**Lafayette & Lafayette Act Five** ***Confrontation***

(Yorktown, Virginia, October 21, 1781, at Lafayette’s headquarters. Mid-afternoon. Table at right wall on which are tumblers and Madeira. Easel with map of Yorktown upstage left. American flag on staff to right of the easel. Table with two chairs centerstage on which is a chess set with chess pieces in motion. Lord Cornwallis is looking at the map. Lafayette is pouring two tumblers of Madeira.)

***Cornwallis:*** I know you were in command on the right wing. But who led the charge on # 10?

***Lafayette:*** Hamilton. Colonel Alexander Hamilton.

***Cornwallis:*** I knew it was over then. When you captured Redoubt #10. Canon had direct fire on us into Yorktown.

***Lafayette:*** Why did you decide to hold out for five more days?

***Cornwallis:*** Hope. That we could escape across to Gloucester. That perhaps Clinton would arrive with ships of the line.

***Lafayette:*** De Grasse would not have allowed passage into the York River. I knew the end was near when I saw the horses, dead in the river.

***Cornwallis:*** Well. Supplies were dwindling. There was little enough food for the Regulars, let alone forage for horses. Killing them was the most humane thing to do.

***Lafayette:*** Captain Ewald told me he lost hope September 28th.

***Cornwallis:*** That. What choice was there? We couldn’t feed them, either. (Moment’s thought.) Are you married? Children?

***Lafayette:*** Adrienne. I am married to Adrienne. Two children. Anastasie is four. George is two. There was Henriette. She died. I was at valley Forge when I got word. You?

***Cornwallis:*** Two children, Mary and Charles. A few years older than yours. Jemima, my wife, died, two years ago.

***Lafayette:*** Our quartermaster Colonel Timothy Pickering estimated that the black number in your camp was near 2000.

***Cornwallis:*** Colonel Pickering would be correct. They did much of the work on our defenses.

***Lafayette:*** But you turned them out.

***Cornwallis:*** It was that or shoot them, like we did the horses, or let them starve. We were down to last rations. Captain Ewald was the most vocal against releasing them into your parallels.

***Lafayette:*** They have been ill-treated one way or the other since Lord Dunmore six years ago.

***Cornwallis:*** Dunmore’s Proclamation. His Ethiopian Regiment. Dunmore thought that his invitation to freedom for blacks would put an end to the insurgency. What a colossal miscalculation.

***Lafayette:*** I have been surprised at how many loyalists there are here in the South.

***Cornwallis:*** I have been surprised at how few. Dunmore thought his Proclamation would draw all that vanguard of loyalists out. All it did was fuel the opposition. He galvanized Virginia against us. They are contrarian. Virginians hate being dictated to.

***Lafayette:*** But your commander, General Clinton, why did he not let it go? Instead he issues his own Proclamation, not on moral grounds, either.

***Cornwallis:*** It was strategic. No high-minded moral philosophy. London ordered him to rally loyalists. That Ethiopian Regiment Clinton gave a new name, the “Black Pioneers.” It was Clinton’s folly of false hope. They followed him from New York to Philadelphia, to Charleston, and back to New York.

***Lafayette:*** Why did Clinton did not arm them? They can fight. I saw the First Rhode Island Regiment. They know what they are about. But Clinton only used them for digging trenches.

***Cornwallis:*** General Clinton does not confide in me. The Philipsburg Proclamation was his own work. Over 5000 escaped to our lines in Georgia over that Proclamation. We were overwhelmed; had to send them back.

***Lafayette:*** Do you know, I first came to America near midnight, June 13, 1777, at Georgetown, South Carolina. The first Americans I met were four of the black part of mankind, oyster hunting. They were on the beach oyster hunting.

***Cornwallis:*** (Said in a casual, but besting tone.) Do you know, I was in Parliament when the Stamp Act came for vote. The act that triggered it all, and I was there. I voted on it.

***Lafayette:*** And how did you vote?

***Cornwallis:*** It may surprise you to know I voted ‘no.’ I voted against. There were five of us. We voted no. We could see what was coming.

***Lafayette:*** If you voted no, if you could see what was coming, how did you come to decide to command in this war?

***Cornwallis:*** I thought the Stamp Act was a mistreatment and I favored giving the colonies wide berth, but I thought, I still think, we’ll be better together. I don’t favor dissolving the empire. Even if you win independence, you will not survive.

***Lafayette:*** Why?

***Cornwallis:*** I have been to Georgia, the Carolinas, the Middle Colonies, the Northeast. America is not one people. They are concerned only with their own interests, their own particular pursuits. Independence will bring out the worst in them.

***Lafayette:*** I disagree. True. They must each plant their own vine and fig tree and tend it. Tending to their own interest is the enlightened thread. That is what unites them.

***Cornwallis:*** But it does not unite them. It does not compel them to common decency or to a common vision.

***Lafayette:*** They are united by common principle. “All men are created equal” unites them. That is the purpose that will dispose them to respect each other and to put limits on their own ambitions.

***Cornwallis:*** You are high minded, and I fear over-optimistic. They will not maintain an eye on that purpose.

***Lafayette:*** Every child in America will learn its purpose. Liberty and equality are hand in hand.

***Cornwallis:*** Somebody has to yield justice. What of the Black Pioneers? Where are they in America’s vision? I do not think they will forget. Ever. The two people will never live together. It’s not in them.

***Lafayette:*** We differ once more. Things can change. Eye on principle changes people. The world has no good example and this will be it.

***Cornwallis:*** Lafayette, you hinge your hopes on people and their ability to be steadfast. To keep their eye on liberty and equality. You even assume they know what it means. How are the Black Pioneers to transcend their legacy? How can they share a vision of liberty and equality?

***Lafayette:*** Some things cannot be atoned. They have to be overcome. The Black Pioneers must transcend, as you say, and the other parts of America must transcend their old ways and worn out habits. I have learned. The American oftentimes holds an opinion not out of conviction, but out of stubbornness. The desire not to give ground. This is at once a virtue and a fault.

***Cornwallis:*** Attitude is implicit in your vision. A forgiving, accepting attitude. No doubt, you were raised in that attitude. It is in your nature. That is not common here. American character is preoccupied with personal pursuits. It is rude, self-absorbed. And the Black Pioneers have none of the attitude you require of them.

***Lafayette:*** Surely, of all those to whom you have been exposed, some few perhaps of the 2000 in your camp, you found to have a mind with moral imagination?

***Cornwallis:*** Moral imagination has too much scope. There was one Pioneer capable of some vision. I recruited him to spy on you. He brought intelligence about your troop strength and deployments.

***Lafayette:*** What was his name?

***Cornwallis:*** He was William Armistead’s manservant. James. James was his name.

***Lafayette:*** Did he bring you messages like this? (Hands Cornwallis a folded paper.)

***Cornwallis:*** (Unfolds the paper.) Yes. The script is the same. Where did you get this? I don’t understand.

***Lafayette:*** James works with me. I guarantee you he has moral imagination. (Calls.) James.

***James:*** (Enters stage left. Faces Lafayette. Cornwallis has his back to him.) Sir.

***Lafayette:*** Lord Cornwallis. This is my friend James. James, this is Lieutenant General Charles, Lord Cornwallis.

***James:*** (Cornwallis turns to face James.) Sir, we have met.

***Cornwallis:*** (Looks at James. Quiet.) I have been played. Well done. (Reaches to the chessboard and tips the king over.)

(Lights dim.)