



A journey of discovery connecting continents and cultures across centuries

Abdelkader Stage Project (Middle School Version)

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BOOKEND FRONT

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.

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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

(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 **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.

BLACKOUT

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...

BUGAUD

(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.

BUGAUD

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.

BUGAUD

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.

BUGAUD

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

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 Captain, 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

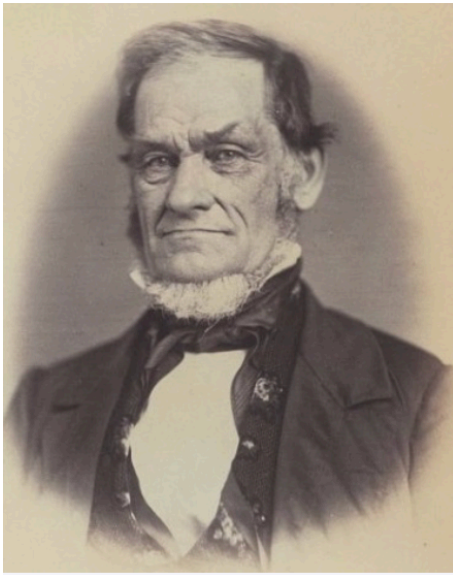
(exits)

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



Timothy Davis

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? Thompsonston?

THOMPSON

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

SAGE

Hmmmm.

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 Thompsonston.

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.

THOMPSON AND SAGE (*together*)

To Abd el Kader and Elkader.

BLACKOUT

READING THE NEW YORK TIMES

Vocabulary

- **exploits:** acts or deeds, especially brave or heroic ones
- **abundant:** plentiful; having a great amount
- **ardent:** enthusiastic; devoted

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 and check out the AEP Facebook page. Also, reach out to students who have participated in the Abdelkader Global Leadership Prize essay contests!