**Lafayette and Lafayette Act Six** ***Aftermath***

(James Centerstage. He is 75 years of age, October, 1824. Stage is clear except Table stage right with chess set. No one else on stage. Voice from overhead, who is a reporter. Holds a hat in his hand and a cane. Wearing a freestyle bowtie and galluses.)

***Reporter:*** Are you James? James Armistead?

***James:*** May I help you?

***Reporter:*** I’m from the Richmond News. Do you have a moment?

***James:*** I do.

***Reporter:*** Do you know the Marquis de Lafayette?

***James:*** He’s my friend.

***Reporter:*** How did you meet?

***James:*** Yorktown. I was with him at Yorktown.

***Reporter:*** Were you his valet? I mean, what did you do?

***James:*** Valet? You could say that. I helped him make things right.

***Reporter:*** Did you enlist?

***James:*** No. I didn’t enlist. I never carried a gun. Never wore a uniform. Never fired a shot.

***Reporter:*** How old are you?

***James:*** I was born in New Kent County, Virginia, December 10, 1748. I’m thirty-three.

***Reporter:*** But that doesn’t add up.

***James:*** I’ll always be thirty-three. That’s how I think of myself. That’s when I met the Marquis.

***Reporter:*** Oh, I see. You were 33 when you joined the Continental Army. Did you run away.? Did you have to escape to join?

***James:*** No. William Armistead gave permission.

***Reporter:*** I don’t understand. He gave you permission? It doesn’t make sense. You were his manservant?

***James:*** It made sense to Mr. Armistead.

***Reporter:*** The Marquis de Lafayette wrote a testimonial to the Virginia Assembly endorsing your emancipation. How did you contact him to have it done?

***James:*** I didn’t.

***Reporter:*** If you didn’t, who did?

 ***James:*** I did not ask the Marquis to write that testimonial.

***Reporter:*** Who did?

***James:*** William Armistead.

***Reporter:*** How did Armistead know Lafayette?

***James:*** The Marquis gave a speech to the Virginia House of Delegates, November 16, 1784. William---William Armistead---was a member of that august body. He’s the one. He asked Lafayette to write that testimonial on my behalf.

***Reporter:*** It’s dated November 21, 1784. You applied for emancipation December 4, about two weeks later. Your petition was denied?

***James:*** It wasn’t denied. My petition went to the Committee of Propositions and Grievances. The Assembly adjourned January 7, 1785, before the committee could vote it out.

***Reporter:*** Why did it take a month to deliberate?

***James:*** The emancipation Act of 1783 applied to soldiers. The debate was about definition. Was I soldier or was I not. They were just doing their best.

***Reporter:*** Don’t you think that was petty? I mean, don’t you feel bitter?

***James:*** Life is too short to be bitter. Wouldn’t that be petty?

***Reporter:*** You are a free man now. How?

***James:*** I reapplied. November 30, 1786. The House passed it December 25. The Senate January 1. Governor Edmund Randolph signed it January 9, 1787.

***Reporter:*** The record shows on February 7, 1787, William Clayton of New Kent County was appointed by the Assembly to put a value on your services.

***James:*** On my person.

***Reporter:*** Payment demanded by William Armistead, I suppose.

***James:*** You suppose wrong. I asked that William be paid. That was at my request. William Armistead was a man of good will. He made life for me and Sylvia tolerable.

***Reporter:*** Sylvia, that’s your wife I gather. In March, 1787, the Virginia Auditor of Public Accounts disbursed 250 pounds to Mr. Armistead. The usual disbursement in these cases is 100 pounds. What made you worth the difference.

***James:*** I play chess. I’m worth more because I play chess.

***Reporter:*** I see. What do you do now?

***James:*** I talk to reporters. I’m too old to do much else.

***Reporter:*** How do you support yourself.

***James:*** Well. On December 28, 1818, I applied for a pension. The Assembly gave me sixty dollars outright and three dollars and thirty cents a month. I go to Richmond once every six months to collect.

***Reporter:*** What did you do mostly after the War?

***James:*** I was a farmer.

***Reporter:*** You owned your own farm?

***James:*** I bought the Philemon Woodyard estate. A thirty acre parcel for $41.70 and a ten acre parcel for $13.90.

***Reporter:*** They say the Marquis recognized you on his Farewell Tour. Picked you out of the crowd, stopped his carriage, got out, ran over and hugged you. Is that true?

***James:*** Every word. Kissed me on the cheek. He’s French. They kiss everybody. And he didn’t run. Broke his left leg, slipped on some ice awhile back; it slows him up a bit.

***Reporter:*** Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Armistead.

***James:*** You have the name wrong.

***Reporter:*** That’s what they told me, James, James Armistead.

***James:*** My name is James, all right. Never really had a last name, not official anyway. I never went by Armistead. But since the Governor signed my papers, my name has been James, James Lafayette.

***Reporter:*** Thank you, Mr. Lafayette.

***James:*** I enjoyed talking to you. (Turns, puts on his hat, walks upstage.)

(Lights dim.)

***The End***