

Factions & Power Structures

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Aeolian Wayfarer Social Structure

Overview — One Branch Among Several

"Wayfarer" is not a single, undifferentiated culture any more than "Arbour resident" is. It is a shared root — the same gradual, multi-generational divergence described in *Wayfarer Divergence*, the same core values of mobility, accumulated wisdom over institutional record, and species-blind authority — expressed differently by different branches that grew apart from one another the same way the original Wayfarers grew apart from Arbour: gradually, through drift, not through any single schism or declared split.

No branch rejects the core Wayfarer values. What differs is **emphasis** — which value a given branch has built its entire way of life around expressing most fully, often at some cost to how fully it expresses the others. This document covers that general structure, then focuses on the Aeolians specifically.

[Updated — this document sketches the Aeolians in full. Two other branches are now fully sketched in their own companion documents: Thessaly Wayfarer Social Structure (Pell's birth branch — composure and self-mastery) and Corvane Wayfarer Social Structure (Doran's birth branch — trade and relationship-keeping). A fuller map of every Wayfarer branch, beyond these three, remains its own future undertaking if the series needs one — nothing here should be read as a complete taxonomy.]

What All Wayfarer Branches Share

Regardless of branch, every Wayfarer community shares:

- **Caravan as the basic unit.** Status, lineage, and belonging travel with the caravan, not with a fixed place.
- **Authority by accumulated wisdom,** not species, age alone, or inherited rank in the Arbour sense — though, as the Aeolians demonstrate, a *family's* accumulated reputation

for having been reliably right, generation after generation, can function as something close to inherited standing, even inside a culture that would reject the word "inherited" if you used it to describe Arbour's tier system. The distinction Wayfarers draw is that the family's standing is never permanent or unconditional — it has to keep being demonstrated, by someone, or it fades within a generation or two, the way Cael Morrow's story faded into half-remembered legend in the Sprawl rather than staying fixed as official record.

- **Oral tradition as the primary mode of carrying knowledge, identity, and history** — a direct consequence of the gradual, undocumented nature of the original divergence and crossing (see *Wayfarer Divergence*). No founding document exists for any branch, Aeolian included, because the culture that produced the Wayfarers in the first place was never the kind that produces founding documents.
 - **Species-blind structure.** No branch organizes status around species. This is treated as settled and non-negotiable across all branches — the one value no branch has been observed to deemphasize, likely because it was never a value under active negotiation in the first place; it was simply what happened when status stopped attaching to an institutional record that didn't exist out there.
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What Distinguishes Branches From One Another

Branches differ along a few recognizable axes, all of them philosophical/cultural rather than geographic or generational in the strict sense — though geography and generation both shape how a branch's particular emphasis gets expressed in practice:

- **Range tolerance** — how far and how readily a branch moves, and how comfortable it is operating at the edge of known, mapped territory versus within well-traveled routes.
 - **Contact posture** — how much a branch engages with outsiders: Arbour traders, Badlands communities, other Wayfarer branches, the fixed settlements and other nomadic groups of the wider Free Territories.
 - **Relationship to the Installations and the Convergence/Aetheris** — every branch inherits the same general theological uncertainty (ascension vs. erasure, never resolved), but branches differ in how directly they engage with that uncertainty: some treat Installations as sites to avoid entirely, some as sites worth studying carefully from a respectful distance, and at least one — the Aeolians — produces the scouts who end up closest to them, by profession rather than by belief.
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The Aeolians

Name and Character

The Aeolian branch takes its name from an old root associated with wind and weather — fitting for a branch whose entire cultural identity orients around reading what moves: air, land, water, the subtle changes that precede larger ones. Where some Wayfarer branches lean toward deep contact-network building or toward careful, settled-adjacent caution, the Aeolians lean toward range. They are the branch most comfortable at the genuine frontier — the deep Badlands, the coastal edges, the territory closest to where the known map runs out.

This is not recklessness. It is a specific, disciplined expression of the shared Wayfarer value of trusting direct observation over secondhand report: if you want to know what's actually happening at the edge of things, you go to the edge, you read it yourself, and you bring back what you learned. Aeolian caravans produce, disproportionately, the scouts and trackers who range furthest from the body of Wayfarer territory — which is precisely why an Aeolian, rather than a member of a more contact-averse or settlement-anchored branch, is positioned to be the one who finds something in the Badlands that shouldn't exist, and the one who eventually crosses an entire ocean following evidence rather than instruction.

Caravan Structure

Aeolian caravans are, consistent with the wider Wayfarer pattern, organized around extended family groups with a respected elder or small council of elders providing the accumulated-wisdom authority the wider culture is built on. What distinguishes Aeolian caravan structure specifically is a stronger-than-average emphasis on **scouting lineages** — families whose accumulated reputation has been built, across generations, specifically around reading land and danger correctly for the caravan's safety, the same way a family elsewhere might be known for healing, or for trade relationships, or for storytelling.

Aran's lineage is one of these. "A lineage already respected within his caravan" — the existing baseline established in his character document — is best read as exactly this: not noble blood in the Arbour sense, but a family whose name has, for as long as anyone in the caravan can recall, been reliably attached to *being right about the land*. That inheritance is real and it is also conditional in the specifically Wayfarer way: it gave Aran a baseline of trust to build on, not a guarantee. What he did with it — becoming a scout and tracker whose readings people's safety has come to depend on, routinely and without ceremony — is the part that's his.

Contact Posture

Aeolians sit toward the more outward-engaging end of the Wayfarer spectrum, a natural consequence of being the branch that ranges furthest. Aeolian scouts are disproportionately the ones who maintain whatever loose, intermittent contact exists between Wayfarer communities and the Badlands' settled and nomadic populations, and — per existing canon in *Water Recycling and Food Production* — Aeolian-adjacent scouts are very likely among the "Wayfarer advance scouts who periodically cross the ocean," making first and repeated contact with Badlands communities on Arbour's continent and carrying back seed varieties, cultivar knowledge, and information through the long, indirect chain that eventually reaches vendors like Jennifer Mosswood.

This contact posture is also, quietly, why Aran's particular crossing toward Arbour in Act Two A doesn't read as a total break from everything he's known. It's an intensification of something Aeolians already do, not an invention of something they don't.

Relationship to the Installations

Aeolian range puts its scouts in closer, more frequent proximity to Installations than most other branches — not because Aeolians are less reverent or less wary of them than other Wayfarers, but because a branch whose entire purpose is reading unfamiliar land inevitably encounters more of it. This is the structural reason Aran's accidental discovery of an ancient, Wayfarer-avoided site (*Five Arks* Thread 3) makes sense as something that happens to him specifically, doing his ordinary job, rather than requiring him to go looking for it. An Aeolian scout ranging at the edge of known territory is exactly the kind of person who stumbles onto something the rest of Wayfarer tradition has spent generations carefully steering around.

Sage Yahari

Sage Yahari — the elder whose "Unknowable God" oral tradition frames Aetheris theologically for Aran, and whose death in Act Two A is a major emotional beat — is best understood as an Aeolian elder specifically, which gives a clean, already-consistent explanation for *why* Yahari's particular framing exists in the form it does. A branch that ranges closest to the Installations and produces the scouts most likely to encounter Convergence-adjacent phenomena directly is also the branch most likely to have produced the most developed theological tradition for making sense of what its own people keep running into out there. Yahari's stories are not generic Wayfarer folklore picked up secondhand — they are Aeolian institutional knowledge, in the only form Aeolian culture produces institutional knowledge: a person, carrying it, until they can pass it to someone else.

This also sharpens the loss of Yahari's death: it is not just the loss of a beloved elder to Aran personally, but the loss of one of the Aeolians' primary living repositories of exactly the knowledge the caravan most needs as **Aetheris** activity increases. Aran inherits the absence of an archive at the precise moment he needs one most — a structural echo, from the opposite cultural direction, of Wren's own relationship to archives and their failure.

What This Means for the Story

Aran is not a generic Wayfarer. He is a specific product of a specific branch's specific emphasis, and that emphasis — range, direct observation, comfort at the frontier — is the same trait that makes him valuable to his caravan, makes him the one who finds the wrong thing in the Badlands, and makes him the one whose trust in his own senses is, eventually, the precise tool the Convergence learns to forge. The Aeolian identity isn't background color. It's the cultural machinery that produces the specific shape of his vulnerability.

Aran's caravan and immediate family are now fully named — Long Reach, Mira, Doran, Tamsin, and Pell — see *Aran Sunderwood — Family and Caravan* for the complete treatment.

Open Follow-Ups

- [x] **Name Aran's specific caravan** — ✓ resolved: **Long Reach**, named in its own tongue for "the ones who go furthest and still come back." See *Aran Sunderwood — Family and Caravan*.
- [x] **Name Aran's immediate family members beyond the general "respected lineage."** — ✓ resolved. Mira (mother, retired scout/trainer), Doran (father, Corvane-born), Tamsin (younger sister, trader), and Pell (ward/apprentice, not blood family but raised as such). See *Aran Sunderwood — Family and Caravan*.
- [x] **Sketch at least one or two other Wayfarer branches** — ✓ resolved via two full documents: *Thessaly Wayfarer Social Structure* (composure/self-mastery as proof of trustworthy character — Pell's birth branch, her specific caravan named Eventide) and *Corvane Wayfarer Social Structure* (trade and relationship-keeping over range — Doran's birth branch, his specific caravan named The Bound Word). Aeolian now sits in clear contrast against both.
- [x] **Whether Yahari led the Aeolian elder council alone or was one of several elders** — ✓ resolved: Yahari led alongside **Garrick Stane**, a goat-type elder, practical and logistics-minded — a real, close partnership despite Garrick being noticeably younger, since Yahari treated him as a full equal once he rose into the council rather than as someone still proving himself in. Garrick survives Yahari's death in Act Two A and keeps Long Reach functioning without visible disruption; the loss is personal for him, not just structural, and stays mostly private. This means Yahari's death leaves a real gap in understanding/meaning specifically, not in governance — the caravan is never read as leaderless. See *Aran Sunderwood — Family and Caravan*.
- [] **How disputes are resolved and how coming-of-age works within Aeolian caravans specifically** — flagged generally in the World Systems To-Do as still needed for "Wayfarer social structure" as a whole; this document doesn't resolve it, only narrows where it should eventually live (Aeolian-specific practice, with the understanding that other branches may differ).

- [x] **Whether anyone in Aran's caravan notices something changing in him before he does** — ✓ resolved: **Mira does**. Crucially, this is written as motherly noticing rather than her professional scout's read on unfamiliar ground — she knows the specific shape of his moods the way any parent clocks a child running a low fever before the child admits to feeling unwell. Consistent with her established terseness, it never becomes a conversation; it surfaces only in small, characteristic gestures (an extra portion pushed his way, a look held a beat too long, his gear checked without being asked). Nothing is ever named outright, by her or by him. See *Aran Sunderwood — Family and Caravan* for the full passage.

Thessaly Wayfarer Social Structure

Lives in: World & Lore → Factions & Power Structures. Companion to Wayfarer Divergence and Aeolian Wayfarer Social Structure. Where the Aeolian document establishes range and direct observation as one branch's defining emphasis, this document sketches a second branch built around a different, equally legitimate expression of the same root Wayfarer values: containment, discipline, and self-mastery as the visible proof of a trustworthy character. Written specifically to ground Pell's birth caravan (see Aran Sunderwood — Family and Caravan) and available, if useful, for Doran Sunderwood's own pre-Long Reach origin.

Name and Character

Thessaly — taking its name, per the established naming convention of real-language roots slightly defamiliarised, from an old word associated with binding, settling, or holding fast; worn down over generations into a single name, the way "Aeolian" was. Where Aeolians are known for range, Thessaly caravans are known for composure — for arriving anywhere, in any condition, having already metabolised whatever the journey cost them before anyone outside the caravan has to see it.

This is not the same thing as being settled. Thessaly caravans move as much as any Wayfarer branch — movement is one of the few values genuinely non-negotiable across all branches, per Wayfarer Divergence. What distinguishes Thessaly is not how far or how often they move, but the manner of it: unhurried, controlled, visibly undisturbed, regardless of what the day actually contained. A Thessaly caravan arriving at a trade meeting after a brutal crossing and a caravan arriving after an easy one should, by their own standard, be indistinguishable to anyone watching. The difference is supposed to live entirely inside the people who lived it, never on their faces.

The Core Value: Containment as Trustworthiness

Thessaly culture is built around a specific, coherent belief: that a person's worth to the caravan is measured by how completely they can hold themselves — their fear, their grief, their excitement, their pain — without letting it become anyone else's problem to manage. This is not, in Thessaly's own self-understanding, coldness. It is read internally as a form of care: a person who has mastered their own reactions is a person nobody else has to spend energy steadying, which leaves more of the caravan's collective attention free for the things that actually threaten it. An elder's authority, within Thessaly, is built on accumulated wisdom exactly as the wider Wayfarer pattern requires — but specifically wisdom demonstrated through a lifetime of visible self-possession under pressure. The calmest person in the worst moment is, by Thessaly's own logic, the person who has earned the right to be listened to.

This value is sincerely held and not, in itself, cruel. Thessaly produces genuinely steady people, skilled negotiators, and caravans that hold together under pressures that might fracture a less disciplined community. The cruelty enters only at the edges — in what the value system has no framework for, and in how unforgivingly it judges what it cannot explain.

The Edge of the Value

Thessaly's culture has no real category for a person whose nervous system simply does not run the way the culture's ideal demands — not through unwillingness, but through how they are built. A person who startles easily, who cannot mask distress, who needs to leave a room rather than sit through what's overwhelming them, reads to Thessaly not as a different kind of person but as an undisciplined one: someone who hasn't yet done the work everyone else has done, or worse, someone who has decided not to. The culture's deep, genuine investment in self-mastery as something everyone can achieve through effort makes it almost structurally incapable of recognising a difference that effort alone cannot resolve. This is Pell's specific wound, and the document treats it as the load-bearing example: not a single cruel individual, but an entire well-intentioned culture without the conceptual room to see what it was actually looking at.

Contact Posture — Warm Outward, Rigid Inward

Thessaly's relationship to outsiders is, by design, almost the inverse of what its internal culture might suggest. Strangers are met with real warmth, real hospitality, and none of the performance standard Thessaly applies to its own — a Thessaly caravan will sit with a frightened, grieving, or overwhelmed outsider with patience and genuine care, precisely because an outsider's composure was never Thessaly's responsibility to judge. The discipline is a covenant among Thessaly's own people, not a universal law they expect the world to follow. This makes Thessaly, paradoxically, one of the more approachable and well-regarded Wayfarer branches among other communities — traders speak well of them, Badlands settlements that deal with Thessaly caravans describe them as patient and fair, and the warmth is not performance. It is simply bounded, with a line drawn precisely at the edge of Thessaly's own bloodlines and households, where a much harder standard quietly takes over.

This is what makes Thessaly's treatment of its own a particular kind of painful rather than a simple, recognisable insularity: there is no external enemy to point to, no xenophobia to name. The same caravan that took in a lost stranger without a second thought could, the same season, run out of patience for a child who shared their blood and simply couldn't perform calm on command. The warmth outsiders receive is real. It was just never the warmth Pell needed, and she was never going to be treated as the outsider who got to receive it.

Relationship to the Installations

Thessaly caravans treat Installations as sites to be avoided entirely — not out of the Aeolian instinct toward careful, controlled study, but as a direct extension of the culture's core value. An Installation is, in Thessaly's framing, a place where containment itself failed completely: whatever the Penumbrans were, whatever happened to them, it reads to Thessaly less as a question to investigate and more as a cautionary structure, proof of what happens when something is allowed

to go fully, catastrophically uncontained. Thessaly elders steer caravan routes well clear of known Installation sites, not from superstitious fear exactly, but from something closer to the discipline itself: you do not linger near the evidence of what containment, taken to its limit and lost, actually looks like.

This gives Thessaly a markedly different relationship to the Convergence/Aetheris's theological ambiguity than the Aeolians have through Sage Yahari's tradition. Where Aeolian elders can disagree, in the open, about ascension versus erasure, Thessaly's oral tradition treats the question itself with more caution — not forbidden exactly, but not dwelt on, the way a Thessaly elder might discourage dwelling on any subject that risked unsettling a person past the point of useful composure.

What This Means for the Story

Pell's rejection now has a precise, non-arbitrary shape. She was not punished for being strange to a fearful culture. She was held to the same standard Thessaly genuinely believes builds trustworthy people — a standard the culture has no real evidence is achievable by everyone, because it has never had to test that assumption against someone built the way Pell is built. Her parents' failure was not cruelty in the simple sense. It was the failure of a sincerely held, generally functional value system meeting its one unaccounted-for edge case, and choosing the system over the child rather than questioning whether the system was wrong.

This sharpens the contrast with Long Reach specifically, not just Wayfarer culture generally. Long Reach (Aeolian) trusts direct observation over inherited expectation; Thessaly trusts demonstrated self-mastery over situational excuse. Both are legitimate, functional expressions of "authority through accumulated wisdom" — neither is a strawman of the other. Pell's story is not "good caravan rescues girl from bad caravan." It's two coherent, differently-calibrated cultures producing two completely different verdicts on the exact same child, which is a sharper and more honest version of the book's broader argument that institutions are rarely simply evil — they are often sincere, internally consistent, and still capable of real harm at their edges.

Open Follow-Ups

[x] Doran is NOT Thessaly-born. Decided — reusing the same branch for both Doran's and Pell's origins reads as too convenient, given they have no in-story connection to each other. Thessaly is Pell's birth culture alone. Doran's own origin needs a separate branch (see Aran Sunderwood — Family and Caravan, updated follow-up).

[x] Pell's specific birth caravan named: Eventide. ✓ Resolved. Translates from its own tongue as "what the day cannot move" — worn down into the shorter, plainer "Eventide," consistent with how Long Reach was named. A specific instance of Thessaly culture, the way Long Reach is a specific instance of Aeolian culture. See Aran Sunderwood — Family and Caravan for the full naming and context. Naming specific elders within Eventide remains open, lower priority — the caravan doesn't need named individuals beyond Pell's parents (themselves still unnamed) unless the story later needs them on the page.

[] Whether Thessaly culture's avoidance of Installations ever becomes plot-relevant — e.g., if a future scene requires a Thessaly-adjacent character to react to or refuse an Installation encounter, this document's framework should govern that reaction.

[] A third axis check — per Aeolian Wayfarer Social Structure's "What Distinguishes Branches" framework (range tolerance, contact posture, relationship to Installations), this document explicitly declined to make range tolerance Thessaly's defining axis. Worth confirming this doesn't leave Thessaly feeling underdefined on that axis if it becomes relevant later — a brief default position (e.g., "moderate, unremarkable range, consistent with most Wayfarer caravans") could be added if needed.

Corvane Wayfarer Social Structure

Lives in: World & Lore → Factions & Power Structures. Companion to Wayfarer Divergence, Aeolian Wayfarer Social Structure, and Thessaly Wayfarer Social Structure. A deliberately lighter sketch than either — written to ground Doran Sunderwood's pre-Long Reach origin (see Aran Sunderwood — Family and Caravan), not to carry the same narrative weight as Aeolian or Thessaly. Expand only if the story later needs more from it.

Name and Character

Corvane — taking its name, per the established convention, from an old root associated with exchange, dealing, and the crossing of paths; worn down over generations the way every Wayfarer branch name has been. Where Aeolians are known for range and Thessaly for composure, Corvane caravans are known for reach without distance — not how far they travel, but how many relationships they maintain along the routes they already know well.

If Aeolian answers "how do we survive the unknown" with go look at it directly, and Thessaly answers it with master yourself so nothing unknown can shake you, Corvane answers it with a third, equally valid response: know everyone, owe favors carefully, and never be a stranger anywhere you might need to not be one.

Core Value: The Web Over the Frontier

Corvane caravans keep to established, well-traveled routes — not from caution or fear of the unfamiliar, but because their entire value system is built around depth of relationship rather than breadth of territory. A Corvane elder's authority is built on accumulated wisdom exactly as the wider Wayfarer pattern requires, but specifically wisdom about people: who can be trusted with what, which debts are worth calling in and which are worth quietly forgiving, how to keep a trade relationship alive across a generation of changing faces on both sides.

This produces caravans that are, in practice, deeply embedded in whatever wider community ecosystem exists around their routes — genuinely comparable, in function if not in scale, to the kind of layered, redundant trade web already established elsewhere in this world's canon (see Water Recycling and Food Production, "The Wider Supply Network"). A Corvane caravan is the kind of Wayfarer community most likely to have a standing, personal relationship with a specific Badlands settlement, a specific shadow-settlement contact, or — at several removes — a specific Sprawl vendor's trade chain.

Corvane does not consider this a lesser calling than scouting or self-mastery. Within Corvane culture, the person who can walk into a tense negotiation and walk out with the caravan's needs met and the relationship intact has done something just as load-bearing, just as difficult, and just as worthy of respect as a scout who reads dangerous ground correctly. The caravan needs both. Corvane simply produces disproportionately more of the former.

Contact Posture and Relationship to Installations

Contact posture: the most consistently outward-facing of the three sketched branches, by design — this is the entire point of the culture. Corvane caravans maintain wider, deeper, more durable outside relationships than most Wayfarer communities, and are correspondingly the branch most likely to be fluent in reading outsiders accurately, quickly, and without the friction a more insular culture might bring to the same exchange.

Relationship to Installations: moderate and practical rather than reverent or fearful. Corvane's orientation is toward people and routes, not toward the deep Badlands or the genuine frontier where most Installations are found — so Installations simply fall outside the caravan's usual concerns, encountered occasionally and treated with the same unremarkable caution any sensible Wayfarer would apply, without the Aeolian instinct toward study or the Thessaly instinct toward active avoidance as doctrine.

Doran's Origin

Doran was Corvane-raised, in a caravan whose name is left open for now (see Follow-Ups). He was good at the work — relationship-keeping, trade logistics, the patient maintenance of a hundred small obligations across a dozen routes — and nothing about his upbringing pushed him toward Long Reach. He left because he met Mira during a routine trade contact between the two caravans, and stayed because he wanted to, in the uncomplicated way people sometimes simply choose a life because it's the one they want and not because the life they had was lacking.

This is deliberately the simplest origin story among the family. Mira's standing is inherited and earned. Tamsin pushes gently against expectation by choosing trade over scouting. Pell's history is a real wound, carefully built. Doran is the one person in the household whose story doesn't ask anything difficult of the reader — and that's the point. Not every person in a found, chosen, blended family needs to be running from something. Some of them are just there because they wanted to be, and that's allowed to be enough.

What Doran brought from Corvane into Long Reach life, practically: the trade and logistics competence that makes him, per his existing characterization, just as load-bearing to the caravan's functioning as any scout — simply in a register that doesn't carry the same instinctive cultural reverence Long Reach extends to a good read on bad ground. He has made his peace with that, mostly. The story doesn't need to dwell on whether the "mostly" is fully true.

What This Means for the Story

Doran's lightness is itself useful. Against Mira's quiet intensity, Tamsin's sharp independence, and Pell's hard-won safety, Doran is the family member whose presence is simply, uncomplicatedly

good — present, anchoring, worried in the soft register that asks nothing back. A family entirely made of wounds and inheritances would start to feel schematic. Doran keeps it human.

Corvane gives the wider world a third coherent answer to the same root question, completing a clean triangle without needing to be heavily developed on the page: Aeolian (trust direct observation), Thessaly (trust self-mastery), Corvane (trust relationship). Three branches, three real and different ways of surviving the same uncertain world, none of them wrong, none of them complete on their own.

Open Follow-Ups

[x] Doran's specific birth caravan named: The Bound Word. ✓ Resolved. The name carries the branch's entire ethic directly — a promise that holds, a debt remembered correctly — consistent with how Long Reach and Eventide were both named (a short, ordinary-sounding phrase that only reveals its full weight once the caravan's culture is known). See Aran Sunderwood — Family and Caravan for the full context.

[] Whether Corvane ever becomes plot-relevant beyond Doran's origin — e.g., as a connective thread into the wider trade network already established in Water Recycling and Food Production, if the story ever needs a Wayfarer-side contact for that network rather than only the Badlands/shadow-settlement side already sketched there.

[] The specific trade contact event where Doran and Mira met — not detailed here; a natural small worldbuilding or flashback beat if the story ever wants it, but not required.