Abdelkader Stage Project (Middle School Version)

By T. Gregory Argall

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Scene: Either in front of the curtain or against a bare stage, the HISTORIAN steps out. The HISTORIAN will be our guide through the vignettes, providing additional follow up details, as needed.

HISTORIAN

It has been said that Emir Abdelkader was many things to many people. Today, we are going to give you a small sample of some of those many people, telling their stories and, through them, telling his.

BLACKOUT

The following vignettes can be presented in whatever order you choose. They are each stand-alone stories, not dependent on each other. The scene entitled BOOKEND BACK should be presented last as a closer.
Formative Years: Childhood and Education

**MUHI: A FATHER’S LESSON**

**Vocabulary**
- **donning**: putting on an item of clothing
- **legacy**: something handed down to the next generation

HISTORIAN
The year is 1816. Abd el-Kader’s father MUHI AL-DINI stands in his tent speaking to a SERVANT who is assisting with the **donning** of his robes.

MUHI
Today my son will be thirteen years of age.

SERVANT
Yes, sir, you must be very proud.

MUHI
Proud and inspired and, I must admit, more than a little concerned about the future.

SERVANT
For what reason could you fear your son’s future?

MUHI
My son, Abd el-Kader, is a wonderful student. He has absorbed all that he has been taught, with an eager appetite for learning. He is already a teacher himself, instructing others on the Koran. He makes my heart swell with pride.

SERVANT
This is all good and well, so why are you concerned about his future?

MUHI
It is not his future of which I am worried about, but my own. A father’s duty is to teach his son, and my intention was to continue teaching him for many more years, but...

SERVANT
Yes, my master?

MUHI
I am not certain how much more he will be able to learn from me. His own studies will soon surpass mine.

SERVANT
If I may, your duty as father and teacher is to ensure that he never stops learning, whether the teachings come from you or from others. Your duty is to not only instill the knowledge, but also to reinforce the teachings, to make sure he applies what he has learned.
MUHI

(\textit{Smiles})

You are wise, my friend.

SERVANT

You are the wise one. My duty is but to serve. Sometimes, serving the wise requires that one remind them that their wisdom matters. What was it you taught young Abd about a Muslim’s duty to others?

MUHI

That Muslims have a duty to pray for and contribute to the well-being of all people, not simply that of fellow Muslims.

SERVANT

Yes, and that final distinction, "not just fellow Muslims but all people," is what will make your son a great man and a great leader someday. That will be your \textit{legacy}.

MUHI

Yes, but, if--

SERVANT

A teacher must not only teach the lesson but also ensure that the lesson is not forgotten. As the student gains more and more knowledge, he must also be reminded of the foundation upon which that knowledge is housed.

MUHI

Thank you for your words of kindness and guidance. Now, it is time to see to Abd el-Kader’s lesson today, before we begin his birthday celebrations. And I promise you, I will continue to teach him, even if the lesson is simply that a man is always learning.

\textbf{BLACKOUT}
Colonial War in Regency of Algiers, 1830-1847

PRISONER EXCHANGE

Vocabulary

- **restrained**: careful, controlled
- **unflinching**: not showing fear or hesitation in the face of danger or difficulty
- **wary**: showing caution

**General Bugeaud**

Bishop Dupuch

**HISTORIAN**

GENERAL BUGEAUD [BOO Zhoe] sits at his desk, pen in hand, composing a speech to inspire the French troops.

BUGEAUD

"A restrained approach is a dangerous one. One does not make war with charity but with..." with... with **unflinching** determination? Yes, that is it. "Unflinching determination. Our enemy is..." No. "We face an enemy..." That sounds better; it will inspire them. "We face an enemy without Christian compassion, a merciless opponent who is little more than a savage beast." Truly that will fire up the troops. "And savage beasts are meant to be killed and--"

*(BISHOP DUPUCH [Dew PUSH] knocks on the door to BUGEAUD’s office.)*

DUPUCH

General Bugeaud? If I may have a moment of your time?

BUGEAUD

Bishop Dupuch, yes, of course. Come in, Your Excellency, come in, come in. I was just composing a speech to inspire the troops in our quest to crush and defeat the Muslim savage, the so-called Emir, Abd el-Kader.
DUPUCH
(uncertain)

Yes... regarding that...

BUGEAUD
(wary)

Yes..?

DUPUCH
You see, General, I was approached by a woman, a young mother and wife, who explained to me that her husband was a French soldier who had the misfortune of being captured by the Algerian resistance, the Muslim rebels. Understandably, she was concerned for his continued survival and fearful that she would never see him again. She pleaded with me to do all I could to secure his release, his freedom. She wished nothing more than for him to be reunited with his family, his newly born child. But what could I, a humble servant of God, hope to do? I have no experience in the ways of war.

BUGEAUD
Indeed. Well, Bishop Dupuch, you can assure this young woman that when we defeat these Muslims and crush their rebellious spirits, in the name of God and for the glory of France, we will do our utmost to rescue her captured husband and return him to her embrace. However, many of our brave soldiers have been captured. Who can say what these poor souls are suffering at the hands of the Muslim savages?

DUPUCH
Excuse me, General, I had not yet reached the point of my tale. Although I have no experience in the ways of war, as a servant of our Lord I have great experience in the ways of compassion. And so I wrote the Emir Abd el-Kader, sent a letter, appealing to his compassion to see the release of this soldier, to take a small action to reunite a family.

BUGEAUD
Did you, now? How did the Emir respond? If I may be so bold, Your Excellency, your presence in Algiers is tolerated but not entirely welcome. Many, myself included, feel that you overstep your holy Christian mission, interfering in matters that are beyond your concern. This... letter of yours serves as a clear justification of such feelings. I will tell you now, Bishop, if your interference has put our brave French troops at risk--

DUPUCH
Quite the opposite, General. Quite the opposite. In fact, the Emir responded immediately, sending his reply with great haste. In his response, to my shame, he scolded me as a man of God for seeking salvation only for a single prisoner. He suggested the release of three hundred brave Christian soldiers in exchange for the similar release of three hundred Muslim soldiers held here in French prisons.

BUGEAUD
He what? Bishop Dupuch, you simply do not have the authority to--

DUPUCH
I am aware of that, General, which is why I have come to you. Now that this bridge has been made, however accidentally by my own rash act, it falls to you to continue with negotiations for this unprecedented prisoner exchange.

BUGEAUD
I am... uncertain. This sort of humanitarian offer is most unexpected from a savage.

DUPUCH
From a savage, yes. But Islam also teaches compassion, it seems.

BUGEAUD
Indeed.

BLACKOUT
Prisoner-in-Exile, France

A GUARD’S REQUEST

Vocabulary

- **mount** (noun): a means of transport, such as a horse, on which to ride
- **steed**: a horse
- **in absentia**: while in absence; not present

Scene: A French CAPTAIN sits at a desk, reviewing paperwork. ESCOFFIER [Es KO Fee A] enters, salutes and stands at attention, waiting to be acknowledged. Eventually the CAPTAIN looks up from his paperwork and returns the salute.

HISTORIAN
Tuileries Palace in Paris, France, 1853. Private Escoffier, a military guard, submits an unusual request to his superiors.

ESCOFFIER
You sent for me, my Captain?

CAPTAIN
Yes, Private, I did.

(Shuffles papers until he finds the one he’s looking for, holds it up)

You submitted a request for transfer.

ESCOFFIER
Yes, sir.

CAPTAIN
A very specific transfer.

ESCOFFIER
Yes, sir.

CAPTAIN
Are you unhappy here, Private?

ESCOFFIER
No, my Captain. Quite the opposite. This is an admirable and comfortable posting. My fellow guards respect and support me, as I respect and support them. I have very much enjoyed my assignment here, sir.
CAPTAIN
Your performance record is admirable and, as you say, you are respected among the staff and the military. And yet you have requested a transfer to another assignment entirely.

ESCOFFIER
Yes, sir.

CAPTAIN
More to the point, you have requested assignment to a particular prisoner, the Algerian. Abd el-Kader.

ESCOFFIER
Yes. If that assignment is unavailable, I will gladly keep my post here, sir.

CAPTAIN
Why?

ESCOFFIER
Because, as I have said, I am quite happy here, sir.

CAPTAIN
No, Private, I am asking why you wish to be assigned to guarding the prisoner Abd el-Kader. Surely, a guard with your experience...

ESCOFFIER
If I may speak freely, sir?

CAPTAIN
By all means. Proceed.

ESCOFFIER
As I am sure you are aware, I served during the Algerian campaign. In fact, I was captured at Sidi Youssef and held as a prisoner of war. I was a prisoner of Abd el-Kader. My treatment as a prisoner had a...shall we say, notable effect on me.

CAPTAIN
I see. And now that he is a prisoner of the French, you wish for the opportunity to present similar treatment to Abd el-Kader himself.

ESCOFFIER
Yes, my Captain.

CAPTAIN
Need I remind you, Private, that revenge is not a trait encouraged by the French. However poorly and deplorably you were treated, we have standards of treatment in France.

ESCOFFIER
I'm afraid you misunderstand. Revenge is not my intent. As you said, it is not a trait encouraged by the French. However, we do encourage returning a kindness. While a prisoner in Algeria, I was treated humanely, with kindness and comfort and the utmost humanity. During my time there, I only saw one guard attempt to mistreat a prisoner. That guard received significant discipline for his actions.
CAPTAIN
I see.

ESCOFFIER
And, if I may add, the Emir performed a particular kindness for me directly.

CAPTAIN
Please go on, Private.

ESCOFFIER
You see, my Capitain, I was a trumpeter during my service in Algiers. My commanding officer lost his mount during the battle of Sidi Youssef. The poor beast was felled by a bullet. I surrendered my horse to my commander so that he could stay visible to his troops, leading from upon a steed. It was at this same battle that I was captured. General Bugeaud, upon learning I had given my mount to my commander saw fit to present me to me with the Legion of Honor in absentia. The general sent a letter to the Emir along with the medal, asking him to see that I received it.

CAPTAIN
I assume the Emir did so..?

ESCOFFIER
Much more than that, sir. The Emir assembled his own troops in a formal ceremony, brought me before them, and read the general’s letter aloud. He then personally pinned the medal on my uniform and praised me for my bravery.

CAPTAIN
An admirable and dignified action, to be sure.

ESCOFFIER
Definitely. The performance of my duties here has been significantly influenced by my time as a prisoner in Algeria. My request for transfer is simply so that I can return the kindness and do my part to ensure that during his incarceration in France the Emir receives the same level of humane treatment that he provided for me. My sense of honor and fairness demands nothing less.

CAPTAIN
(considers ESCOFFIER for several moments)
Private, how could I deny such admirable intent? Request approved.

ESCOFFIER
Thank you.

(ESCOFFIER salutes and turns to leave. The CAPTAIN holds up a hand to stop him.)

CAPTAIN
And Private?

ESCOFFIER
Yes, my Captain?
CAPTAIN
    Please pass along my thanks as well to Mister Abd el-Kader.

ESCOFFIER
    Yes, my Captain.

ESCOFFIER
    (exits)

BLACKOUT
**OUR TOWN: ELKADER, IOWA USA**

**Vocabulary**
- **platting**: to divide a piece of land into streets and plots for buildings
- **saw mill**: a plant where trees are sawed into boards
- **grist mill**: a mill for grinding grain
- **daunting**: discouraging; intimidating

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**Scene**: Three men are sitting at a table, survey maps and various papers scattered about. Three short glasses sit ignored on the table. The men are TIMOTHY DAVIS, JOHN THOMPSON, and CHESTER SAGE.

**HISTORIAN**
1846, a home on the banks of the Turkey River. Timothy Davis, a lawyer recently moved from Dubuque (Iowa) meets with John Thompson and Chester Sage to finalize plans for the **platting** of a new town in Clayton County.

**DAVIS**
So with Main Street running parallel to the river for a designated distance, that should allow for relatively even division of parcels of land on either side of the river.

**THOMPSON**
*(pointing at a map)* With a general store there, the **saw mill** there, and the **grist mill** further along there, we should have no trouble attracting residents to our town.

**SAGE**
I have already had an inquiry from a blacksmith back east looking for a place to settle in the new frontier.
THOMPSON
    All we need is a name for our little town and you can fill the registration papers and maps, Davis.

SAGE
    Any thoughts on that?

DAVIS
    Thoughts on a name for the town?

THOMPSON
    Yes, should we consider naming it for one of us?

SAGE
    Davisville? Thompsonton?

THOMPSON
    As much as I appreciate the idea of Thompsonton, it does seem a bit... awkward to the tongue. What about Sageberg?

SAGE
    Hmmm.

DAVIS
    Gentlemen, as flattering as those ideas are, I have a suggestion that involves another, possibly more worthy and inspiring gentleman.

THOMPSON
    Then who, Davis? Who do you have in mind?

DAVIS
    I assume you have been aware, however distantly, of events and activities in Algeria, these past fifteen or so years? The French colonization and the fierce resistance by the locals?

SAGE
    I understand the French stance has been fierce at times, as well.

DAVIS
    Through it all, one man has led his people in resisting the invasion. But his fierce opposition was balanced with gentle humanity. His name is Abd el-Kader and he is, by all accounts, a wholly unique man. Although the circumstances here are vastly different than what he has faced, I put to you that the spirit of his intent matches the spirit of settlers in this great land. I propose, gentlemen, that we could inspire and motivate the frontier spirit by naming our town in honor of Mr. Abd el-Kader.

SAGE
    You’re suggesting we name the town Abd el-Kader?

THOMPSON
    As town names go, that’s an even more daunting collection of syllables than Thompsonton.
DAVIS
    Then we shorten it. Abdel? No.

SAGE
    Kader?

THOMPSON
    No.

DAVIS
    Elkader?

THOMPSON
    Elkader. Yes.

SAGE
    I agree.

DAVIS
    It is settled, then. I shall file the papers in the morning. Gentlemen, a toast.

_All three raise their glasses._

DAVIS
    To Abd el-Kader the man and Elkader the village.

THOMSON AND SAGE (together)
    To Abd el Kader and Elkader.
**Scene:** A BUTLER is setting a small table for breakfast. He places a covered dish in the middle of the setting. A folded newspaper is tucked under his arm. A well-dressed Mr. HOLLISTER enters.

**HISTORIAN**

1883, at the home of Mr. HOLLISTER*, a wealthy businessman in New York City.

**HOLLISTER**

Morning, Carstairs.

**BUTLER**

Good morning, sir.

(The BUTLER holds the chair as HOLLISTER sits.)

**HOLLISTER**

What have you got for us this morning?

(With a flourish, the BUTLER removes the lid from the dish.)

**BUTLER**

For Sir’s breakfast, Cook has prepared Eggs Florentine with only the freshest eggs and spinach, and hollandaise prepared just this morning, toast, lightly buttered, fresh fruit, orange juice, and coffee with just a dash of cream. And, to aid with Sir’s digestion, this morning’s edition of the New York Times.

(The BUTLER places the newspaper to the side of the table and steps back, waiting attentively just beyond HOLLISTER’s shoulder. HOLLISTER reaches for the paper and snaps it open.)

**HOLLISTER**

(slight chuckle)

Every morning, Carstairs, you say the same thing about the Times aiding my digestion, knowing full well that I will read the paper before I eat.

**BUTLER**

One does what one must, Sir.

**HOLLISTER**

(browsing through the paper)
HOLLISTER
   Oh, my goodness, this is sad news.

BUTLER
   Sir?

HOLLISTER
   It seems the Emir Abd el-Kader has passed away.

BUTLER
   Sad news, indeed, Sir. If I may say, even amongst the downstairs staff he was greatly admired.

HOLLISTER
   I should expect he was. Yes. Listen to this, Carstairs, the New York Times calls him "one of the ablest rulers and most brilliant captains of the century."

BUTLER
   From what I understand, that is quite true, Sir.

HOLLISTER
   They go on to say, "The nobility of his character, no less than the brilliance of his exploits in the field, long ago won him the admiration of the world. Great men are not so abundant that we can afford to lose them without a word. If to be an ardent patriot, a soldier whose genius is unquestioned, whose honor is stainless...

HOLLISTER (continues)
   ...a hero who could accept defeat and disaster without murmur - if all of these constitutes a great man, Abd el-Kader deserves to be ranked among the foremost of the few great men of the century."

BUTLER
   A fitting and moving tribute, Sir.

HOLLISTER
   Indeed.

BLACKOUT

*Mr. Hollister is a fictional character.*
BOOKEND BACK

_The Historian addresses the audience._

**Historian**

He was many things to many people. These were just some of the stories that show that. Abdelkader was a fascinating and complex man with a fascinating and complex legacy, all born out of one simple truth: We are all part of the same humanity.

Learn more about the emir and the Abdelkader Education Project by visiting our website at [www.abdelkaderproject.org](http://www.abdelkaderproject.org) and check out the AEP Facebook page. Also, reach out to students who have participated in the Abdelkader Global Leadership Prize essay contests!