Scene Ten

(Apartment at Bordeaux. March 24, 1777. Lafayette in chair behind desk downstage left reading a letter. High backed chair further downstage left, in front of the desk. Credenza near back wall with coffee and cups. Window stage right. Door downstage right. DeKalb enters.)

***DeKalb:*** (Shakes out his hat and his coat to get rain off. Lafayette looks up. Sits back in his chair.) It’s raining.

***Lafayette:*** Springtime in Bordeaux.

***DeKalb:*** The wind…coming off the river…feels like darts. Is coffee in the pot? (Motions to kettle.)

***Lafayette:*** Help yourself. (Gets up. Walks to window.)

***DeKalb:*** I have some good news. (Pours his coffee. Walks back to chair beside the desk. Sips and savors his coffee. Takes his time.)

***Lafayette:*** (Looking at him intently. Walks back to his chair.) Well?

***DeKalb:*** Well. What?

***Lafayette:*** (Calmly. Playfully.) I’d hate to have to hurt you.

***DeKalb:*** You’re funny. Ho. Ho.

***Lafayette:*** Come on. We’ve been stuck here for a week. I need good news.

***DeKalb:*** I saw Basmarein. (Sips.)

***Lafayette:*** And…

***DeKalb:*** Ship’s ready. Rigging done. Sails up.

***Lafayette:*** Finally. (Walks to window.) When can we sail?

***DeKalb:*** Well. Not today. We’d get blown from one side of the river to the other.

***Lafayette:*** Tomorrow, then. What else did he say?

***DeKalb:*** About what?

***Lafayette:*** You know…is anyone on to us?

***DeKalb:*** Not so far. Basmarein hasn’t heard anything. I’m surprised. I thought certain…I mean, we’ve been here, what, five days. I thought your father-in-law would do something.

***Lafayette:*** We do have a problem. (Pours himself coffee. Walks back to his desk. Picks up a letter.)

***DeKalb:*** Is that the problem? (Points to the letter.)

***Lafayette:*** It’s from Coigny. The courier came this morning.

***DeKalb:*** And?

***Lafayette:*** He says Papa is furious.

***DeKalb:*** I’m not surprised. But what’s he going to do?

***Lafayette:*** He’s been to Maurepas. There’s talk…

***DeKalb:*** That’s not good.

***Lafayette:*** There’s talk of a warrant for my arrest.

***DeKalb:*** I don’t know what that means. Is there a warrant or not?

***Lafayette:*** Doesn’t say.

***DeKalb:*** Well, here’s what it does say: we better board ship and sail soon. Maurepas can scuttle everything. The longer we are in France the greater the risk.

***Lafayette:*** (Paces. Thinking.) Let’s think about this.

***DeKalb:*** There’s nothing to think about…what’s to think about?

***Lafayette:*** Wait…just wait. (Holds up his hand.)

***DeKalb:*** This drives me crazy. This is easy. Why do you make it hard. We board ship…we go to America. There’s no decision here.

***Lafayette:*** My father-in-law is a reasonable man.

***DeKalb:*** Listen to me. Your father-in-law is an unreasonable man. It’s a fact. You don’t need to understand.

***Lafayette:*** I don’t believe that. He wants what’s best for me.

***DeKalb:*** He wants you arrested that’s what he wants. Is that what’s best for you?

***Lafayette:*** We don’t know that.

***DeKalb:*** Coigny said it. There it is…(Points to the letter.)

***Lafayette:*** It says there is talk of a warrant…

***DeKalb:*** (Pause.) Do you know what your problem is? Do you?

***Lafayette:*** (Shrugs his shoulders.) Tell me.

***DeKalb:*** You’re afraid to make a decision.

***Lafayette:*** I am not.

***DeKalb:*** You are.

***Lafayette***: I am not.

***DeKalb:*** Fine. Are we sailing or are we not?

***Lafayette:*** I’m not sure.

***DeKalb:*** I rest my case.

***Lafayette:*** Listen…He can help us. He has connections. He can provide money.

***DeKalb:*** You listen…He can hurt us.

***Lafayette:*** He wouldn’t.

***DeKalb:*** (Pause.) You’ll believe it when you’re looking outside from inside the Bastille…You think too much.

***Lafayette:*** I don’t.

***DeKalb:*** You do.

***Lafayette:*** I don’t.

***DeKalb:*** You do.

***Lafayette:*** Think about it like this.

***DeKalb:*** I rest my case. Again.

***Lafayette:*** (Waves DeKalb off.) Pay attention. If I can convince him, he can help with men and money. His connections…

***DeKalb:*** You said that already. It’s not going to happen. He’s not going to tell you what you want to hear. Do you know…Here’s what you want from him…Do you want to Know?

***Lafayette:*** What? Tell me what I want.

***DeKalb:*** The money is a sidebar. You want his blessing. That’s the right word. Not permission. They’re not the same thing. People use them like they’re the same, but they’re not. You want his blessing. You want him to anoint you. I don’t know why you want it, but you do. Admit it…don’t you?

***Lafayette:*** (A moment.) Yes.

***DeKalb:*** Here’s the thing: you won’t get it.

***Lafayette:*** “You won’t amount to anything.” That’s the last thing he said to me.

***DeKalb:*** You analyze too much. You want all the facts. Sometimes you just have to do it…without all the facts.

***Lafayette:*** Are you finished?

***DeKalb:*** Do we sail or not?

***Lafayette:*** (Pause.) Yes.

***DeKalb:*** Finally!

***Lafayette:*** But not to America.

***DeKalb:*** (Throws up his hands.) I’m done.

***Lafayette:*** (Holds up his hand as if to explain.) Everything you say may be true. I’m learning. Maybe the Duc d’Ayen is unreasonable. Maybe he does want me arrested. Maybe so. Still. I want him on my side. It matters to me.

***DeKalb:*** You’re a fool.

***Lafayette:*** Then you’re a good friend to a fool.

***DeKalb:*** Don’t get sentimental…You’re not going to kiss me or something, are you?

***Lafayette:*** No. I don’t kiss ugly. (Both raise their coffee cups in salute.) I know…you tell me what I need to hear.

***DeKalb:*** So. If not America…

***Lafayette:*** (Unrolls map on his desk. Points.) Here we are. From Bordeaux we sail down the Garonne. Then west. Down the coast of France. The Bay of Biscay. To Spain. There’s safe harbor at San Sebastian.

***DeKalb:*** (Sighs.) At least we’ll be out of France. Then what?

***Lafayette:*** I don’t know. I’ll figure it out.

***DeKalb:*** I’ll say this: your heart’s in the right place. It’s your head that’s muddled.

***Lafayette:*** You’re not going to kiss me or something, are you?

***DeKalb:*** (Waves him off.) Fine. At least. First thing in the morning. Tuesday, March 25th. We sail.

(Lights dim.)