



## STUDIO OCHENTA ORIGINAL TRANSCRIPT

### MIJA (ENGLISH) – 304: Baba Abdou

[0:05]

Hi, I'm Mija, and this podcast is about my family, those alive, those long gone, and those still dreaming.

Here's what you need to know about Abdou:

He's very kind,

[0:18]

He is quiet,

He loves music

and his family is his life.

Abdou is my dad.

[0:26]

So here goes, 10 minutes to tell his story.

[0:46]

There's a boy walking along the seashore.

He's humming a song

He heard from one of the tourists on his mother Dawlat's tourist boats along the seashore

[0:59]

Heart and soul...

This is Abdou.

[1:07]

The 3rd youngest son of Gidda Dawlat and Mohammed.

As you might've guessed he loves music.

In fact, little else gives him joy.

[1:19]

When he turns 8 years old, Gidda gives him an oud.

When he's not at school, Abdou spends his free time  
strumming away by the beach.

[1:39]

The only other thing that makes his heart race

Is a young girl with long dark curly hair

[1:45]

And emerald eyes

Named Mona.

She lives next door and

[1:52]

Abdou is VERY MUCH in love with her.

Though he is not 10 years old yet,

he's seen enough mosalsalat, or TV dramas, with his mother during Ramadan

[2:03]

To know what great love looks like.

But of course he can't show it.

Because typically, he's a quiet boy

[2:18]

Except when he plays his music.

On weekends, he plays his oud on the porch

And he hopes she'll hear him.

[2:32]

And she does.

One day, she watches him play and then introduces herself.

They become fast friends,

and race through the streets of Alexandria

[2:45]

Until their toes are on sand and water  
laughing.

[2:54]

Life is good.

Until

Everything changes.

[3:05]

His father leaves this world.

And Gidda is left all alone with 4 children to look after.

Abdou can't stand seeing his mother suffer.

[3:20]

Though she never once complains,

He can always see how hard she works

Just to make sure there is food on the table.

[3:28]

So now instead of running to the beach

After school, he runs home to help her.

He even came up with the idea to play music for the tourists.

[3:47]

Gidda sets up her boat tour complete with a live musician: Abdou.

But she's scared she's distracting him from his studies with all the music

She knows that one day he will go off into the world and that day will be the saddest day in her life.

[4:05]

Anyway,

Abdou was super talented.

His music literally brought thousands of tourists onto the boat.

[4:15]

But when it's time for him to go off to pursue his career, he doesn't.

He watches as one by one, his siblings leave, and decides that *he* won't.

Because He wants to be there for Gidda Dawlat.

[4:34]

But Abdou never stops playing music.

He even begins to perform at weddings and parties across Alexandria.

By now, he is a handsome young man,

[4:51]

Gidda teases him about meeting a beautiful young woman at one of these upscale parties, the ones that happen in hotels.

But Abdou can't fathom loving anyone but Mona, his childhood sweetheart.

[5:15]

One day when Abdou is at one of his wedding events

He notices two young women being bothered by a group of young men.

He breaks it up.

[5:23]

And Mona looks up and sees a familiar face:

“Abdou?”

She says.

[5:33]

And from that moment, they never part.

They marry quickly and Abdou decides to open a little restaurant to support his own family now.

His youngest brother Mido comes back to run the boat business with Gidda.

[5:57]

Abdou is swept up by it all, life, the business, his love...

And he seemingly doesn't have time for music anymore

he throws his heart into his business.

[6:11]

The restaurant becomes a pillar of the street, like a fourth pyramid,

whatever you need, Abdou would help you.

It's where Sherif goes after his parent's pass away for emotional support and a job,

[6:27]

And where so many of his stories from Egypt come from:

"There was a man that was being chased by drug lords for years and I was somehow able to hide him in the store. He's doing well! My shop saved his life. Thank Allah!"

"Have I ever told you about your cousin who got a divorce from that nasty man who moved to Italy. She's good now! Thank Allah!"

[7:02]

And just as things are about to settle, there's yet another change in Abdou's life.

Mona gets a job offer.

Mona, the love of his life, was offered a job in London doing what she loves most:

Working on Egypt's grand history at the British Museum.

[7:23]

But he didn't want to just move and leave his mother behind.

Abdou tells the story like this.

*"Gidda didn't want me to go but then she had a dream.*

*Mona wanted me to go to live her dream.*

*I also had a dream.*

[7:39]

*And it didn't involve leaving Egypt.*

*But, that's what ALLAH wanted... so that's what I would do.*

You always gotta follow the....”

And then he would point to his heart, every time.

[7:54]

I have memorized this phrase because everytime we complained about anything,

He would remind us that he never wanted to come to London in the first place.

Anyway in the end, Abdou follows Mona to London with a heavy heart and terrible homesickness.

[8:13]

They arrive in London and Mona adjusts to her new job.

But Abdou is restless.

He goes for long walks exploring the city.

[8:23]

He goes and goes, far from Bethnal Green thanks to Gidda's guidance.

And then he sees it,

a vacant shop in Ealing, a neighborhood of Arab communities

[8:28]

He makes it his goal to save up to start his business.

He works as a waiter at a restaurant nearby in the evenings after Mona is back from work

And then finally:

[8:51]



Abdou begins to rebuild what he had left behind in Egypt

And it's beyond borders

Abdou is always there for his friends and neighbors.

And somehow word gets out that he's a performer too.

[9:05]

He even gets asked to play at weddings and parties.

"No one else plays like you", they would beg him.

[9:17]

You would think that's the end.

But Abdou has two children: Me and Omar.

And we'll both turn his life around one last time

when we BOTH leave London for New York City.

[9:34]

Once Omar settles into his new life in NYC,

He is reminded of Abdou when he left Egypt for London

I feel the depth of his longing for home.

[9:44]

He calls Abdou.

and Abdou tells him to go for a walk

He says: "You'll see that our people and our culture is everywhere."

[9:58]

Omar hops on a train with no destination in particular.

And gets off at Steinway St.

As gets out of the station

[10:07]

He sees a restaurant called Luxor with an Eye of Horus at the entrance.

With the biggest smile, he snaps a photo and sends it to Abdou

It's like he's never left.

**FINAL DEL EPISODIO**