Scene Twelve

(Aboard “The Victory” at San Sebastian Harbor, Spain. March 31, 1777, having arrived March 28, 1777. A courier has just departed. Lafayette sitting in chair behind his desk, facing downstage, left. On the left corner of the desk, facing downstage, is a chessboard with pieces deployed. DeKalb enters door downstage right. Window upstage right. Mid-morning.)

***DeKalb:*** (Looking over his shoulder, visually tracking the courier who has just left.) Who was that? (Lafayette preoccupied.) Hey! Who was that?

***Lafayette:*** (Looks up.) Courier. (Back to preoccupation.)

***DeKalb:*** Well?

***Lafayette:*** (Hands letter to DeKalb.) By way of the commandant at the port of Bordeaux.

***DeKalb:*** (Reads the letter.) “You are ordered to join the Duc d’Ayen and his party at Marseilles by April 15, for a tour of Italy.” So and so and so. “Maurepas.” Italy? Why Italy? I’ve been to Italy. Why Italy? Full of Italians. What’s the plan?

***Lafayette:*** (Stands. Walks to window.) This is a beautiful harbor.

***DeKalb:*** We’ve been looking at it for three days now. Le Boursier says the crew is restless. Thirty sailors are not satisfied for long with scenery. And I don’t care if Le Boursier is captain, I don’t trust him.

***Lafayette:*** You’re too suspicious. He’s looking out for our interest. Wasn’t he the one to suggest we move to the harbor at Los Pasajes, because it was safer?

***DeKalb:*** Is that the plan, to move to Los Pasajes? Or how about we stop at Los Pasajes on the return trip from America?

***Lafayette:*** Well. That won’t answer my orders.

***DeKalb:*** Are you serious? Will you really take them seriously?

***Lafayette:*** What do you mean, they’re my orders.

***DeKalb:*** (Reading.) “To Marseilles by April 15th to meet the Duc d’Ayen and his party for a tour of Italy.”

***Lafayette:*** I can’t very well disregard it.

***DeKalb:*** (Does a double take.) Cur non?

***Lafayette:*** Now, you’re not serious.

***DeKalb:*** I am always serious. Listen. We pull up anchor. Point west. And sail. It’s easy.

***Lafayette:*** Not yet.

***DeKalb:*** I don’t understand. Do you want to go to America or not?

***Lafayette:*** Of course. But the orders…

***DeKalb:*** These are not orders. These are suggestions. This is a fable. Go to Italy for what? To help the Pope? To come to the defense of Rome? These orders (brandishes the letter) are not for real.

***Lafayette:*** How can I disobey an order?

***DeKalb:*** (Puts the orders down on the desk.) Charge a canon, take a hill with enemy blasting away at you, those are orders. Take a tour of Italy…I don’t know what it is, but it’s not an order. (Silence.) What’s the plan?

***Lafayette:*** I don’t know.

***DeKalb:*** I…I just do not…maybe you should give it up. Maybe Basmarein will take the boat back, less maybe 25,000 livres, for his trouble.

***Lafayette:*** I’m not selling back to Basmarein.

***DeKalb:*** Fine. Sell it to me. I’ll buy it, keep it in the family.

***Lafayette:*** I won’t sell it to anybody.

***DeKalb:*** We can’t just stay here.

***Lafayette:*** This is my father-in-law’s doing. You and I both know it.

***DeKalb:*** Why does he even care?

***Lafayette:*** What?

***DeKalb:*** Why does it matter to him what you do? You’re only his son-in-law.

***Lafayette:*** Well…

***DeKalb:*** It’s not like you’re his flesh and blood. You go to America, you get killed, what’s it to him?

***Lafayette:*** When you put it that way…there is Adrienne, and the children.

***DeKalb:*** Adrienne is a beauty. With you out of the way she could attract a handsome husband. The children are no account. You don’t see them anyway. I don’t see why the Duc d’Ayen is set on stopping you. Are you holding out? What is it I don’t know?

***Lafayette:*** Nothing. I’m not holding out.

***DeKalb:*** This doesn’t add up. He can’t let you go. You can’t let him go. It makes no sense. I could understand if you were his son.

***Lafayette:*** If I can see him, I can convert him.

***DeKalb:*** To what?

***Lafayette:*** To my way of thinking.

***DeKalb:*** What’s the point?

***Lafayette:*** I can’t leave under this cloud.

***DeKalb:*** What cloud?

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

***DeKalb:*** Nobody understands. Do you?

***Lafayette:*** I do. I’ll ride back to Bordeaux. I’ll ask the commandant for two weeks’ leave. He’ll grant it.

***DeKalb:*** He’ll have you in irons. As soon as he knows you’re there, he’ll have you in irons.

***Lafayette:*** He won’t do that.

***DeKalb:*** Say he gives you two weeks. Then what?

***Lafayette:*** I’ll go straight to Paris. I’ll convince the Duc d’Ayen how worthy this mission is.

***DeKalb:*** Here’s what I think: You are out of your mind.

***Lafayette:*** I’ll leave first thing in the morning, by the post road. The tavern at St. Jean-de-Lutz, then Bayonne, then Bordeaux. This will work.

***DeKalb:*** This won’t work. I’ll write my wife. She’ll be happy to know I’ll be home soon. Do we stay here in the meantime?

***Lafayette:*** No. Move the ship to Los Pasajes. It’s a safer harbor and it will give the men something to do.

***DeKalb:*** At least we’ll be moving.

***Lafayette:*** Promise me…Don’t leave Los Pasajes until you hear from me.

***DeKalb:*** Fine, fine.

***Lafayette:*** Promise.

***DeKalb:*** Sure, sure. Cur non.

(Lights dim.)