Scene Sixteen

(Prime Minister Maurepas and Duc d’Ayen, in the office of Maurepas. D’Ayen is reading a letter. Maurepas is behind his desk putting on his jacket, then pouring a cup of coffee. Paris, April 8, 1777.)

***Maurepas:*** The courier delivered it this morning. I thought you’d be pleased.

***Duc:*** (Reading the letter.) Did you arrest him?

***Maurepas:*** No.

***Duc:*** Why not?

***Maurepas:*** It’s over. Read his letter.

***Duc:*** I am reading it. Nowhere…nowhere does he say he’s done.

***Maurepas:*** He apologizes. He’s contrite.

***Duc:*** Says he’s sorry for the misunderstanding. I see that. It’s not the same…He equivocates…(Reads on.) And here (Pointing to a paragraph)…He asks you to rescind his orders to Marseilles…Retract my orders to be at Marseilles by April 15th…When was this written? (Searching.)

***Maurepas:*** A week ago. April 3rd. From Bordeaux.

***Duc:*** Can’t the commandant, what’s his name?

***Maurepas:*** Fumel.

***Duc:*** Have Fumel arrest him.

***Maurepas:*** I can’t do that.

***Duc:*** You can’t do it. What do you mean you can’t do it? It’d be the best thing to happen to him.

***Maurepas:*** (Ponders.) Lafayette hasn’t done anything that adds up to a crime.

***Duc:*** He bought a ship. He was going to America. Taking others along.

***Maurepas:*** That’s over. It’s finished. He’s in Bordeaux.

***Duc:*** He’s got a child on the way. He’s draining his accounts. He disobeys me.

***Maurepas:*** How can he drain his accounts? He’s not twenty-five. You’ve got a hold on them.

***Duc:*** He’s borrowing against them, using his accounts and his lands as collateral for all this.

***Maurepas:*** It irks you he followed his own mind. You hold that most against him.

***Duc:*** What are you talking about?

***Maurepas:*** That’s it. He made up his mind.

***Duc:*** He doesn’t know his mind.

***Maurepas:*** I think he does.

***Duc:*** You don’t know him.

***Maurepas:*** And you are sure you do?

***Duc:*** (Staring at Maurepas.) You’ve never had your heart in this, have you?

***Maurepas:*** How do you mean?

***Duc:*** Lafayette. Stopping him. Admit it. You’d just as soon see him on the Atlantic…you want him over there (said with disdain). Fighting England. You’d just as soon see him dead.

***Maurepas:*** That’s not true. France is at peace with England.

***Duc:*** I know. I know…(Said again with disdain.)

***Maurepas:*** This government has no desire to quarrel with England. We can’t afford it.

***Duc:*** Save it for Stormont. The fact…

***Maurepas:*** (Cuts him off.) The fact is…yes. I was pulling for him. I wanted him to make it. All Paris is on his side. If I arrest him we’d be a laughing stock, to say nothing of the riot…now…pack your bags. Meet your son-in-law at Marseilles.

***Duc:*** He told you to rescind those orders.

***Maurepas:*** He did not. He said please.

***Duc:*** Are you going to do it?

***Maurepas:*** Of course not. He knows I won’t. He’s just trying to get out of being confined to a trip with you and your sister.

***Duc:*** This is no matter to laugh at. How will you reply.

***Maurepas:*** I won’t.

***Duc:*** You won’t?

***Maurepas:*** No.

***Duc:*** But…

***Maurepas:*** As far as I’m concerned, this is over. Nothing more needs attention. You have had your way.

***Duc:*** Well. We’ll see about that. (Exits.)

(Lights dim.)