Scene Fifteen

(Comte de Broglie’s office, Paris, April 8, 1777. Broglie’s desk centerstage, chair behind it facing downstage. Vicomte de Mauroy sits in a chair in front of the desk downstage left, angled toward the door downstage right. Window upstage right, below which is a rotating globe on a pedestal. Broglie is fingering the globe, looking out the window. Behind him is an easel with a map of Europe, the Atlantic, and the eastern seaboard of America. Mauroy and Broglie are in military uniform. William Carmichael is pouring himself coffee from the pot on the corner of the desk away from Mauroy. Mauroy is pitching playing cards into a tin box about six feet in front of him on the floor. There is a chair also for Carmichael opposite Mauroy.)

***Carmichael:*** (Sits.) What’s he doing in Bordeaux? I thought he would have been long gone to America by now.

***Broglie:*** (Stops fingering the globe, stares at Mauroy, who continues pitching cards.) Mauroy, this is a crisis and I need you to pay attention. Stop doing that.

***Mauroy:*** It helps me think. You have my attention. Lafayette. Bordeaux. No explanation. You’re about to tell us what your spies say about why he’s there and not in the middle of the Atlantic.

***Broglie:*** I don’t have spies. Informers. I have well paid informers.

***Carmichael:*** What’s the story?

***Broglie:*** (Turns to the map.) Lafayette leaves Paris on March 16 and he arrives in Bordeaux three days later on March 19. His ship, the one he bought and renamed “The Victory,” weighed anchor on March 25 and sailed down the Garonne River out into the Atlantic. But instead of America, he goes to San Sebastian, Spain. Drops anchor there on March 27. He gets orders from Maurepas on March 29. On April 1st he leaves San Sebastian on horseback and arrives back in Bordeaux April 3rd. Meanwhile, “The Victory” sails on April 1st from San Sebastian to the harbor at Los Pasajes.

***Carmichael:*** (Puts coffee in saucer on edge of table. Gets up, walks to the map.) Why did he go to San Sebastian in the first place? Why Spain at all?

***Mauroy:*** (Stops pitching cards.) That’s easy. He obviously thought there was a warrant for his arrest. He had to escape France.

***Broglie:*** Why not sail on to America? What was so important he doubled back?

***Carmichael:*** Unfinished business.

***Broglie:*** What do you mean?

***Mauroy:*** What were his orders? You said he got orders from Maurepas.

***Broglie:*** Maurepas ordered him to Marseilles by April 15 to join the Duc d’Ayen for a trip to Italy. But he didn’t receive those orders until March 29th.

***Carmichael:*** He was already planning his return to Bordeaux. Those orders just expedited what he already planned.

***Broglie:*** At Bordeaux we know he asked the Commandant for two weeks’ leave to go to Paris, which was denied. And we have intercepted a letter to Prime Minister Maurepas from Lafayette. Lafayette asks Maurepas to rescind the orders to go to Marseilles. Lafayette is waiting now as we speak in Bordeaux to hear from Maurepas.

***Mauroy:*** He must assume Maurepas opposes his venture to America, at least that’s how he probably interprets those orders.

***Carmichael:*** He has the boat, the means…this is all afterthought. It’s about approval.

***Mauroy:*** Whose approval?

***Carmichael:*** This is Hamlet and Othello. Lafayette has choice. His will, what he wants to do, needs approval to do it. He makes a choice he can’t follow without approval.

***Broglie:*** I don’t follow you.

***Carmichael:*** This is a young man who has had all his decisions made for him. He has never gone against the grain. Never. It’s contrary to what’s in him. What he does he must feel is endorsed by some authority.

***Broglie***: I know Maurepas. I know the King. Privately, they endorse this scheme. They both want Lafayette over there irritating England.

***Carmichael:*** But Lafayette only sees what Maurepas shows to France. He takes the orders as a rebuke. His age cannot take such slights and just let them pass. He is compelled to answer. His temperament does not permit disharmony.

***Mauroy:*** So he returns to Bordeaux to make it all right, to convince Maurepas. That’s why he asks for two weeks’ leave, to go to Paris and persuade Maurepas.

***Broglie:*** You think Lafayette needs to know what Maurepas really thinks, and if he knows he will be unchained? I know Maurepas wants to foment as much agitation in America as he can and he sees Lafayette as means. Of course, he can’t come out and say that.

***Carmichael:*** I’m sure of it. Lafayette can’t take that leap. He needs to know the truth, but he must hear it from someone he trusts, whom he knows speaks his mind.

***Mauroy:*** (He had returned to pitching cards. Both Carmichael and Broglie silently eye Mauroy, who finally notices.) What? Me? You think I can convince Lafayette that Maurepas wrote those orders for show?

***Carmichael:*** You are a mercenary. You did take blood money. (Said as fact, not in accusatory fashion.)

***Mauroy:*** Are you trying to compliment me? Deane gave me 12,000 livres as incentive. I admit it; I have never denied it. I’m in it for the money and I think this dust up is about power and empire.

***Carmichael:*** Your motivations are misguided, but that’s not the point. Lafayette knows that you have Broglie’s confidence. He knows that Broglie knows the mind of Maurepas and the King.

***Broglie:*** You’re the one to convince him that Maurepas has to put on this show, to keep up this appearance of neutrality. Lafayette must pay it no mind. We have come too far to abort this plan now.

***Carmichael:*** You see yourself replacing Washington, still?

***Broglie:*** There is no chance if French officers cannot first pave the way. (Rubs his hands together, distracted by his greater ambition.)

***Carmichael:*** Congress is aware of your ambition. Deane informed them.

***Broglie:*** You disagree.

***Carmichael:*** Washington will not be so easily displaced. Back to the matter at hand. Mauroy…

***Mauroy:*** If I leave today I should get to Bordeaux on Saturday. That’ll give plenty of time.

***Carmichael:*** There is one more problem. It is THE impediment.

***Broglie:*** What’s that?

***Carmichael:*** The Duc d’Ayen.

***Mauroy:*** Maurepas and Duc d’Ayen…Are they not one and the same problem?

***Broglie:*** You (indicating Carmichael) think Lafayette is hindered by more than his orders from Maurepas?

***Carmichael:*** The orders are of little moment, really. In Shakespeare the great stories of murder are about men who could not have done it but who did. Othello. Hamlet. Lafayette needs…Let me correct…Lafayette must have his father-in-law’s approval.

***Mauroy:*** Why?

***Broglie:*** Because his father-in-law is the force behnd everything Lafayette has ever done. Lieutenant. Captain. Marriage. The Duc d’Ayen did it all.

***Mauroy:*** I don’t see it.

***Carmichael:*** You don’t have to. To Lafayette, going against the approval of his father-in-law is the same as someone else committing murder.

***Broglie:*** Doesn’t that carry loyalty a bit far?

***Carmichael:*** This is not about loyalty.

***Mauroy:*** I still don’t see it.

***Carmichael:*** You suffer from spiritual sterility.

***Mauroy:*** There you go. Complimenting me again.

***Broglie:*** What do we do?

***Carmichael:*** Here’s what you tell him. (Talking to Mauroy.) And be sure to tell him I said it. (Sits down, leans in to talk to Mauroy.)

(Lights dim.)