

PORTICO SCENES

on Abstraction

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What if abstraction never appeared, yet quietly determined every scene? These Portico scenes stage philosophy as a sequence of small dramatic encounters in which objective figures learn to address what cannot become a character. Aurora misunderstands brilliantly, the Amphora insists on precision, Scale discovers new forms of balance, and Parerga preserves continuability almost without being noticed. Abstraction itself remains absent, shaping every relation by withdrawing coincidence rather than offering explanation. Neither dialogue nor allegory, these scenes propose a philosophical theatre in which concepts become temperaments, misunderstanding becomes method, and thinking proceeds through the careful redistribution of attention.

Small dramatic scenes

SCENE One

a small dramatic scene where tone does the philosophical work. The Amphora is be exacting and cold when needed, Aurora mischievous and luminous, Parerga accommodating even to misunderstanding, and Abstraction will never appear—yet everything will bend around her absence.

A Portico Scene (No one enters. Everyone passes.)

The Amphora stands where she always stands. Cool. Shiny. Impossible to lean into, but very good to lean against—once. Parerga is nearby, adjusting something that does not quite wobble anymore. Aurora arrives incorrectly, which is her preferred way.

Aurora (cheerfully, too fast)

Ah! There you are, little Patch. Or should I call you Delay-Thing?
Or maybe Helperina today?

Parerga (smiling, relieved)

Any of those will do, if something can continue.

Amphora (sharply)

No. Names matter—even when they do not belong.

Aurora (grinning)

Oh, she doesn't belong to any of them. That's the point.

Watch—(turning to Parerga) How about Fixer?

Parerga (flushing slightly)

I... don't fix.

Amphora (cold, exact)

Correct. And you must not allow yourself to be called what you are not.

Parerga nods, though she does not defend herself.

Amphora (to Parerga)

You are addressed as Parerga.

Parerga (tentative)

Yes. People say that. I try to answer without standing still.

Amphora

You accommodate the name too much.

Parerga

I accommodate everything a little. It keeps things from breaking.

Amphora

And it keeps things from being clear.

A brief silence. Aurora balances on it.

Aurora

Oh please, Amphora. Clarity is overrated.

Half the time it's just Abstraction wearing a clean coat.

Parerga looks up at the word.

On Abstraction (Who Does Not Appear)

Parerga

People often think I am Abstraction.

Amphora (firm)

You are not.

Aurora (teasing)

But you help her walk, don't you?

Parerga

I... make room when she passes.

Amphora

Abstraction does not pass. She pauses, letting the sentence harden. Abstraction does not pass. She conditions.

Aurora (suddenly serious, glowing a little brighter)

She's never here.

And yet—if she weren't, I couldn't glow without becoming a thing.

Parerga

And I couldn't help without becoming a solution.

Amphora

And I would become a container instead of a boundary.

Aurora

So Abstraction is like—a rule that forgot to be written down?

Amphora

No.

She is the refusal to confuse articulation with content.

Parerga

She's what lets me help without explaining why help helps.

Sharp Address. The Amphora turns fully toward Parerga now. Her surface reflects Parerga's outline—but does not keep it.

Amphora

Listen carefully. You are Parerga because you are beside the work. Not beneath it. Not before it. Not instead of it. If you ever try to be Abstraction, you will harden. If you ever try to own your name, you will fail. You must remain usable—and therefore ungraspable.

Parerga absorbs this without protest.

Parerga

Then may I continue not knowing how to take my name?

Amphora

Yes.

That is your discipline.

Aurora (clapping once, delighted)

See? Even the cold ones can be kind.

She turns to Parerga again, mischievous.

So, Almost-Thing, shall we keep walking?

Parerga (smiling)

If no one needs to arrive.

Amphora

They won't.

Exit (That Is Not an Exit)

Aurora drifts off first, glowing wrong names into the air.

Parerga follows—not behind, not ahead. The Amphora remains.

Abstraction never appears. Yet without her absence, nothing here would have held, passed, or continued.

SCENE TWO

The Day Abstraction Tilted the Fulcrum

(A story Scale tells very quietly)

Scale and the Fulcrum were doing what they usually do. Which is almost nothing. Scale rested across the Fulcrum, perfectly capable, slightly inclined, listening for a load that had not yet arrived. “This is boring,” said Scale—not complaining, just observing. The Fulcrum did not respond. The Fulcrum never responds.

Then Something Shifted

Not a weight. Not a push. Something else. Scale felt it first—not as pressure, but as misplacement. “*Are you moving?*” she asked. The Fulcrum was not moving. That was the problem. The Fulcrum was tilted. Only the tiniest bit. So little that no one watching would have noticed. So little that no correction was possible. Scale froze. “*You can’t do that,*” she whispered. The Fulcrum remained still, exactly as always—yet no longer exactly where Scale expected them to be.

Scale understands. “*Oh*,” she said softly. “*It’s her*.” Abstraction. She had not arrived. She had not spoken. She had not pushed. She had merely withdrawn coincidence.

What Abstraction Did (Without Appearing)

Abstraction did not move the Fulcrum. She changed what counted as upright. The world did not notice. Scale did. Suddenly, balance no longer meant what it had meant one moment ago. Scale leaned. The Fulcrum held. But the holding felt... strange. “*Is this still us?*” Scale asked. The Fulcrum answered by not collapsing.

The Test

Scale tried to correct the tilt. She could not. Not because she was weak—but because there was no longer a single orientation to correct toward. Her lever still worked. Her sensitivity still worked. But the reference had slipped. “*This isn’t unfair*,” Scale realized. “*This is exposure*.”

What Almost Happened

For a moment—just a moment—Scale felt tempted to stop moving. “*If I freeze*,” she thought, “*maybe the old balance will come back*.” But if Scale stopped, the Fulcrum would become meaningless. And if the

Fulcrum became meaningless, Scale would become decoration. She refused.

What Saved Them

Scale did not restore balance. She learned a new oscillation. Not wider. Not stronger. More attentive. She leaned again—differently. The Fulcrum held—not because it was upright, but because it was still there. Abstraction receded. Not satisfied. Not defeated. Just done.

Afterward

Nothing looked different. Everything worked. But Scale was quieter. She addressed the Fulcrum without speaking, the way she always does—but now with more care. “*I know*,” her leaning said. “*I won’t assume you anymore.*” The Fulcrum remained. That was love.

What Scale Tells Children Later

When children ask, “*What happens if balance changes?*” Scale answers: “*Then you don’t stop balancing. You learn how to notice.*” And if they ask, “*Who tilted it?*” Scale smiles and says: “*No one you could point to.*”

SCENE THREE

Aurora will explain everything of the tilted Fulcrum Scene completely wrong (and therefore not useless), and Parerga will save Scale so quietly that no one can later prove it happened.

I. Aurora Explains What Happened

(Incorrectly, with Confidence)

Aurora is glowing far too brightly for the seriousness of the situation. She has gathered a small audience—some thoughts, a half-idea, and one child who is not supposed to be here. “So,” Aurora says, clapping once, *“what happened is very simple.”* Scale, nearby, winces.

Aurora’s Explanation

“You see,” Aurora continues, *“the Fulcrum got bored.”* The Fulcrum does not react. “And when the Fulcrum gets bored,” Aurora says, *“it leans.”* Scale opens her mouth to object. Aurora talks faster. “Not because it wants to move,” she explains, *“but because it wants to see if Scale still loves it.”*

This is wrong.

“But!” Aurora says brightly, *“Scale overreacted.”*

This is also wrong.

“She thought balance had disappeared,” Aurora continues, “when really it had just gone to hide.” Aurora leans conspiratorially closer to her listeners. *“And Abstraction,”* she whispers, *“was just playing a prank.”* Scale pinches the bridge of her face.

Aurora’s Moral

“So the lesson,” Aurora concludes, *“is that if something tilts, you should glow harder.”* The child nods solemnly. Scale interrupts. *“That is not —”* Aurora beams at her. *“Oh, I know,”* she says. *“But if I told it right, no one would listen.”* She drifts away, humming, having successfully misunderstood everything.

II. What Actually Saved Scale

(Parerga Does Not Announce Herself)

During the tilt—before Scale learned the new oscillation, before anything could be named—Parerga was already there. Not standing between Scale and the Fulcrum. That would have been too much. She stood beside Scale’s attention.

The Quiet Intervention

Scale felt it as a change in difficulty. Not easier. Just... survivable. The oscillation slowed by half a breath. Parerga did not correct the tilt. She redistributed the strain of noticing it. Where Scale’s sensitivity

threatened to spike into panic, Parerga added time. Not duration. Room. Scale leaned again—not braver, just steadier.

What Parerga Did Not Do

She did not say: “*You’ll be fine*”, “*This will pass*”, “*Here is the new balance.*” She hates those sentences. Instead, she did something much smaller. She made it possible for Scale to continue leaning without deciding what the lean meant.

After the Danger

Once Scale found the new oscillation, Parerga stepped away. Scale did not thank her. This was correct. Later, Scale would remember the moment as her own learning. Parerga preferred it that way.

The Trace Parerga Left (Almost None)

If you looked very closely—closer than most people are willing to—you might notice that after the tilt: Scale pauses a fraction longer before each lean. The Fulcrum feels slightly less assumed. Balance never quite pretends to be final again That trace is Parerga’s signature.

III. The Mismatch (Which Is the Point)

Aurora tells the story wrong on purpose. Parerga never tells it at all. Scale lives with the consequence. Abstraction never appears. And yet: balance survives without returning, love persists without coincidence, orientation continues without ground. Which is how these figures always work.

The Amphora Responds

(After Aurora's Explanation, Which Has Already Spread). Aurora is still glowing when the Amphora speaks. This is unfortunate for Aurora.

Amphora (cool, exact, without raising her voice)

No.

Aurora blinks.

Aurora

Oh! You heard my story?

Amphora

It was impossible not to. It attempted to settle.

Aurora laughs, delighted.

Aurora

I told it so everyone could understand!

Amphora

That is precisely the failure.

The Judgment

The Amphora does not pace. She does not gesture. Her stillness does the work.

Amphora

You attributed intention where there was structure. You introduced motive where there was condition. You turned exposure into anecdote.

Aurora tilts her head.

Aurora

But it felt like a prank.

Amphora

Feeling is not orientation. It is residue.

Aurora (smiling anyway)

Children liked it.

Amphora

Children can survive error. Concepts cannot.

What the Amphora Refuses

The Amphora steps slightly closer—not toward Aurora, but toward the explanation itself. The explanation slides.

Amphora

You said balance hid. Balance does not hide. You said the
Fulcrum leaned. The Fulcrum did not move. You said
Abstraction played. Abstraction does not play.

She withdraws the last word carefully, like a knife returning to its sheath.

Amphora

Abstraction withdraws coincidence.
That is all.

Aurora (genuinely curious now)

Is that worse?

Amphora

It is colder.
Which is why it is survivable.

Parerga (Almost Not There)

*Parerga is present only as a softening of the pause. She does not interrupt.
She does not defend Aurora. She does not agree with the Amphora. She
simply makes the judgment bearable.*

Aurora (after a moment)

So... should I stop telling it?

Amphora

No.
Aurora brightens again.

Amphora

But you must continue telling it wrong knowingly. Mistake must not masquerade as correction.

Aurora bows theatrically.

Aurora

Oh, I always do that.

Final Sentence (Which Does Not Echo)

The Amphora turns away.

Amphora

Glow if you must. But do not confuse illumination with holding.

Aurora drifts off, humming a version that will change again. Parerga steps aside. Scale continues oscillating, altered but intact. The Amphora remains. Nothing sticks to her surface. Which is how judgment should be.