Scene Eight

(Lafayette and DeKalb enter stage left, looking beyond the front, into the distance. Lafayette is upbeat. DeKalb not so much. Along the Garonne River, Bordeaux, March 19, 1777. Both have travelling bags, indicating they have just arrived.)

***Lafayette:*** This is the place. Basmarein said to meet him here and he’d lead us to the ship. (Stands, gazing in the distance.) There it is. I’m sure of it.

***DeKalb:*** Where? I don’t see it.

***Lafayette:*** There’s the Garonne, right there. Flowing in that direction. (Points downstage left, then tracks with his index finger to his right). See it? Down river. There, there, where the three mast is. That’s got to be “The Victory.”

***DeKalb:*** (Pulls out spy glass from his bag; drops the bag; looks into the glass.) Not a bad looking boat at that. Twenty-five feet long, I’d say; maybe, fifteen at the beam. Hard to tell dimensions from here.

***Lafayette:*** Can you see the name? Basmarein promised to paint “The Victory” on it.

***DeKalb:*** (Searching.) It’s at an angle…where are the sails? The masts have no sails. I don’t see rigging.

***Lafayette:*** (Takes his glass out. Drops his bag. Looks.) I think I can make out letters…I’m sure it says “The Victory.”

***DeKalb:*** You’d see “Victory” anywhere.

***Lafayette:*** (Still looking through glass.) Not very big, is it?

***DeKalb:*** What did you expect? You don’t get a ship of the line for 100,000 livres.

***Lafayette:*** I just thought…I thought it’d be bigger. And it’s 112,000 livres, 40,000 down, the rest in June. (Mockingly, correcting DeKalb.)

***DeKalb:*** Two guns…it only has two guns.

***Lafayette:*** I don’t see them.

***DeKalb:*** Good. Maybe the man-o-war we run into won’t see them either. They won’t do much good against 74’s.

***Lafayette:*** I see now. Specks on the broadside. What’s a 74?

***DeKalb:*** A 74 is a ship with 74 guns. They have the best balance between speed and size. The only thing “The Victory” could put against something like that is luck.

***Lafayette:*** We’ll have luck. Plenty of it. (Still looking through his glass.) Maybe it’s not our ship.

***DeKalb:*** You said you could see its name. (Looks back into his glass.)

***Lafayette:*** Well. I could be mistaken, couldn’t I? I mean, it’s not clear…”The Victory” should have sails up. Ready to sail. Basmarein said it would be ready. That must be it. The sails aren’t out because that’s not our ship.

***DeKalb:*** (Takes a quiet look at Lafayette. Looks back into his glass.) It’s our ship all right. But the sails aren’t out and no rigging. Something’s wrong.

***Lafayette:*** Why? Why no sails? What does it mean?

***DeKalb:*** I don’t know why. What it means is that we can’t sail, not right now anyway. (Looks at Lafayette.)

***Lafayette:*** That could be a problem.

***DeKalb:*** Why? It just means we wait a few days till rigging and sails…

***Lafayette:*** It’s just that…well…I thought we’d get here, march right on board, and sail away. I didn’t count on delays.

***DeKalb:*** Why should there be a problem even if there is a delay of a few days. No one knows the plan. Except you, me, Basmarein, Carmichael.

***Lafayette:*** We’re not the only ones.

***DeKalb:*** (Thoughtful. Aimlessly strolling.) I told no one. Basmarein wouldn’t expose us, he has too much at stake. Noailles! You said you told Noailles. But he’s a good friend. He wouldn’t say anything…Did you tell someone else? One of your other friends, maybe?

***Lafayette:*** Perhaps.

***DeKalb:*** Perhaps. What does that mean? (Thinking. Then smiling, as though an idea has come to him.) I see. You had a tryst?

***Lafayette:*** What? A tryst? No, no. (Waving it off.)

***DeKalb:*** That’s it. It’s safe with me. You had a fling. Was it after you saw Noailles? (Playful.)

***Lafayette:*** No, of course not.

***DeKalb:*** These things happen. Before? You are an early riser.

***Lafayette:*** It wasn’t before or after.

**DeKalb:** Then when?

***Lafayette:*** You don’t understand.

***DeKalb:*** What did you tell this trollop?

***Lafayette:*** I didn’t tell the trollop anything!

***DeKalb:*** AHA! You admit there was a trollop? And you had a tryst with the trollop! You are troubled by this tryst with the trollop!

***Lafayette:*** Stop. I didn’t.

***DeKalb:*** Fine. (Serious now.) But I am right. Something bothers you. Even if you detailed our plan to one of our friends I doubt it can amount to anything. Who did you tell?

***Lafayette:*** Adrienne. I told Adrienne.

***DeKalb:*** (Chuckles.) I thought it was something serious. So you told your wife. She wouldn’t share this confidence.

***Lafayette:*** I gave Carmichael a letter. He was to have it delivered to Adrienne. I owed her that.

***DeKalb:*** Indeed. You do owe her that. I agree. Do you know why I agree? Because I told my wife, too. It’s good they know. No harm done. (Goes back to the glass.)

***Lafayette:*** (Hesitates.) She’s not the only one.

***DeKalb:*** (Pause. Looks at Lafayette quietly.) Who? Who else did you tell?

***Lafayette:*** The Duc d’Ayen.

***DeKalb:*** (Stunned. Sits on a rock.) You told your father-in-law? (Silence.) We’re done.

***Lafayette:*** I know he’ll come around. Even though he said he’d do anything in his power to stop me. He was angry.

***DeKalb:*** You…you explained…everything?

***Lafayette:*** Everything. At the same time I gave Carmichael the letter to Adrienne, I gave him one for the Duc d’Ayen. I’m sure they were delivered the same day.

***DeKalb:*** Three days ago, then. When we left Paris. (Thinking.) Why didn’t you just write the King himself? Or Prime Minister Maurepas?

***Lafayette:*** I’m sure he has had a change of mind. People do change their minds. I told him about my commission. About “The Victory.”

***DeKalb:*** The Duc d’Ayen is a military man. He and I are alike in age. I know how he thinks. This will not go down well.

***Lafayette:*** Maybe “The Victory” is ready, even without sails. Maybe there’s something we don’t know. We just need to see Basmarein.

***DeKalb:*** (Looks into the distance, as though searching.) He’s late. I tell you I don’t trust him.

***Lafayette:*** He’ll be here. He and I have a deal. (Basmarein enters stage right as Lafayette and DeKalb look stage left. Basmarein coughs, sheepishly.)

***DeKalb:*** (Turns. Sees Basmarein.) You’re late. My guess…you have bad news. (Lafayette turns. Silence.)

***Basmarein:*** Your ship isn’t ready.

***DeKalb:*** Is that it? (Points to the ship in the distance.)

***Basmarein:*** Yes.

***DeKalb:*** Why?

***Basmarein:*** The rigging and the sails. Suppliers. I deal with this all the time. It couldn’t be helped.

***DeKalb:*** Says you. (Accusatory.)

***Basmarein:*** Fine. Fine. We don’t have to do business. (Silence.)

***Lafayette:*** You and I have a deal. I hold you to it. When? When will it be ready?

***Basmarein:*** Four, five days at most.

***DeKalb:*** Do you have any idea…

***Lafayette:*** DeKalb, it can’t be helped…(To Basmarein.) Are authorities suspicious? Could the Duc d’Ayen have anything to do with this?

***Basmarein:*** No. The commandant of the port of Bordeaux is M. de Fumel. He prides himself on being informed…He lets you know if you are under suspicion. He likes to let you know. If the Duc d’Ayen were involved, believe me, I would know.

***DeKalb:*** What are we supposed to do for five days?

***Basmarein:*** I don’t care what you do. But stay quiet. I’ll contact you once all is ready. See my foreman at the dock. He’ll find quarters for you. (Leaves.)

***DeKalb:*** (Looks at Lafayette.) What now?

***Lafayette:*** (Thoughtful.) We assume the worst. Maybe it’s not so bad and maybe the Duc d’Ayen HAS changed his mind.

***DeKalb:*** And maybe not. How do you propose to find out.

***Lafayette:*** The Vicomte de Coigny. He’s an ally, an old friend iIn Paris. I’ll send a letter and ask him. He’ll know if the Duc has had a change of mind. He’ll let us know if someone is on our trail. We can trust him.

***DeKalb:*** Do you think we can get an answer in time?

***Lafayette:*** Today is Wednesday.

***DeKalb:*** Three days to get a letter from here to Paris and at least three days back.

***Lafayette:*** I’ll dispatch a courier today. Coigny won’t delay his reply. We should get it back by Tuesday, latest.

***DeKalb:*** Say I’m right…that the Duc d’Ayen is mad as ever…wants you stopped. And say Coigny confirms. What will you do?

***Lafayette:*** I don’t know. I just can’t let this go. Papa must be persuaded. I must have him convinced.

***DeKalb:*** You want him on your side.

***Lafayette:*** No, it’s not that I want him on my side. You don’t understand. I must have him on my side.

***DeKalb:*** You’re right, I don’t understand. It makes no sense to me.

***Lafayette:*** I know it doesn’t make sense. My mind tells me that Papa should not matter. My heart won’t have it. My heart must know…my heart must feel that he believes in me…that he knows I want to make him proud. It is all so very right to me, but I can’t explain it.

***DeKalb:*** (Quietly.) I believe you. I trust you. This…work (Thinking deliberately.). This work inspires you. America inspires you. I believe this. Is there more to it?

***Lafayette:*** What makes you think there is more to it?

***DeKalb:*** Because if I put my heart into a cause, I wouldn’t care what anybody else thought. I wouldn’t care if God Almightty opposed it. There’s something you’re not telling me.

***Lafayette:*** I must have Papa persuaded.

***DeKalb:*** I know that. I don’t understand it.

***Lafayette:*** He’s not God Almighty, but close.

***DeKalb:*** I know that, too.

***Lafayette:*** I want this ship. I want this adventure, if I can call it that, more than anything I’ve ever wanted in my life. But what happens when the means to make your dream real are taken from you? Wanting won’t make it so.

***DeKalb:*** It’s not that bleak, not yet anyway. You’re young and strong and you do have a ship, it’s just that we’re delayed a few days.

***Lafayette:*** That’s just it. I don’t really have a ship. I just put a down payment on it.

***DeKalb:*** But you paid 40,000 livres.

***Lafayette:*** Borrowed. I’ll have to borrow the rest in June. As long as the Duc d’Ayen has his way, I have no access to accounts.

***DeKalb:*** You agreed to serve without pay. How will you manage?

***Lafayette:*** I don’t know. If Papa is against me, I don’t know.

***DeKalb:*** You are one of the richest men.

***Lafayette:*** Not if I can’t get to it. I know the endgame. I feel it. But the means are not in hand. It seemed so simple at first. Now it’s complicated.

***DeKalb:*** We need a plan. Assume your letter from your friend Coigny comes back. Assume it says your father-in-law wants you jailed.

***Lafayette:*** He wouldn’t…

***DeKalb:*** Humor me. Say it’s true…what will you do?

***Lafayette:*** I haven’t thought it all the way through.

***DeKalb:*** Will you give it up? Will you quit?

***Lafayette:*** No. No chance. I do know that.

***DeKalb:*** Pull up anchor and into the Atlantic and on to America?

***Lafayette:*** True. We could just defy him.

***DeKalb:*** What’s this ‘we’? You’re the one he’s after.

***Lafayette:*** You’re part of it now. It’s ‘we’.

***DeKalb:*** Well. Which will it be?

***Lafayette:*** If what you say is true…(Thinking.) There is a middle ground.

***DeKalb:*** What middle ground? There’s here and there’s America. The only middle ground is the ocean.

***Lafayette:*** Spain.

***DeKalb:*** Spain? Why Spain?

***Lafayette:*** If what you say…if things are unsafe here in France…we could sail to Spain…it would give us time to think it through…for me to figure it out. Papa’s clutches do not go so far as Spain. I’m convinced I’ll win him over. I just don’t know when that’ll be.

***DeKalb:*** You are all over the map. Well. Your boat. Your call. You need to make a decision. Then do it. Let’s go find someplace to eat. I get grumpy when I’m hungry. (Picks up his bag and walks offstage right.)

***Lafayette:*** (To himself.) You must be hungry all the time. (Looks into the distance.) “The Victory.” It’ll work out. (Picks up his bag, calls out.) DeKalb, wait!

(Lights dim.)