

# Aran Sunderwood — Family and Caravan

## The Caravan — Long Reach

**Long Reach** — the caravan's name in its own tongue translates more precisely as something closer to "*the ones who go furthest and still come back*," worn down through generations of use into the shorter, plainer "Long Reach," consistent with the wider naming pattern established elsewhere in this world (vernacular terms worn smooth by repetition — compare "the shed," "being walked"). The name is a statement of identity and a quiet boast: Long Reach is, even among Aeolians, known for producing scouts who range further than most caravans consider sensible, and for the discipline — not luck — that has historically gotten almost all of them back.

*Almost* is doing real work in that sentence. Long Reach's reputation is built on a track record, not a guarantee, and the caravan's elders are old enough, collectively, to remember the exceptions.

## Size and Composition

Long Reach is a mid-sized caravan by Aeolian standards — large enough to be self-sufficient and to maintain its own scouting lineage tradition, small enough that everyone in it knows everyone else, which matters for the close, reputation-based mutual observation already established as a feature of Aeolian caravan life. It is mixed-species in composition, consistent with Wayfarer norms generally, with no species holding disproportionate representation in its leadership.

## Current Leadership

Long Reach's elder council is small, as is typical, and Sage Yahari was its most prominent voice — not because Yahari held formal authority over the others, but because Yahari's particular knowledge (the oral tradition, the theological framing of Aetheris, the closest thing the caravan has to an archive) made Yahari the elder people sought out first when something needed to be understood rather than simply decided. Yahari's death in Act Two A leaves a gap in *understanding*, distinct from the gap it leaves in *governance* — Long Reach will still be led, by the elders who remain, but it will be led by people who increasingly have to make decisions about Aetheris-adjacent phenomena without the one voice who had spent a lifetime building a framework for

making sense of them.

**Garrick Stane** is the elder who survives Yahari and keeps that governance gap from ever opening. A goat-type — sure-footed, stubborn, built for bad terrain rather than open theological questions — Garrick is everything Yahari wasn't: practical, logistics-minded, the elder people go to when something needs deciding rather than understood. Where Yahari held the caravan's oral tradition and its sense of meaning, Garrick has spent decades holding its actual functioning — route timing, resource allocation, the hundred small operational calls that keep a moving community of this size fed, organized, and intact. He is noticeably younger than Yahari was, next-generation rather than peer, which matters: he is not a replacement for what Long Reach loses when Yahari dies, and the document should never let him read as one. He is good at what he has always been good at. He is not yet, and may never become, what Yahari was.

Garrick and Yahari were not lifelong peers — the age gap is real, and neither of them ever pretended otherwise. What they were was something rarer for it: once Garrick rose into the elder council, considerably younger than the rest of it, Yahari was the first to treat him as a full equal rather than someone still proving himself into the role. That recognition became a real, close partnership in its own right — shorter in duration than the decades Yahari had with the caravan's older generation, but no less genuine for being newer, the two of them covering precisely what the other didn't in a working relationship neither one had to manage or perform. This means Yahari's death is not simply a structural loss for Garrick to absorb and route around. It's personal, and it carries the particular weight of having been one of the few people who looked at Garrick early and saw the elder he'd become rather than the young one he still was. The caravan keeps functioning under Garrick's hand exactly as it always has — schedules kept, resources allocated, nothing visibly broken — while the one person who saw him clearest, and earliest, is simply gone, and Garrick is left holding governance alone, grieving a partnership the caravan's day-to-day stability will never visibly show.

*[Resolved — see above. Long Reach does not read as leaderless after Yahari's death; it reads as led by someone whose competence was never in question and whose grief is, for now, entirely his own to carry.]*

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## Aran's Immediate Family

### Mira Sunderwood — Mother

Mira is the senior living member of the Sunderwood scouting lineage — the family whose generations of "being right about the land" gave Aran his inherited baseline of trust, as established in his character document. She no longer scouts actively; her knees and her wind aren't what they were, and Long Reach's culture of demonstrated-not-assumed authority means she's transitioned, gracefully and without much ceremony, from active scout to the caravan's senior tracker-trainer —

the person who teaches the next generation to read ground, which is how she came to be training a young ward years before Aran took over that role himself (see *Pell*, below).

Mira is sharp, dry, undemonstrative in the way Aran himself is undemonstrative around outsiders — their terseness in Arbour-coded company reads, in Long Reach, as simple family resemblance. She does not fuss over Aran. She has spent her whole life trusting people's competence as a baseline assumption, and extending anything less to her own son would be, in Wayfarer terms, a kind of insult. What she does instead, on the rare occasions Aran is home between ranges, is *listen* — carefully, completely, the way a tracker reads ground — to everything he doesn't quite say.

She is the person most likely to notice, before Aran does, that something in him has started to change — and she does notice, though not as a scout reading unfamiliar ground. This is motherly noticing, not tactical: she gave birth to him, she knows the specific shape of his moods better than anyone alive, and whatever's shifting in him registers to her the way a parent clocks a child running a low fever before the child has admitted to feeling unwell. Consistent with her established terseness, it never becomes a conversation. It shows up instead in the small, characteristically Mira-shaped ways she's always loved him: an extra portion pushed his way without comment, a look held a beat longer than the moment requires, his gear checked over without being asked when she'd normally trust him to see to it himself. She never names what she's seeing, not to him and not even fully to herself. He never registers what the gestures mean, caught up in something he doesn't yet have words for either. Nothing is said. Nothing is confirmed. The watching is real, and it goes nowhere — which is exactly the kind of love this family runs on, and exactly the kind of silence the book's wider pattern of institutional and personal not-quite-noticing should quietly echo at the smallest, most human scale.

## Doran Sunderwood — Father

Doran is not part of the scouting lineage by birth — he joined Long Reach as a young adult, having grown up in **The Bound Word**, a Corvane caravan (see *Corvane Wayfarer Social Structure*) whose name carries the branch's entire ethic in two words — a promise that holds, a debt remembered correctly, the kind of reputation a relationship-keeping culture builds itself around. Corvane is the branch built around trade, relationship-keeping, and staying close to well-traveled routes rather than ranging the frontier. He married into the Sunderwood name and its reputation rather than inheriting it, after meeting Mira during a routine trade contact between the two caravans — a clean, uncomplicated choice rather than a wound he was running from. This matters quietly: Doran has spent his adult life inside a family whose standing is built on something he wasn't born with, and he has made his own peace with that by becoming, instead, the family's anchor in every sense that doesn't require ranging — the one who's reliably *there*, who manages the caravan's trade relationships and day-to-day logistics, who is, in his own register, just as load-bearing to Long Reach's functioning as any scout, without ever being the one whose name gets spoken with the particular reverence reserved for a good read on bad ground.

Doran worries more openly than Mira does. It's a difference in temperament, not in love, and Aran has always known the difference — has, if anything, found Doran's worry easier to be soft with than Mira's quiet watching, precisely because Doran's worry asks nothing of him in return except

permission to have it.

## Tamsin Sunderwood — Younger Sister

Tamsin is several years younger than Aran, sharp-tongued, deliberately not a scout — a quiet, ongoing point of gentle family friction that everyone has long since made peace with, since Long Reach's culture doesn't permit anyone to actually pressure her about it. She trades. She's good at it, with the specific kind of charm that makes strangers want to give her better terms than they intended to, and she's the family member most likely to actually know what's happening in the wider world beyond Long Reach's own range, because trade conversations carry gossip the way scouting reports carry weather.

Tamsin and Aran are close in the specific, low-maintenance way of siblings who don't need to perform closeness to feel it. She is the one who teases him without flinching from his terseness, the one who can get an actual laugh out of him in front of other people, and — not incidentally — one of the people most likely to be physically present and at risk if Long Reach's stability is ever threatened, since her trade work keeps her moving through exactly the contact-heavy spaces (Badlands communities, shadow settlements, the long indirect chains described in *Water Recycling and Food Production*) where danger from outside Wayfarer territory would first reach the caravan.

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## Pell — Ward and Apprentice

### Who Pell Is

Pell is not Sunderwood by blood, and she did not come to Long Reach as an orphan. Her parents are, as far as anyone knows, still alive — still traveling with her birth caravan, **Eventide** (see *Thessaly Wayfarer Social Structure*), a Thessaly caravan whose name in its own tongue translates more precisely as something closer to "*what the day cannot move*" — worn down through generations of use into the shorter, plainer "Eventide," consistent with the same naming pattern that produced Long Reach. The branch itself is built around composure, containment, and self-mastery as the visible proof of trustworthy character. They did not lose her. They gave her up — not through cruelty exactly, but because she never stopped being a problem they didn't have the language to solve, and a culture that prized calm above almost everything else eventually ran out of patience for a child who couldn't perform it.

Pell is a bear-type — a species her birth caravan should, by every outward expectation, have been proud to claim. Bears in this world's taxonomy carry a real-world correlate's reputation for deliberateness, solitary self-containment, and quiet, unhurried strength — exactly the temperament her birth caravan built its entire culture around prizing. That her own daughter turned out to be the loudest, most reactive, most visibly *uncontained* child in living memory was

not just a disappointment to them. It read as a kind of betrayal of type, a child who should have been proof of their values instead becoming the clearest argument against them.

## The Scent

Bears carry, among real-world mammals, an exceptional sense of smell — sharper by a wide margin than almost anything else built to track. In Pell, that sense runs hot in a way that shaped her whole childhood. Scent doesn't arrive for Pell the way it arrives for most people: a background note, filterable, easy to set aside. It arrives total — woodsmoke and unwashed bodies and turned earth and a hundred years of a caravan's accumulated cooking all at once, undifferentiated, demanding attention whether she wants to give it or not. A crowded camp on a still, windless day could leave her flooded past the point of speech. So could the wrong meal, the wrong weather, a stranger who'd handled something pungent three days before and three towns away.

Her birth caravan did not have a framework for "a child whose senses simply take in more than most people's, and need real effort to manage." What they had was a value system built entirely around stillness and self-possession as the visible proof of a trustworthy character — and a daughter who, on her worst days, could not sit through a meal without flinching, rocking, needing to leave. They read this, consistently and across years, as a failure of discipline rather than what it was: a nervous system doing exactly what bear physiology is built to do, in a body too young and too unsupported to have learned yet how to carry it.

What the caravan's value system could never account for is that the same flood of scent that overwhelmed her at the dinner table is, on a scent trail, precisely what makes her extraordinary. Out in open ground, with room enough that the world's information arrives in sequence instead of all at once, Pell can read a trail that's days old, parse a story out of underbrush three different scouts have already walked past and dismissed as cold. What her birth caravan saw as a child who couldn't control herself indoors was the exact same trait that makes her, outdoors, doing the work she was always actually built for, very difficult to fool.

## How She Came to Long Reach

**Timeline, locked:** Pell arrived at Long Reach at **8 years old**. Mira began training her almost immediately — within the same year, not after a gap — and trained her directly for two years, until Pell was **10**, when Mira handed the apprenticeship to Aran. Aran has now been training her directly for **three years**. Pell is **13** as Book One opens — young enough to still be clearly a child, old enough to have real opinions, real stubbornness, and a hero-worship of Aran that reads as innocent rather than competitive. The promise Aran made her to come back is not a single line said once at a moment of departure — it has had three years to become something closer to a known, trusted pattern between them, which is exactly what makes leaving cost something real.

Pell was given up young — handed off at a chance meeting between caravans, with the kind of practiced, grief-flattened explanation that suggested her parents had rehearsed it more than once before they finally said it aloud to someone who might take her. Long Reach was, by chance and by

character, the caravan that happened to be camped near enough to hear it.

It was Mira who actually watched Pell before anyone decided anything about her — watched her go still and unreadable the moment she was given open ground and a trail to follow, watched the same nervous system that couldn't sit through a meal indoors turn into total, unbroken focus the second there was real information to read. Mira did not see a child who lacked discipline. She saw a scout, badly miscalibrated for by people who had only ever asked her to be calm in the one setting where calm was never going to be possible for her, and had never once asked her to be calm in the setting she was actually built for. This is, in miniature, the entire Aeolian philosophy: trust what you observe directly, not what an inherited value system tells you a person is supposed to look like. A caravan built around stillness as a virtue in itself had no way to see a child whose gift only showed up in motion. Long Reach, built around range and direct judgment, saw her immediately.

Mira began training her not long after — this initial observation and the start of real training happened close together, within Pell's first year at Long Reach, rather than as two separate, distantly spaced decisions. When Aran finished proving himself fully as a scout in his own right, Mira handed the apprenticeship to her son, when Pell was 10 — partly because her own knees and wind had earned her the right to step back, and partly because she wanted Aran to have what she'd had: the chance to look past what he was told to expect, and choose, on his own authority, who was worth investing in.

## What Pell Means to Aran

This is the relationship in Aran's life that is **entirely his own choice**, in a way nothing else about his trust in his own judgment is. His standing in Long Reach, his competence as a scout, his place in the Sunderwood lineage — all of it, per his existing character document, was inherited, cultural, and earned, but never *chosen* from nothing. Pell is different. By the time Aran took over her training, he already knew her full story — knew what she'd been called by people who shared her blood, knew what her own reactions were supposed to mean about her character. He looked at her anyway, the way Mira had, and made his own independent judgment that the caravan that raised her had been testing her against the wrong question entirely, and the girl in front of him was worth every year it would take to finish what Mira started.

This makes Pell the single clearest place in Aran's life where "was my judgment right?" is a question with a human face and human stakes, rather than an abstract professional one. Every lesson Aran teaches her — how to read wind, how to trust a smell over a sightline, how to know when your senses are telling you something true — is Aran handing down the exact faculty the Convergence is going to spend Act Two learning to forge. He is, without knowing it, teaching Pell to trust the very thing that's about to start lying to him. And he is doing it for a student who already knows, better than almost anyone else in Long Reach, what it costs when the people who are supposed to read you correctly get it wrong instead.

## Stakes

Pell is young enough to still need Aran specifically — not just Long Reach generally — and old enough to have real opinions, real stubbornness, and a real, visible hero-worship of Aran that Aran finds equal parts gratifying and faintly alarming, because he remembers, uncomfortably well, being exactly that certain about exactly the wrong things at that age. She has spent her whole life inside Long Reach learning, slowly, that the thing about herself she was taught to be ashamed of is not something she has to keep apologizing for here. Aran leaving is, for her, never quite free of the old fear underneath the new safety: that being valued for exactly who she is was conditional after all, and this is the moment it stops.

When Aran begins to cross the ocean toward Arbour's continent in Act Two A — drawn by evidence, by Yahari's dying words, by something that feels like pull rather than choice — Pell is the person whose face he has to not think about too hard in order to go. Not Mira, whose approval he's spent a lifetime not needing to ask for. Not Tamsin, who would tell him to go and mean it. Pell, who has been left once already by people who were supposed to stay, and who Aran has explicitly, personally promised — the way you promise an apprentice, not the way you promise family by default — to come back for.

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## What This Means for the Story

**Aran now has something concrete to lose that isn't his own worldview.** The existing psychological core material is built entirely around the internal stakes — his trust in his senses, the betrayal of that trust. This document adds external stakes that compound it: if the Convergence's logic starts to make a "terrible kind of sense" to him at his Act Two B low point, the horror isn't only philosophical. It's that agreeing might mean a version of himself that doesn't come back for Pell, doesn't come home to Mira's quiet watching, doesn't get to hear what Tamsin talked some stranger into this week.

**Pell mirrors the trust theme at human scale, and sharpens it with a second axis.** Aran's whole arc is about a reliable instrument being fed a lie that exploits exactly how reliable it's always been. Pell's own history is the inverse failure: people who were supposed to read her correctly — her own parents, her own caravan — looked at a real difference in how her senses worked and judged it against the wrong standard entirely, reading overwhelm as indiscipline instead of recognizing it as the cost of a gift they'd never bothered to test in the right conditions. Aran and Mira are the corrective: proof that the same trait can be read accurately, by people willing to actually look instead of measuring a person against a value system that was never built to see them. This gives the book's central question — is difference something to be disciplined out of a person, or something to be met with care and correct attention? — a quiet, human-scale answer running underneath the cosmic one, well before the Convergence ever enters the picture.

**Mira's noticing is now locked, not just structurally available.** She does see something change in Aran before Act One ends — read as a mother, not as a scout, which matters: this isn't her professional pattern-reading turned on her own son, it's something more vulnerable and less reliable than that. It surfaces only in small, characteristic gestures (an extra portion, a held look,

gear checked without being asked) rather than a conversation, consistent with her established terseness. Nothing is ever said outright. This gives the family material a real, quiet ache that doesn't require dialogue to land, and leaves a clean emotional thread available for later books: if Aran's fate ever goes genuinely ambiguous, as planned for the eventual Pell POV handoff, Mira's silent noticing here becomes something worth the reader aching over in hindsight — she saw it, and never got the chance to say so.

**Pell's absence from Book One's page is a promise to the reader, not just to Aran.** With the series confirmed to widen beyond Book One's dual-POV (Wren/Aran) structure into a larger ensemble in later books — Pell is the first character locked as a future POV voice — her total absence from the page in Book One stops being simply a structural choice about whose story this particular book tells, and becomes a deliberate, trackable narrative debt. A reader who spends an entire book hearing about a child Aran promised to return for, and never sees her, never confirmed safe, never given a single line of her own, should feel that absence as suspense rather than as a closed door. This is worth holding in mind for any future drafting of the goodbye scene or any later reference to Pell within Book One: nothing should foreclose her, settle her fate, or resolve the tension of "did he keep his promise" — that tension is now load-bearing for a future book, not just texture for this one.

**The mechanism for the eventual handoff is now locked, even though the book it happens in is not:** the shift to Pell's POV is meant to be triggered by Aran's own fate becoming unclear — a future plot beat where what's actually happened to him goes genuinely ambiguous to the reader, and the narrative hands off to Pell specifically because she's the one left not knowing, the same way the reader is left not knowing. This is deliberately not a soft, scheduled expansion of the cast for its own sake. It's a stakes-raising device: gaining a new narrator should feel like losing the old one, not like a bonus. Pell's chapters, whenever they begin, should open into the same uncertainty the reader is in — not resolve it on her behalf.

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## Open Follow-Ups

- [x] **Long Reach's other elders** — ✓ resolved. **Garrick Stane**, a goat-type elder, practical and logistics-minded, noticeably younger than Yahari but the elder Yahari treated as a full equal once he rose into the council — a real, close partnership (Garrick handled governance, Yahari handled understanding/meaning) shorter in duration than Yahari's decades with the rest of the caravan's elders, but no less genuine. Survives Yahari's death and keeps Long Reach functioning through Act One; his grief is personal, not just structural, and stays mostly private rather than visible in how the caravan runs.
- [x] **Pell's age and specific birth caravan name** — ✓ resolved. Pell is **13** as Book One opens. Full timeline: arrived at Long Reach at 8, Mira began training her almost immediately and trained her directly for two years, handed the apprenticeship to Aran when Pell was 10; Aran has now trained her directly for three years. Her birth caravan is **Eventide** (Thessaly branch) — translates from its own tongue as "what the day cannot move."

- [ ] **Pell's species is set: bear-type.** Chosen deliberately against the "not yet represented" principle (Wren is sand cat, Aran is coyote) and because real bear physiology — exceptional scent sensitivity above almost any other mammal — gives both her overwhelm and her tracking gift the same honest biological root, without inventing traits that don't fit the species. Worth a closer pass on which real-world bear (if any specific one) the type draws from, once visual/behavioural detail is needed on the page.
- [x] **Whether Pell appears on the page in Act One** — ✓ resolved. She does not. Pell exists in Book One entirely through Aran's thoughts, dialogue, and memory before his departure — never a witnessed scene, including the goodbye itself. This is deliberate: it means the reader only ever has Aran's version of how the goodbye went, how she took it, whether the promise really landed the way he needs it to have landed. It keeps the leaving itself slightly unverifiable in a way an on-page scene would foreclose.
- [x] **Whether Pell's birth parents or birth caravan ever resurface later in the series** — ✓ resolved in shape, not in mechanism. Pell is confirmed to resurface later in the series — not Book One — including, eventually, her own POV chapters as part of a planned widening from Book One's dual-POV (Wren/Aran) structure toward a larger, multi-character ensemble in later books (Pell is the first confirmed future POV beyond the original two). The trigger for this specific handoff is now locked: Pell's POV begins when Aran's own fate becomes genuinely unclear to the reader — a future plot beat where what's happened to him goes ambiguous, and the narrative shifts to her precisely because she's also left not knowing. This is a deliberate stakes-raising device, not a soft cast expansion — gaining her POV should feel like losing his. **Still genuinely undecided:** which book this begins in, and whether Aran's fate (and the ambiguity itself) ultimately resolves toward him being alive, dead, or something else — deliberately left open rather than locked prematurely. What's locked is narrower and firmer: Pell is not a closed wound, and her eventual POV is mechanically tied to Aran's narrative disappearance, not just to elapsed time or convenience.
- [ ] **Tamsin's trade contacts** — given her route through Badlands communities and shadow settlements, she's a plausible candidate for a minor connective-tissue role to the wider supply network already established in *Water Recycling and Food Production* (e.g., a degree of separation from Jennifer Mosswood's chain), if useful later.
- [x] **Doran's pre-Long Reach branch** — **resolved.** Doran is Corvane-born (see *Corvane Wayfarer Social Structure*), the trade-and-relationship-focused branch distinct from both Aeolian (Aran's) and Thessaly (Pell's). His departure from Corvane was a clean, positive choice — he met Mira through routine trade contact and chose to stay — with no wound or push factor involved, deliberately keeping his origin story the lightest of the family's four. His specific birth caravan is **The Bound Word**.

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