

Joni, Carey and Me

***“The wind is in from Africa and Last night I couldn’t sleep
Oh, you know it sure is hard to leave here Carey, but it’s really not my
home.”***

---Joni Mitchell, Carey from her album Blue, 1971



Joni, Carey and Me

Linda, my best friend in high school, and I are from a tiny pulp and paper town in Northern Ontario called Española. It's about a half hour west of Sudbury. We saved up over a thousand dollars each our last year of high school and planned to travel for, well as long as the money held out.

It's 1970 and the Western world is going through seismic shifts spurred on from the post war economic growth, the pill and free love, the protests over the Vietnam war, racial and civil disturbances throughout the States and an explosion of popular music. We were part of the young, gigantic baby boom generation that had only known peace and prosperity. 18 years old and dying to escape the shackles of small-town life, it was time for us to hop aboard the counterculture Revolution. We dove headfirst along with throngs of other like-minded kids from Canada, the U.S., and Australia onto cheap flights to Europe and beyond—destinations to be discovered!!

Peace, Love, Sex, Drugs and Rock and Roll, here we come!!

"Maria, the ferry leaves in an hour. Let's motor out of here down to the dock."

I was still a bit fuzzy headed from the night before from the weed and wine we'd shared with some other Canadian girls in the youth hostel in Piraeus, the port town just outside of Athens. I'd been resting on my bunk trying to shake off the fog.

"Ok, I'm packed but I can't find my Jewelry!!! I know it was here in my pack. Shit must have been those assholes from England that were hanging around last night. Creepy dudes. I bet they stole my stuff, even took my tampax. Thank the lord I had my passport and travelers' checks tucked inside my sleeping bag."

Linda looked sympathetic, motioning that it was time to leave.

“Sorry, it’s a drag”, she said. “I hear Crete is great for the handmade stuff and we can get some more cheap jewelry there.”

She was right, but I had really liked some of the artisanal stuff we had bought along the way, and I’d spent a lot of time shopping and bartering.

“Penelope, it’s so great to get out of the spotlight and just hang out with you. This fame crap is great, but sometimes I just wish I could disappear. I still love him, but not sure I can do the whole marriage, babies, and long-term thing. Man, I’ll probably regret leaving him, but I have to move on.” Joni, always defiant, smiled but didn’t look that happy.

Penelope had heard this refrain so many times from her famous friend, it was starting to grate on her. But she nodded and listened as always. Wow she thought, you have everything and what the hell do I have?

“France and Spain have been great, but it’s hard to be invisible. Let’s fly to Greece, at least it will be warmer this time of year and perhaps we can disappear for a bit.”

In Athens, few people recognized her, and they both had long hair and dressed like the other hippie travelers, so they just blended in.

“Sheepy, Sheepy, Matala, Matala there’s lots of your own kind there,” several macho looking middle-aged Greek men yelled out and pointed at them in unison as they were leaving the Acropolis.

“What the hell are they saying,” Penelope asked a young backpacker from Holland who was walking with them.

“I think it means Hippie, Hippie, go to Matala in Crete and join the other sheep.”
He shrugged.

The Ferry to Heraklion, on the North Coast of Crete departed at 4pm and we had to hurry along the narrow streets of Piraeus half running with our heavy back packs, Canadian Flags sewn prominently on the top. The old ship, second world war vintage was already boarding when we arrived, and we lugged our gear up the rickety boarding ramp. It was not a luxury craft. An aging deck hand in a dishevelled black T-Shirt and cap was taking tickets and looked disinterested barely looking at another couple of hippies.

The Ferry was an overnight trip that would get us to Crete the next morning at 9am. It had several sleeping options. Bunk beds in cabins, below deck, the size of a large telephone booth- the first-class tickets. The other, to crash on a wooden chair scattered around the deck or on the deck floor itself, the more comfortable of the two. We only had enough for the deck option so we rushed to claim a few feet near the bow where there might be a breeze and laid out our sleeping bags in conquest.

The smattering of other rag tag long hairs did not mix well with the local Greeks, mostly transient workers and poor families returning home from the mainland. They probably thought we were Gypsies or worse as we were mostly in jeans or cut off shorts, bandanas and looking and smelling like there was a severe shortage of soap and water. They kept their distance. Shaggy long haired freaks were still a rare but growing occurrence.

It was late January, quite cool in Athens and time to find warmer digs. The winter winds on the Aegean Sea were picking up and the ocean was tossing us around as soon as we chugged out of the Piraeus harbour. A decrepit ship, it

started rolling and heaving which did not help my already queasy stomach. This kept up for the whole voyage to Crete, so eating was not an issue.

Linda who was in better shape than me from the night before and generally had a stronger constitution, had been exploring the boat while I snoozed off. She plopped down beside me on the deck about an hour after we had sailed.

“Man Maria, there are a bunch of cool freaks hanging out in the old swimming pool near the stern. Let’s go back and join them. We can leave our bags here...should be ok.”

“A pool.” I brightened up. “Can we swim in the buff,” I joked.

I had grown up with very liberal parents from Eastern Europe who’d taken refuge in Canada after living in various internment camps for five years after the war. My father had hand built a wonderful cabin when I was six, on a tiny island on a secluded lake just north of Georgian Bay which we called Shangri-La. My family always enjoyed the freedom of swimming nude in the summer on the secluded island, so it was the most natural thing in the world for me to feel that way. True Freedom!

“You can swim if you want, but there is only a teaspoon full of water near the drain in the pool.” She said sarcastically.

Happy to meet some of our fellow travelers, I followed her back to the pool, careful to carry my valuables with me. Seven or eight fellow young adventurers were spread out on the slopping floor of a 10 by 15-foot hole which at one time had been a working pool. It smelled faintly of urine and vomit and with the rocking, I felt even more nauseous. They all looked stoned and were giggling and seemed to be quite happy with the accommodations. Some had already staked out spots for the overnight sojourn. One of the girls with dirty blond hair was playing a wooden flute, and the others were singing along to a Bob Dylan tune, drumming with anything available.

I stayed only a few minutes as I felt like heaving and started back alone to the front of the ship where the wind at least provided some relief. Linda wanted to

stay and sat down beside a cute Australian guy taking a toke as a reefer floated by.

Tap, Tap, Tap. I heard the sound behind me in the narrow corridor on the way back to the bow.

“Hey Beautiful Blond. Where you off to?”

I spun around and almost stumbled forward into this guy who was walking towards me.

“Join me for a while. Let’s get to know each other,” he said as though it was a forgone conclusion that I would be interested.

A striking apparition with a flaming red beard and piercing Safire eyes reached out to steady me. He had a grimy white turban around his head and wore a flowing dusty Kaftan robe. He gripped an old wooden hooked shepherd’s cane in his right-hand, which accounted for the tapping. In the other he was carrying a square aluminum suitcase, also unusual for a young traveler. On his feet he had high laced well-worn handmade leather boots. Gleaming teeth radiated from a slightly cocky smile.

“Man, you have the most enchanting hair to go with those long legs. I thought you were an angel the way you floated along.” His spoke with a distinct southern accent, which reminded me of Rhett Butler from **Gone with The Wind**.

“Well, I’m just going to rest up front. Not feeling so great.” I mumbled slightly intimidated by this intriguing creature, clearly six or seven years older than me and more sophisticated than the usual guys we were used to meeting on the road, most just out of high school like us.

“Hey that’s where I was headed too. I want to show you something.” His eyes widened to add a tinge of excitement.

“OK, sure,” I muttered, fascinated by this mysterious dude.

I spread my sleeping bag out so we could sit down together beside one of the few lifeboats strapped to the side of the ship, placing my pack between us trying to distance myself from him as best I could.

“I’m Maria, from Canada. Been travelling for over a month now. My friend Linda and I landed in Luxembourg, and we’ve been hitching down through Germany, France, Italy and Greece.” I was babbling on as he was digging through his embroidered woven bag for something. I’m not sure he was even listening.

“Canadian eh,” he said mocking. “Don’t say you’re sorry, eh.” He said sardonically.

“Well, we try to be polite.” Canadian manners you know.” I said defensively.

“No worries, you’re too gorgeous to apologize for anything.”

With a flourish he pulled out a clay pipe and dug out the biggest piece of dark hash I think I’d ever seen that he kept in a carved wooden box.

“Smell this sweet shit”. Cost me \$5 dollars in Afghanistan. Best I’ve ever had. Better than Nepalese, Moroccan, and Tibetan.”

“You’ve been to all those countries. Man... how long have you been on the road? You carry that around, crossing borders and all? Maybe a little Dangerous?”

“Well honey, I like a little danger you know. So far so good.” He grinned as he looked me up and down.

His southern charm and swagger were starting to irritate me, but still he was amusing, and the drugs did look appetizing.

“I’ve never seen a pipe like this one.”

“It’s a chillum, an ancient Indian ritual instrument. It must be handled with care.” He bowed and showed me how to hold it with his hands under the base. With a small dirty red rag wrapped around, he held it upright and took a long deep inhale

before handing the chillum and cloth back to me. His eyes were closed, holding his breath for several seconds as if in prayer.

“This is a sacred garment that has been dipped in the holy waters of the Ganges by Hindu priests. It purifies the smoke and is the proper way to sanctify the procedure.”

I thought he was joking at first, but he seemed so earnest that I had to stifle a laugh. He handed me the pipe and the “sacred garment” and I took a couple of deep drags, which relaxed me, and I started to feel more comfortable.

“Carey’s my name, from North Carolina. Been on the road for over a year now. Plan to winter it out on the islands. Crete is very cool.” He reached for my hand, probing into my eyes. I moved away and he retreated looking a little surprised. Surely with those looks, most woman found it hard to resist his charms, yet I was just a kid from the boonies and was still quite shy.

“I’m going to read you some of my poetry. I love to write,” now turning up the charm offensive.

With some fanfare he pulled out a well-worn notebook and found the right poem for me. He droned on for a few pages and then closed it announcing it was his best work.

“You know I was in Crete for a couple of months last year. Me and a friend took a van across Asia collecting stuff for my leather business and a few other trinkets along the way,” glancing at the box of hash. “I swam in the Ganges River and rode a camel across the Khyber Pass. Man, what a trip. Matala though is the best. Living in the caves and the cool cats that hang on the beach. It’s so hip, man. And it’s warm in the winter”

I loved to hear travel stories and really hadn’t planned where else to go after Crete, so he was giving me some ideas.

“Sounds a little scary going through those countries,” I perked up.

“Hell no. People are very hospitable and its dirt cheap, Man. Y’all gotta go. I’ll go back again after winter to get more stuff for my business. We can go together. Maybe even take the Magic Bus.” He flashed another grin, now convinced he’d snared me.

We partied on with the rest of the gang back at the pool most of the night, and dozed off and on, slightly nauseous still from the rocky voyage. Carey was the life of the party, pulling out a bottle of Ouzo and passing it around along with the great hash that seemed endless, and regaling us with stories of his travels. He continued his advances, but I moved over beside some other girls to avoid him, unsure that I could handle such a big personality. When we arrived at the port in Crete that morning, bleary eyed, but dazzled by the beauty of the island we stumbled down the loading plank on to terra firma.

Heraklion is the largest city and capital of Crete which is also the largest and most well-known of the Greek Islands. Behind the harbour the old city rises above nestled upon low hills showing off the beautiful white and blue painted buildings and small houses. A bustling port and commercial city, the sheltered bay is protected by an imposing 17th century fort built by the Turks during the Ottoman Empire. Many invaders have conquered Crete over the millennia, which was originally the heart of one of the earliest Western advanced civilizations, the Minoans going back almost 5000 years. They were invaded by the early Greeks, the Romans, the Byzantine Empire, the Arabs and then Ottomans before Crete finally joined Greece again in 1910. Greek mythology is full of references to Cretan/Minoan gods and characters and the island is a feast of archeological treasures.

Carey was travelling with another younger guy from the States, Charlie who seemed to be enthralled with his compatriot following him around like a disciple. They already had a ride arranged to Matala, so he bid goodbye and kissed me on the lips with a long lingering embrace. I went red.

“Darlin Maria will see ya’all in Matala. The bus leaves from over at that building every two hours. Maria, love ya doll. Can’t wait to snuggle with you in the caves,” he said in a whisper with a wink. “You can find me at the Delphini restaurant or the Mermaid Café. Everyone knows Carey”

All night I had fended him off but admit that I was a wee bit bedazzled by this flaming, larger than life red devil.

The bumpy bus ride across the island took a couple of hours, but the scenery traversing the rugged mountainous island was dazzling. Bridges traversed deep gorges and we could see the mystical snow-capped Mt. Ida in the distance which soars over 8000 ft. Several locals were also on the bus. An old woman with a goat and a young man returning home from working in the port.

Linda and I and the other six foreign nomads were relieved to arrive in the small beach town of Matala on the Southern Coast. At the time Matala was not the major tourist attraction that it would become, but we felt the magic of something special as soon as we stepped off the bus, a destination mainly still for hippies, sheep and goats.

Linda and I decided to break away from the others to find a place to crash. We'd heard that some foreigners were staying in the ancient caves carved into a cliff facing the crescent beach which sounded exotic, so we tried to beat the others over there to find out more. Before we got there some locals told us that there was nothing available, but they offered us a tiny one room cement hut to rent for a few dollars a night, near the cliffs with two single beds and a place to cook with our camping stove.

Exhausted, we both crashed for several hours in our new digs and emerged in the late afternoon eager to explore more of Matala.

Joni and Penelope arrived in Matala in a rented VW van, that had flowers and peace signs covering the entire vehicle. After a quick look around, they found an available hut near the beach. It was the perfect place to hang and drop out for a while, Joni thought. Of course, she could afford any hotel, but she wanted to get back down to earth, and these were the best accommodations in town.

She was using the name Jane in her travels, at that point in her career she was already famous for her wonderful folk and soaring passionate songs. She still

wasn't in the ranks of superstardom so not everyone knew her music. Her song about Woodstock had still not been released, but it was about to explode later that year and send her career and fame into the stratosphere.

It was hot that first afternoon and Linda and I wandered over to Matala's main attraction, the beautiful, curved pebble beach rimmed by impressive formations of sandstone rock cliffs, which slide into the sea into Matala Bay. It creates one of the most unusual beachscapes on the island. One of the cliffs has numerous carved out tombs and caves which over the centuries had become mythical. The caves were ancient burial sites, but some are big enough for a couple of people to sleep and walk around so it's hard to believe that they were only tombs. They had originally housed lepers at the end of the Stone Age and then the Romans used them as burial crypts. When the hippies arrived in the late 60's searching for peace and enlightenment, the caves became the coolest hotel in town.

The water was calm, and the low light of the afternoon accentuated the sparkling emerald waters where several long-haired kids were still swimming and snorkelling or just lying stoned on the beach. A few of them were from the ferry, and we hugged and laughed like long lost friends. The famous caves were dotted with people out front on the balcony like rocks, playing guitars, cooking, or hanging up clothing to dry in the sun and breeze.

The quiet fishing village and bay is a safe natural harbour, the clear emerald waters are abundant with aquatic life, and are perfect for snorkelling and swimming.

The Mermaid Café is a humble restaurant and bar nestled in the village overlooking the bay that was a magnet for locals and travelers. The locals, simple people were puzzled by the strange long-haired invaders and tended to keep their distance. There were often Greek soldiers who were more adventurous and joined in with the foreign crowd that was always ready to party. This and the Delphini restaurant were the only places in town to hang out and the hippy community had effectively expropriated these spots.

Ouzo and Raki, two cheap and powerful local drinks flowed, and the restaurant sold simple local dishes of fresh fish, seafood and lamb and vegetables, a welcome break from our main staple of omelets and tomatoes. It was a luxury for us to eat here often, but we started hanging out most evenings to catch the vibe, smoking a lot of dope and drinking with the others. The soldiers sometimes bought us drinks, ever hopeful to score with the young foreign girls. There was always music, usually rock and roll wafting through along with the omnipresent sweet smell of hash and weed. Most of locals were gone after sunset, leaving us to party until the wee hours.

Linda and I wandered up from the beach and heard Beatle music drifting down from the Mermaid as we approached. We found a spot outside on the patio and settled in for our first real meal in several days. Fried Calamari with a few steamed vegetables washed down by Raki to aid digestion! It wasn't long before some of our new friends from the beach found us and we settled in for a wonderful sunset over the Libyan Sea, looking out over the islands towards Africa. Sometimes the wind blows hot and sandy from that southern continent.

He saw us first and with his usual flamboyance approached our table and pulled up a chair beside me. He looked taller, perhaps it was a different turban. Flourishing his shepherd's cane like a conductor's baton he gave me a giant hug.

"Carey, you found us." Linda was the first to greet him. He semi ignored her though focusing his energy on me. Linda turned her attention to Charlie who as always brought up the rear. He seemed like a gentle soul.

"I started work again today as head chef at the Delphini," he laughed. "I'm the best dam cook they've ever had. Took me back the minute I walked in."

"A poet, a chef, a fashion icon, what else haven't you told me," I joked with a mock bow, staring into those incredible eyes.

"Maria, the talents of a great man emerge like clear water bubbling up from the ground. You will learn more soon enough."

I think he believed his own lines.

Charlie scoffed.

“You’re full of shit Man, no wonder your hair’s so red.”

Everyone laughed and Carey bought the table a round of drinks, feeling flush no doubt after working all day.

We partied on for several hours, and Carey laid on the southern charm, which I continued to half resist. I was afraid to go back to our hut alone along the dark path and Linda was having too much fun, so I hung in as long as possible, until finally Linda agreed to go with me and get some sleep. Carey insisted on walking back with us as the path to the caves intersected our path. He said he and Charlie had the biggest cave and he was going to cook me a fantastic meal one night. As we split up, he made a last attempt to entice me to his digs, while Charlie worked on Linda. I resisted but offered a hug and a peck of a kiss but held strong. Linda fended off her suitor reluctantly, probably taking my lead, and we crashed exhausted from the general lack of sleep and travel.

Over the next few days, I spent most of my time swimming, meditating, reading, and indulging in my new hobby macramé, making hanging plant pots and wall hangings. I was able to sell these for a few dollars to friends and even some locals, which helped pay for food and drink. Linda often went out alone during the day exploring the village and hanging out with the crowd on the beach.

Carey showed up unannounced at our hut. It was late afternoon. I was just starting to prepare the evening omelet and we had planned to go up to the Mermaid to catch the sunset after dinner. He was armed with fresh fish and two bottles of Ouzo.

“Ladies I am here to show you the art of fine cuisine. I’m not working tonight and have been dying to see you stunning creatures from the Great White North.”

This time he was more civil with Linda and made her feel welcome.

“Where’s Charlie?”

“Linda, Charlie left this morning. Off exploring the island with some dudes we met who have a car.”

Linda looked disappointed but didn't mind the new attention she was receiving from Carey.

“We only have this little one burner camping stove and we're low on fuel, but your offer sounds delicious,” I chimed in.

Like a magician, he pulled out of his ever-present woven bag, a full gas canister that miraculously fit our burner.

We spent the evening eating olive oil sauteed fish, smoking copious amounts of hash and downed the Ouzo laughing at his outrageous stories about his drug smuggling travels across Asia. At one point Carey jumped up, then stood on his head and started reciting poetry. He loved to entertain. Both Linda and I were entranced, and he started making gestures towards the bed. Even though it was the age of free love, and we were not innocent about sex, I could not cross that line of sharing a partner with a friend. Linda seemed intrigued but eventually we both agreed not to go that route.

By midnight, Carey's energy finally dissolved. Disappointed, he mumbled that he had to work the early shift at the restaurant the next day and kissed us goodbye.

“Man, I had a blast with you two.” He said with a slightly defeated grin.

“A Southern Gentleman knows when it's time to say goodnight. I give you, my leave.” He stumbled out the door and meandered over to his cave.

Joni and Penelope had been wandering around discovering the village when they heard a small explosion from just down the street. A guy with wild red curly hair and beard stumbled out of the Delphini restaurant covered in smoke and shaking, looking lucky to be alive. He did not appear injured, but Joni couldn't take her eyes off him. He was dressed in a white Nehru shirt and cotton pants and had a gold heart in one ear and a gold loop in the other. He looked at his singed hands

and feet, yelling obscenities at the gathering crowd and re-entered the smoky building. Later they learned he had been lighting the gas stove and someone lit a cigarette blowing him out on the street.

Joni thought, this dude sure knows how to make an entrance!!

That evening they went up to the Delphini restaurant for dinner.

“Where can I throw this garbage.” Joni asked as a pretence to talk to the chef who was still covered with a trace of black soot from earlier in the day. She had some orange rinds and chocolate wrappers from the beach in her pockets, not wanting to litter.

“Throw them on the floor,” he snarled. What do I look like, a garbage man?”

Not used to being talked to this way, they left without sitting down and wandered over instead to the Mermaid Café, which was getting going for the night. Still, Joni could not get him out of her head. He was so unlike the other hippy freaks, the way he carried himself, obviously older, arrogant more worldly. But interesting and bloody gorgeous, she thought.

“Maria, you are not going to believe who I just met at the Mermaid tonight.” Linda was drunk but coherent and had woken me from the first great sleep I’d had in a while.

“What time is it?”

“Joni Fucking Mitchell was schmoozing with us. She’s trying to keep low key, but everyone knows who she is. Its cool though. She was just hanging out with us like one of the gang. Man, I have two of her albums.”

As Canadian’s Joni Mitchell was already a goddess for us. Her music sublime.

“She’s here in Matala? Not touring around Europe in a limo?” I chirped up wiping away my sleep.

“Guess who she was draped over and dancing with most of the night. They looked like lovebirds,” Linda said coyly.

I imagined she was going to tell me that she was there with Graham Nash. It was well known she had been living with him in L.A.

“Carey!! Carey has her wrapped up tightly in his turban.”

I felt a pang of something. Maybe jealousy, who knows.

“I’d love to meet her. Do you think she’ll be here for long? Where’s she staying?” I tried not to sound disappointed about Carey, but she could see I was hurt.

“I doubt she’ll stay here long, considering how dumpy we all live. She’s got to be rich.” We both cracked up and I went back to bed.

Joni and Carey became inseparable. That first night she was in Matala when he wandered into the Mermaid, she started buying rounds for everyone. He wasted no time sitting down with her and Penelope, who could see right away the chemistry bubbling between them. Penelope had spotted a handsome group of soldiers at another table and fell in with them. It was the last she and Joni would see each other for a couple of years.

Most of the hippy community tried to give Joni Mitchell her space, and after the initial excitement she became one of us, unassuming, friendly and down to earth. She moved into Carey’s cave the next day and that was it, instant romance!!

A bit disappointed, but also kind of relieved that Carey was preoccupied, I went about my life with little change. I avoided the Mermaid for a couple of days, where Linda said Joni and Carey were always hanging out and I was enjoying some inner peace, mediating, and doing yoga several times a day, walking and swimming.

One evening I went up to the café with Linda as they were having a special seafood night. I was starved for some decent food and ready for company and a party. Besides I was dying to meet my musical idol and to hell with that guy anyway. Five or six hippies were crowded around a table on the outdoor patio and Joni and Carey were among them. She was already a bit drunk and buying rounds for the gang. I ended up sitting at the other end of the table, as far away as possible from Carey.

She looked over and smiled as Linda introduced me as “the other Canadian in Matala.”

“Welcome Maria, my brethren. Oh Canada!!” With that she downed a shot of raki and smashed her glass down on the floor and several others followed her lead.

Carey did not even look up, busy writing something, maybe a poem in his ever-present notebook. It hurt to be ignored by him, but he had snared a much bigger fish.

A large water hookah was on the table, and everyone took turns passing it around. The air smelled of sweet hash, pungent Greek cigarettes, and fried food. I was happy to escape the hut and it didn’t take long for me to catch up with the rest of the gang.

Joni did seem unaffected and made several attempts to speak to me from across the table. After a while, a chair opened beside her, and she motioned me over.

“So, you’re also from small town Canada, just like me. I’m a simple prairie girl you know. Isn’t it great to see the big city lights Paris, London, Madrid and of course Matala!!” Joni was flying but still quite lucid.

“You know I feel so liberated. Greece and this island are wonderful. Maybe I’ll just stay here. Nobody out there really knows quite where I am right now so it’s a fantastic feeling, she whispered in my ear.”

Joni, like her new beau Carey was older than most of the hippy crowd in our group, but still youthful with long blond hair, high cheekbones, clear porcelain skin and a dazzling smile. She also had a wicked sense of humour.

“Man, you two look like sisters.” Norbert from Germany exclaimed as he was passing me the hookah. Joni grinned at me and pushed back my hair.

“Hey little sis, we’re family.”

She had several silver necklaces, rings, and bracelets on, and she took pains to show me the special meaning each one had for her. One she had bought in Madrid in an expensive shop, a reminder of her mother’s wedding ring. Another from Paris was for an old love, maybe Graham Nash. Her eyes glistened and for a moment she looked sad. I told her that I’d had some cheap jewelry ripped off in Athens and she started pulling off a lovely silver bracelet to give me. I insisted that I couldn’t accept it but thanked her and thought how sweet that was.

“Joni, your music is fantastic. It makes me so happy when I hear it. I love your album Clouds and think I wore out my copy over the last year.” I was gushing but held back from saying more as I could see it making her squirm. She gave me a warm hug and said nothing more.

At that moment, Carey pulled her up to dance. He gave me a side glance, probably wanting to keep Joni away from me.

Life continued peacefully for the next few weeks, and we settled into our own routines, sometimes rowdy, and sometimes just hanging and enjoying the warmth and beauty of the sun, sea, and carefree existence. Many of the hippies would wander around the beach nude, lighting fires, much to the chagrin of the conservative locals. Music always seemed to be in the air with someone playing a guitar or banging on something to make a beat. Every few nights a bunch of us would gather in someone’s cave and share food. Sometimes it was in Carey and Joni’s two room version, one of the largest caves on the cliffs. Some of the rooms had bones that had been dug up, and some of the hippies would make bracelets out of the teeth and vertebrae and fingers. We called it Roman Art. When the

locals saw this, they were particularly angry and threatened to call the police as the hippies were encroaching more and more on their simple village.

We would often see Joni wandering around town with her dulcimer. She also sat out front of her cave on the rocky outcrop, stumming away with the simple stringed instrument on her lap and singing quietly. She appeared to be composing new songs, as often she would play the same phrase over and over, like a mantra changing it as it evolved. A few of us would gather and listen and she did not seem to mind. It was very low key, but exciting to know you were in the presence of so much talent.

Carey was ever present at the Delphini cooking or at the Mermaid partying and sometimes dropped by to say hello to me and Linda, but any romantic interest seemed to have died out since meeting Joni. Linda saw him and Joni more than I did as after our tete a tete in the Mermaid I reverted to my own more introverted activities.

One night I was on my way up to the town from our hut and bumped into Joni on the path as she was coming from the Mermaid. It was about 9pm and she was alone on her way to their cave. We sat down beside the path a patch of stones and grass on the hillside, and she confided that she'd had a real barn burner of a tiff with Carey. I'm sure she had no idea that Carey had been pursuing me before she'd arrived, and I was not about to tell her.

"Maria. Man he can be so difficult. Sometimes I like that in a way, but he can be cruel. I think he hates women. So different from the sweetie I left behind in L.A., but as always we're attracted to opposites." She was tipsy and high and was wearing her vulnerable side. She needed to talk to someone, especially another woman.

I nodded in understanding and wanted to hug her but held back. Perhaps I was a bit envious but didn't want Joni to know that and deep down felt lucky she was the one dealing with him and not me.

"We had a huge fight today, as usual over nothing, but it was so like him."

“We decided to walk to that town on the road to Heraklion to buy something other than the usual here for dinner. It was just nice to get out and escape this scene. We walked for about five miles and shit I didn’t have good hiking boots, so I wrecked my nice soft leather shoes on the stones.” She was rambling.

“Super-hot day, like what were we thinking?”

“I saw a beautiful piece of driftwood and picked it up telling him that it looked like an ancient Greek god...you know my artsy side. He says it’s just an old piece of wood, leave it and kicked it away. It really ticked me off how crude he can be, but kinda crazy fun too you know.”

“How long do you think you’ll stay here in Crete?” I asked trying to shift the subject away from Carey.

“Linda and I will probably head out in a few weeks as we’re running low on money. Likely go to London as I have some friends there and will try to work and save up for more travel. Maybe Israel. You can work for room and board on a Kibbutz. We met some people in Germany who had spent a year there and it sounded like a real trip.”

Joni replied. “I don’t know. Some days I would just love to keep wandering around, see more of Greece and maybe Morocco with the other freaks. Another side of me misses the excitement. Look at my hair, its filthy and matted. My clothes are disgusting, and my manager must be having conniptions by now as I vanished about two months ago. Also, this guy Carey is driving me up a wall, she smiled coyly. Very physical, brings out the animal in me.”

That sent a little shiver down my spine, but I nodded knowingly.

“I got a little secret Maria. Its Carey’s birthday in a couple of days and I’m going to get him a bunch of Micky Mouse chocolate bars. You know the trading cards with all the Disney characters that they have here in Greece. It’s so funny but he collects them. I also have a little ditty for him too, just working it out. She laughed. Listen.”

She sat up and sang “Last night I couldn’t sleep, the sea was full of sheep.... or something like that. Still working on it.” She sung it haltingly, like she was still formulating it.

I recognized the reference as the locals would use that expression when the sea was choppy, “the whitecaps looked like sheep”. It went on about Carey and the rustic life we were living and her restlessness about fame versus the simple life.

“That’s really cool, captures Matala really well.” I said thinking that it was not one of her best songs, but the tune was catchy.

Joni got up and said she had to get back to her drawing which was a great passion. Maybe she felt she was getting too personal.

“That’s how I work out my fears and desires. See ya soon little sister.” She hugged me and blue me a kiss.

Woodstock had exploded the previous summer in 1969, and was already legendry as one of the most important counterculture events of the era. I’d heard a lot about it and even tried to get tickets as it would have been easy to get there from Ontario. The music from Woodstock was everywhere. Everybody was buying records of the bands that had played and TV was a buzz with reports about the wild festival that seemed to embody the spirit of the age... Peace and love and great music.

Later that night on my way home from the Mermaid, I could hear her voice and the simple chords of her dulcimer strumming out a tune wafting down from the caves on the cliff. It was late and I imagined she probably works a lot on her music and art at night. It sounded like a wistful ballad, and I recognized the word Woodstock. I’d heard that Joni was supposed to have played the festival the past summer, but for some reason missed it. Maybe she was writing a song about the wild event. I sat out front of my hut and listened to her gentle and sweet voice. The stars were blazing in the moonless sky as there was so little ambient light. I looked up at the cliffs and imagined that it was an ancient night and her strumming and sweet refrain transcended time. A musical goddess.

I was passing by the Delphini a couple of days later and poked my head in to see if Carey was there. A waiter named Ron said that he'd gone off with his lady in her rented VW Hippy mobile for an island tour and may not come back any time soon. I was always amazed at how people came and went at a moment's notice. He said that Carey had been in a scuffle with some other dude the previous night, something that happened often with him, and maybe he needed to disappear for a while.

That was the last time I saw Joni and Carey. Linda and I headed back to Athens and to London a couple of weeks later. While in Jerusalem months after, I ran into one of our Matala gang who told me that apparently Joni and Carey had stayed on Crete another few weeks after us and then went back to Europe together but knew little more.

About a year later, after I had returned to Canada and was saving up for more travel adventures, I read that Joni had just released a new album called **Blue**. I ran out to buy it and raptly listened to every song. The words spoke to me. I heard Joni's ambivalence, her joy and her longing for love. The energy of life. **Blue** had several references to her time in Matala in our hippy community and of course included the timeless song about Carey, her "ditty" that she previewed for me for on his birthday. Joni also mentioned him in her song **California** the "red, red rogue". Her song Woodstock by then had stormed across the world. What a thrill for me to have heard these immortal works by a great artist emerging as they did from Joni's creative process.

She had truly captured the essence of the man and the charming untouched island of Crete in those days, and the fun we had there, something I will always cherish.

This summer in 2021, during the pandemic that is still haunting the world, Joni's album **Blue**, turned fifty. Blue is often considered her masterpiece and was honoured by many artists and music critics worldwide. In 1999 the album was

admitted to the Grammy Hall of Fame and is ranked as one of the greatest of all time.

***“Oh Carey, get out your cane, I’ll put on some silver,
We’ll go to the Mermaid Café and have fun tonight.
I said oh you’re a mean old daddy but you’re out of sight.”***

Written by David Goldfield as told to me by my friend Maria Welyhorskyj. September, 2021



Joni and Carey



Maria



Joni and her dulcimer and silver jewellery



Matala



Matala Beach



Matala Caves and Burial Crypts



Hippies Camped out in the Caves



The Mermaid Cafe



Maria and Linda's Hut



Linda admiring Mt. Ida



Village Folk



Feta Cheese Makers in Matala