraj, looks like you have *non-veg\** for lunch today. You are one lucky son of a -----.

A man must be allowed his *little luxuries and vices*, jailer saab.



HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA



I never wanted it this way, you know that.

I always thought I'll walk out of here a free man.

But now, I'm being forced.

It will have to be a Greece.

I don't have any other choice.



\* (It is said that) Sobhraj had access to gourmet food and other delicacies while he was at Tihar

MARCH 17, 1986



RAJU BHATNAGAR, ALLEGED KIDNAPPER AND KILLER, SOBHRAJ'S FORMER CELLMATE.



DAVID HALL, ALLEGED HEROIN SMUGGLER, OUT ON BAIL. SOBHRAJ'S CLOSE ASSOCIATE.

TIHAR JAIL



Aaj Charles bhai ka birthday hain. Thoda party-masti ka intezaam kiya hain.

HAPPY BIRTHDAY TO YOU!

BADHAI HO! BADHAI HO!





Charles! I didn't know it was your birthday today!

I'd forgotten it myself, sir. I guess ten years inside this place does that to you.

RETCH

Charles bhaiyya ka favourite hain... Swiss chocolates!

These chocolates are heavenly! Imported hain kya?

What kind of a question is that, warden sir?







Charles Sobhraj escaped from Tihar on the eve of his extradition to Thailand.



3 weeks later, Sobhraj was captured in Goa and sentenced to 10 more years in prison - this had been Sobhraj's plan all along. In the following 10-year period, the warrants against him in Thailand expired, evidence and witnesses were long lost.

Upon his release in 1997, Sobhraj, a free man now, was sent to France, where he lived the life of a celebrity (he was supposedly paid \$15 million for a movie deal and was said to charge up to \$5000 for an interview) until 2003.

Then, for reasons still unclear, Sobhraj returned to Kathmandu and was arrested for the murder of a young Canadian couple in 1975.



He is currently serving a life-term sentence in Nepal.

*It is very likely that this is not the last we've heard of him.*



#### BIBLIOGRAPHY

The letter to Richard Neville and the Tihar jailbreak (or 'Greece' - Sobhraj's code word for it) are referenced & inspired from Richard Neville & Julie Clarke's book **The Life and Crimes of Charles Sobhraj**. References were also taken from the Wikipedia article on Charles Sobhraj and from the article on Sobhraj by Mark Gibben which is archived in the TruTV Crime Library website.