



# BARD SWALLOWS AND RAVENS

Aranthaen Sub-Class

## **BARD – SWALLOWS AND RAVENS SUBCLASS**

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# Bard - Swallows and Ravens

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## Subclass Overview

Swallows and Ravens are bards who operate where power gathers and guards are lowered. Rather than being performers in taverns or storytellers by the fire, Swallows and Ravens are **social operatives** trained to move through circles of influence unnoticed, unchallenged, and unremembered.

In Aranthaes, information is currency, reputation is leverage, and access is everything. Swallows and Ravens cultivate all three.

Through charm, suggestion, misdirection, and carefully crafted intimacy, they uncover secrets that no amount of force or magic could extract openly.

Unlike spies or assassins, they rarely act directly. Their strength lies in *placement* - being present at the right table, in the right chamber, at the right moment, long enough for others to reveal more than they intended.

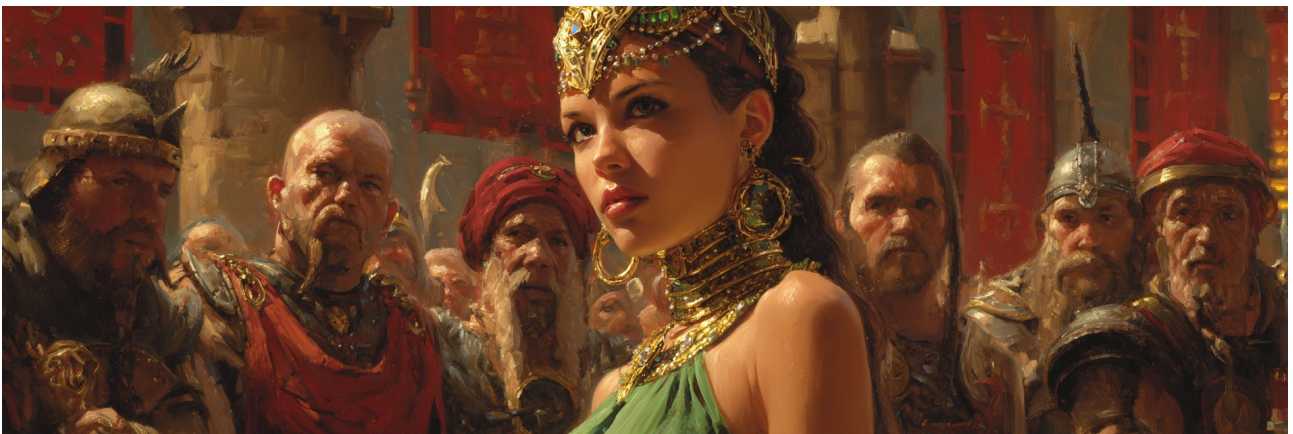
*A smile, a shared drink, a whispered confidence: these are their tools.*

Where Swallows are specialists in social environments where warmth, trust, and admiration open doors, Ravens operate in darker spaces - listening, remembering, and delivering truths that others would prefer remain buried.

Many practitioners move between both roles as needed, adapting their approach without ever revealing their true purpose.

Though trained and deployed by guilds, factions, and powerful patrons, Swallows and Ravens ultimately serve information itself. What they do with what they learn - sell it, bury it, weaponize it, or protect it - defines their reputation and determines whether they continue to be welcomed... or quietly excluded.

In an adventuring party, a Swallows and Ravens bard excels at **infiltration through civility** rather than stealth, dismantling opposition without combat, and ensuring the group is never truly ignorant of the forces arrayed against them.



## Lore & Origins

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The tradition of the Swallows and Ravens school was born as a necessity of trade and governance.

Aranthaes has always been a city where power congregates openly - merchants, priests, captains, foreign envoys, and financiers gathering in public spaces under the assumption that discretion is maintained by etiquette alone.

Early in the city's history, it became clear that neither the highest walls nor toughest guards could protect secrets **willingly spoken**.

The first Swallows were courtiers, companions, musicians, and attendants whose presence calmed rooms and softened tongues. They were invited back not because they were useful, but because they were *pleasant*.

What they overheard, remembered, and quietly conveyed soon proved more valuable than any report extracted by force.

The Ravens emerged later, during periods of unrest and political fracture. Where Swallows cultivated warmth and ease, Ravens learned to listen in silence. They were archivists, night performers, confessional listeners, and observers who moved through darker halls and private chambers where laughter faded and honesty crept in.

Over time, these two approaches formalised into a single tradition. Training became intentional. Patronage became structured. What had once been informal proximity evolved into a recognised - though rarely openly acknowledged - network of social operatives.

Swallows and Ravens are typically recruited young, often before they understand the full implications of the path offered to them.

Talent for charm, recall, improvisation, and emotional intuition is identified early. While seduction and deception are part of their arsenal, instruction focuses on timing, presence, emotional intuition, and the careful creation of situations in which others choose to speak freely.

Though many are affiliated with guilds, noble houses, or mercantile interests, no central authority claims ownership of the tradition. Swallows and Ravens are bound instead by shared methods and quiet understandings. Those who violate discretion rarely suffer public consequence - they simply find themselves excluded from the spaces that once welcomed them.

To the public, they are entertainers, companions, and social fixtures. To those who know better, they are conduits of influence and information, hidden truths and trade secrets - capable of shifting fortunes, collapsing negotiations, or preventing violence long before a blade is drawn.

## Role in Aranthaes

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Within Aranthaes, Swallows and Ravens occupy a position that is both visible and deliberately misunderstood. They are welcomed into halls of power, seated at banquets, retained for celebrations, and invited into private gatherings where others are excluded. Their presence is rarely questioned - and never accidental.

To most citizens, they are entertainers, companions, and social fixtures. To those who operate within politics, commerce, and religion, they are understood as **informal intermediaries**: individuals whose proximity to influence allows information to move without appearing to do so.

Swallows are most often found in open, prestigious spaces - salons, courts, diplomatic functions, and merchant gatherings. They soften conversations, smooth tensions, and encourage openness through warmth and familiarity. A successful Swallow leaves behind goodwill, trust, and the sense that nothing improper occurred.

Ravens are deployed differently. They move through quieter, more private environments - late-night chambers, confessionals, guarded corridors, and moments of vulnerability when performance has ended. Ravens listen more than they speak, observe more than they intervene, and are valued for their discretion as much as their memory.

Neither role is formally acknowledged by the Church or the city's governing bodies, yet both are relied upon extensively. Swallows and Ravens are often used to gauge sentiment, test loyalty, or quietly assess risk before decisions are made publicly.

They are respected, but never fully trusted. Most factions assume a Swallow or Raven is listening on behalf of *someone else* - the uncertainty lies in not knowing whom. As a result, these bards are treated with courtesy, caution, and a measured distance that they themselves are trained to maintain.

In times of tension, Swallows and Ravens are often the first to sense a shift. Long before unrest becomes visible, they notice changes in tone, absence from familiar tables, guarded phrasing, or invitations that quietly stop arriving. Many conflicts in Aranthaes have been defused - or accelerated - based on what these bards choose to pass along, withhold, or reinterpret.

In an adventuring context, a Swallows and Ravens bard acts as the party's social lens. They excel at infiltration without stealth, intelligence gathering without interrogation, and influence without coercion.







## Subclass Features - Swallows and Ravens

### 3rd Level - Circles of Influence

You are trained to move naturally within social hierarchies.

You gain proficiency in **Insight** and **Persuasion**. If you are already proficient in either skill, your proficiency bonus is doubled for that skill.

In addition, when you spend at least 10 minutes conversing with a creature in a non-hostile social setting, you may learn one of the following facts about it (your choice):

- Whether it currently holds leverage over another creature present
- Suggestive information about its loyalties, ambitions, or fears
- Whether it is concealing information relevant to the current situation

This feature does not compel honesty, but reflects your ability to read tone, posture, and omission.

You may use this feature a number of times equal to your Charisma modifier (minimum once), regaining all uses after a long rest.

### 3rd Level - Swallow's Welcome / Raven's Silence

You learn to adopt one of two professional approaches, choosing the one most appropriate to the situation. You may switch between them after completing a long rest.

### **Swallow's Welcome**

When you make a Charisma (Deception or Persuasion) check in a social environment where you are welcome or expected, you may treat a roll of 7 or lower on the d20 as an 8.

### **Raven's Silence**

When you make a Dexterity (Stealth) or Wisdom (Perception) check while remaining quiet, observant, or unobtrusive, you may treat a roll of 7 or lower on the d20 as an 8.

This represents disciplined composure, not luck.

## **6th Level - Unguarded Moment**

You recognise the precise instant when someone reveals more than they intend.

When a creature fails a saving throw against one of your enchantment spells, or fails a contested Charisma or Wisdom check against you, you may immediately ask the DM one of the following questions about that creature:

- What does this creature want most right now?
- What would make this creature hesitate?
- What truth is this creature actively avoiding?

The DM answers truthfully, though not necessarily completely.

You may use this feature a number of times equal to your Charisma modifier (minimum once), regaining all uses after a long rest.

## **14th Level - Whisper Network**

Your reputation precedes you, even where your name does not.

When you arrive in a settlement of at least moderate size, you may spend 1 hour establishing contact through informal social channels. At the DM's discretion, you gain one of the following benefits:

- Learn a significant rumour or hidden tension affecting the settlement
- Identify a local figure who trades in secrets, favours, or influence
- Secure discreet access to a restricted social space

In addition, when you assist an ally on a Charisma-based ability check, the ally may add your Charisma modifier to the roll in addition to the normal benefit.

## 18th Level - Disarming Presence

Your composure itself becomes a form of influence.

When a hostile creature that can see or hear you begins its turn within 30 feet of you, it must succeed on a Wisdom saving throw against your spell save DC or suffer disadvantage on its next attack roll or ability check before the end of its turn.

A creature that succeeds on this save is immune to this effect for 24 hours.

This feature represents hesitation, distraction, and the unsettling sense of being observed - not magical compulsion.





## Expanded Spell Options - Swallows and Ravens

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A Swallows and Ravens bard may choose spells from the SRD as normal. In addition, the following spells are considered especially aligned with the tradition and may be chosen when appropriate. Unique Swallows and Ravens subclass spells are marked with an asterisk detailed after the list.

### SRD Spell Options

#### 1st Level

- *Charm Person*
- *Disguise Self*
- *Silent Image*
- *Attractive Silence*\*

#### 2nd Level

- *Detect Thoughts*
- *Suggestion*
- *Calm Emotions*
- *Measured Words*\*

#### 3rd Level

- *Hypnotic Pattern*
- *Major Image*
- *Feign Death*
- *Hypnotic Cadence*\*

#### 4th Level

- *Compulsion*
- *Hallucinatory Terrain*
- *Borrowed Confidence*\*

#### 5th Level

- *Modify Memory*
- *Velvet Compulsion*\*
- *Quiet Revelation*\*

### Attentive Silence

*1st-level enchantment*

**Casting Time:** 1 action

**Range:** 30 feet

**Components:** V, S

**Duration:** Concentration, up to 1 minute

You subtly command the attention of a creature you can see. The target must succeed on a Wisdom saving throw or be compelled to listen only to you.

While affected:

- The creature has disadvantage on Perception checks not related to you
- Other creatures have advantage on Dexterity (Stealth) checks against the target
- The target cannot take reactions unless they involve you

This spell ends early if the target takes damage.

## Measured Words

*2nd-level enchantment*

**Casting Time:** 1 action

**Range:** Self

**Components:** V

**Duration:** Concentration, up to 10 minutes

Your speech becomes carefully calibrated to elicit openness.

For the duration:

- You gain advantage on Charisma (Persuasion) and Charisma (Deception) checks
- Creatures you speak with have disadvantage on Insight checks made to detect deception from you

This spell does not compel honesty or obedience – but it does significantly lower defences.

## Hypnotic Cadence

*3rd-level enchantment*

**Casting Time:** 1 action

**Range:** 30 feet

**Components:** V, S

**Duration:** Concentration, up to 1 minute

You establish a rhythmic pattern of speech, gesture, or movement that draws a creature into focused attention.

One creature of your choice must succeed on a Wisdom saving throw or become **hypnotically focused** on you.

While hypnotically focused:

- The creature's speed is reduced to 0
- It has disadvantage on Wisdom saving throws
- It is incapacitated, but aware

The effect ends immediately if the creature takes damage or is shaken violently.

## Borrowed Confidence

*4th-level enchantment*

**Casting Time:** 1 action

**Range:** Self (10-foot radius)

**Components:** V

**Duration:** Concentration, up to 1 minute

You draw on the presence of others to reinforce your authority.

For the duration:

- You gain a +2 bonus to your spell save DC
- Hostile creatures within range have disadvantage on their first saving throw each turn against enchantment spells

This spell ends early if you are incapacitated.

## Quiet Revelation

*5th-level enchantment*

**Casting Time:** 1 minute

**Range:** Touch

**Components:** V, S

**Duration:** Instantaneous

You guide a willing or charmed creature into revealing a single guarded truth.

The target speaks honestly in response to one question you ask, phrased clearly and without ambiguity. The spell does not force additional detail beyond what is directly asked.

After the spell ends, the creature does not realise magic was involved, but may later recall having spoken more freely than intended.

## Velvet Compulsion

*5th-level enchantment*

**Casting Time:** 1 minute

**Range:** 30 feet

**Components:** V, S

**Duration:** Concentration, up to 10 minutes

You weave charm, authority, and expectation into a focused exchange, compelling up to three creatures to act in accordance with what they *believe* is appropriate behaviour.

1-3 humanoid creatures you can see must make a Wisdom saving throw. On a failure, the creature/s becomes **socially compelled** by you for the duration.



While socially compelled:

- The creature/s regard you as a trusted and influential presence
- It/they will comply with **reasonable requests** that do not:
  - cause it/them direct physical harm
  - require it/them to betray a deeply held belief
  - force it/them into obviously criminal or suicidal acts
- The creature/s will attempt to justify compliance internally rather than resist

The creature/s are **aware** of their actions and choices, but feel strong internal pressure to agree, assist, or defer to you.

If you or your allies take hostile action against the creature/s, the spell ends immediately.

On a successful save, the creature/s are immune to this spell for 24 hours.



## Player Hooks

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If you choose to play a bard who will walk the path of the Swallows and Ravens, consider the following questions when creating your character:

**What first taught you the value of influence?**

Was it growing up around power you did not possess, witnessing decisions made behind closed doors, or learning that words could open doors that force never could?

**Do you seek access, understanding, or control?**

Are you drawn to this tradition because you want to belong in powerful spaces, because you are curious about what others hide, or because you believe information should never be held by only a few?

**How do you feel about being trusted for the wrong reasons?**

People will open up to you because they like you, admire you, or feel at ease around you - not because they know who you truly are. Does that sit comfortably with you, or does it trouble you?

**What line do you believe you will never cross?**

There will come a moment when a secret could protect someone, ruin someone, or reshape events entirely. Where do you believe your restraint lies - and are you confident it will hold?

**Are you more Swallow or Raven - for now?**

Do you prefer warmth, charm, and visibility, or quiet observation and distance? Do you see these as roles you switch between, or aspects of yourself that compete?

**What do you do with what you learn?**

Do you imagine yourself as a broker of truth, a silent guardian of dangerous knowledge, or someone who trades secrets as currency? Who decides what deserves to be revealed?

**Who knows what you really do - if anyone?**

Is there someone who understands your true role, or do even your allies see only the surface? How do you feel about being useful without being acknowledged?



## Why DMs Should Allow This Subclass

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The Swallows and Ravens bard is designed to expand social and narrative play without undermining DM authority or table comfort. Its defining features focus on **access, timing, and information**, rather than forced outcomes or unchecked control.

This subclass does not replace intrigue, investigation, or roleplay - it *supports* them. Most abilities reward conversation, preparation, and attention to context, allowing scenes to develop naturally rather than shortcutting them through domination or mind control.

Where enchantment magic is used, it is deliberately restrained:

- effects are typically single-target
- hostile action breaks influence
- key terms such as “reasonable” and “deeply held belief” preserve DM judgment
- consequences often emerge *after* the scene, not during it

This ensures the bard enhances tension instead of dissolving it.

Mechanically, the subclass remains in line with other bard colleges. It does not inflate damage, bypass encounters, or trivialize challenges. Instead, it gives the party new ways to approach problems - especially those involving politics, negotiation, and hidden motivations.

For DMs running campaigns with social depth, factional play, or long-term consequences, Swallows and Ravens provide a reliable narrative asset: a character who listens carefully, notices shifts early, and brings information to the table without demanding control over outcomes.

In short, this subclass offers **strong roleplay hooks** without tonal risk, **clear boundaries** on influence and consent, DM-controlled **resolution of edge cases** - and a bard who is useful even when swords stay sheathed