Scene Eleven

(M. de Fumel is the commandant of the Port of Bordeaux. He is 5’7” and weighs 145 pounds. He is on the arrogant side and holds himself in high regard. He is to the point. This scene is in his office. Work desk downstage left with a chair behind. To the right is an easel with a map of France and Spain. Window upstage right. Door downstage right. Congolais and madeira on back wall credenza. Fumel sitting at desk. Basmarein standing near the door. It is mid-morning. Huguenots were French Protestants. The French Wars of Religion took a heavy toll from 1562 to 1598. King Henry IV on April 13, 1598, signed the Edict of Nantes giving civil liberties to French Protestants. The Edict of Fontainebleau, October 18, 1685, by King Louis XIV, essentially repealed the Edict of Nantes. Protestants tried to leave France and were often arrested.)

***Fumel:*** I have a dilemma.

***Basmarein:*** Commandant, if it’s a problem you can’t solve, I doubt I can help.

***Fumel:*** A courier delivered orders to me from Prime Minister Maurepas for the Marquis de Lafayette.

***Basmarein:*** And how may I help you with that? If you’re trying to locate…

***Fumel:*** I know where he is. (Gets up. Steps to the map at his right, on the easel.) Tuesday he was anchored at Pauillac, just upriver, in a ship you sold him.

***Basmarein:*** That’s my business. I sell boats.

***Fumel:*** I know, I know. Tell me this. Why such a tiny vessel. Why not just provide a raft? (Walks to credenza, pours tumbler of madeira. Offers a tumbler to Basmarein.)

***Basmarein:*** (Declines.) I prefer to keep my wits when I play chess.

***Fumel:*** Basmarein, you are defensive and suspicious.

***Basmarein:*** I’ve been a businessman for a long time. It’s how I stay in business.

***Fumel:*** At first I thought Lafayette was smuggling Huguenots to America. We may be a bit backwoods here in Bordeaux compared to Paris, but news eventually arrives. Lafayette is a hero. He’s going to America to fight with the insurgents. Don’t deny it. You knew of his plan.

***Basmarein:*** Anyone who reads newspapers knows he was sailing to America. But Huguenots. I don’t know anything about Huguenots.

***Fumel:*** Edmund Brice is a Protestant from Maryland. Why did he register as Catholic? DeKalb did the same. Neither one is a Catholic.

***Basmarein:*** Catholics and Protestants have been slitting each other’s throats for years. I don’t think this had anything to do with that. I’m unaware of any smuggling of Huguenots.

***Fumel:*** Why did Lafayette give false registration?

***Basmarein:*** I don’t know. If I looked like Lafayette I’d give false registration, too.

***Fumel:*** (Looks at the registration certificate.) Gilbert du Motier, it says.

***Basmarein:*** That’s his name.

***Fumel:*** He signs everything else “Lafayette.” He is 5’9” with red hair; he’s 19 years old, but on his embarkation certificate he writes “tall, blonde, and twenty.” Clearly, he is under the impression he may be detained. He wants to escape detection.

***Basmarein:*** Is a warrant out for his arrest?

***Fumel:*** That’s just it. No. But he obviously suspects he’ll be arrested. Why?

***Basmarein:*** (Shrugs.)

***Fumel:*** (Arches his brow, doubting Basmarein’s sincerity.) Are you sure?

***Basmarein:*** All I know is that the Duc d’Ayen opposes whatever Lafayette is doing.

***Fumel:*** In fact, the Duc d’Ayen is furious. That’s what my contacts say. What I can’t figure out is, if he’s so angry, why not order Maurepas to order me to station a cruiser at the mouth of the Garonne River and arrest him? Everybody knows d’Ayen has Maurepas on a leash.

***Basmarein:*** You think the Duc d’Ayen is behind this.

***Fumel:*** I have no doubt about it. Maurepas sent orders to Lafayette by courier. The courier arrived here in Bordeaux, but “The Victory” had already sailed. The courier brought the orders to me because that’s what Maurepas told him to do, in the Duc d’Ayen’s presence. I have dispatched my own courier to take the orders on to Lafayette.

***Basmarein:*** You think the Duc d’Ayen wrote those orders?

***Fumel:*** No, no. Those are not orders from an enraged father-in-law. I think he wants Lafayette chained and I think he probably demanded Maurepas do it.

***Basmarein:*** But you don’t put a hero in chains.

***Fumel:*** Exactly. I mean, what kind of orders are these? To meet the Duc d’Ayen ‘and his party’ on April 15th at Marseilles for a holiday to Italy. It’s an invitation to a tea party. Naples is not where you send someone to do penance.

***Basmarein:*** Maurepas must respond to the demands of a powerful ally without bringing the people down on him.

***Fumel:*** You catch on quickly. Here’s the real puzzle. I called you here to fill in this gap. (Intent on the map.)

***Basmarein:*** What? What gap? (Anxious himself to know.)

***Fumel:*** All of Paris knows Lafayette is going to America. You sell him a ship, or at least we’ll call it a ship even though it is more of a dingy. It anchors right there on the Garonne River. He and his band board. Now what does he do?

***Basmarein:*** I assume he sails down the Garonne, into the Atlantic, and on to America.

***Fumel:*** But that’s not what he does. He sails from Bordeaux, down the Garonne and into the wide open Atlantic. All he has to do is steer ahead. Instead, he bears left into the Bay of Biscay, down the coast of France, and drops anchor at San Sebastian. Spain. He goes to Spain. It’s not far across the border but it’s not somewhere you luck into. It was his destination. Basmarein, it makes no sense. Why is he in Spain? Why did he not just sail on to America?

***Basmarein:*** I’m no help. I have no idea. Do you think he’ll obey that order? Will he come back?

***Fumel:*** It is a direct order. But why should he? What would you do? (Rhetorical question.) There again, why go to Spain? If he plays chess, I don’t want to play him. He is either incredibly smart or remarkably stupid.

(Lights dim.)