



IRON FATED

A MARTIAL ARCHETYPE FOR FIGHTERS

BY: WILL MAYER

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A Martial Archetype for Fighters
Plus rules and examples for scaling signature weapons.

by Will Mayer
DM
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V.2 CONTAINS CHANGES THAT MAKE THE CLASS A LITTLE MORE POWERFUL THAN V.1, DUE TO BALANCE CONCERNS IN THE FIRST DRAFT.

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IRON FATED

For most of those trained with the weapons of war, the weapons are made deadly by the hands that wield them; the duelist that flourishes a sword as it dances through her opponents or the fighter that arcs a hammer to crush his enemies to dust. But sometimes, like in the cases of Excalibur and Andúril, it is the weapon that helps make the man or woman who they are meant to be. While most fighters use a weapon as a means to bend fate in their favor, those that belong to the archetype of the Iron Fated have their fate inexorably linked to that of the weapons they wield; sometimes making it hard to tell whether it is the fighter or the weapon that is exerting its will toward their shared destiny.

Iron-Fated Features

Fighter Level	Feature
3	Iron Heart, Steel Song
7	Keen Weapon
10	Additional Steel Song, Steel Ballad
15	Shared Keeness
18	Forged Fate

IRON HEART

Starting at 3rd level, you discover a magically fated weapon or identify new characteristics of a weapon you were already wielding. This weapon may be an ancestral weapon, touched by gods, from a previous age, made of alien or exotic material, invoked from another plane by reciting a mantra or completing a ritual, or an otherwise significant artifact. You or your DM should choose a significance for your weapon or roll on the table below.

Iron heart Weapon Origin

d6 Origin

- 1 You pulled the weapon from a stump, showing your worthiness to lead.
- 2 A god gifted you the weapon to fulfill a specific deed.
- 3 Thought to be merely ceremonial, the weapon has been passed down your family line for generations.
- 4 You found the weapon in an odd location such as at the bottom of a well, while digging in a dry riverbed, or in an abandoned city.
- 5 A vision led you to the weapon.
- 6 You uncovered the weapon from an ancient burial mound or forgotten tomb.
- 7 Your martial arts trainer presented you with the weapon when you completed your initial training or another hero passed it to you after proving your merit.
- 8 You reformed the weapon after it lay broken for generations.

After finishing a long rest, you can bond with the weapon, making it an iron heart weapon for you. You can only have one iron heart weapon bonded to you at a time. If you attempt to bond to a new weapon, you break the bond with the first.

Magically Imbued Weapon. Even if you don't yet understand the magical properties locked within your iron heart weapon, its nature allows its attacks to count as magical for the purpose of overcoming resistance and immunity to nonmagical attacks and damage.

Harmonious Bond. You gain a +1 bonus to attack and damage rolls made with your iron heart weapon. This bonus is in addition to any bonuses afforded by the weapon's properties.

Additionally, your iron heart weapon does not count as an attuned weapon when determining the number of attunement slots you have available.



STEEL SONG

Starting at 3rd level, your iron heart weapon gains the ability to communicate with you while you wield or carry it. You choose whether the communication is vocal, physical, or telepathic. Choose one of the following song options:

Song of Destiny. Your iron heart weapon knows something of the fate that ties the two of you together. You can cast *augury* as a ritual with this feature. When you reach 10th level, you can also cast *commune* once with this feature and regain the ability to do so when you finish a long rest. When you cast *commune*, the deity is one chosen by the weapon and the weapon channels the message of the god through itself before delivering it to you.

Song of Knowledge. You can communicate with your iron heart weapon to gain access to the knowledge of the weapon's previous wielders, the god who forged it, or other general knowledge it has accrued over its existence.

Based on the knowledge of the weapon, you become proficient in your choice of one of the following skills: Arcana, History, Nature, or

Religion. Your proficiency bonus is doubled for an ability check you make that uses that skill. You can choose a second skill when you reach 10th level.

Song of Warning. Your iron heart weapon warns you of the approach of certain types of creatures. Choose one of the following: aberrations, beasts, celestials, constructs, dragons, elementals, fey, fiends, giants, goblinoids, monstrosities, oozes, plants, or undead.

You cannot be surprised by the selected creature type and have advantage on initiative rolls for encounters where at least one hostile creature is of the selected type. You can choose an additional creature type when you reach 10th level.

Flavoring Steel Songs

There are a number of ways that weapons communicate to their wielders throughout mythology and fiction. Some work like dowsing rods to lead their wielders toward an enemy or a safe place to rest, some glow to warn of approaching enemies, and others speak audibly or telepathically to their wielders of their desire to draw blood. The player and DM should choose a flavor appropriate to the tone of their campaign, the history of the iron heart weapon, and the personality of the character. Alternatively, the awareness and communication capabilities of iron heart weapons can be determined randomly by rolling on the sentient magic item tables in the *Dungeon Master's Guide*.

KEEN WEAPON

Starting at 7th level you gain the following keen weapon features:

Keen Strikes. When you roll a least 1 hit die on a short rest, you can take 10 minutes to sharpen your blade, polish your hammer, restring your bow, or otherwise renew your iron heart weapon's keenness as you renew your own. Doing so grants the iron heart weapon a number of keen strikes equal to half your fighter level rounded down + the number of hit dice spent during the short rest. If the weapon already contains keen strikes, you decide whether to keep the ones you have or gain the new ones.

Each time you hit with an attack with your iron heart weapon while it has at least 1 keen strike remaining, it deals an extra 1d4 of its damage type and expends a strike.

Keen Critical. If you have at least 1 keen strike remaining, your iron heart weapon scores a critical hit on a roll of 19 or 20. In addition, when determining the damage of a keen critical, you may choose to expend an additional keen strike

DMing for an Iron-Fated Character

When a character finds an iron heart weapon, discovers its nature, or unlocks some new ability within it, this can be done during down time or as part of a quest within the campaign. The call toward discovering the weapon or bringing it to a far-off sage to identify its history could lead to interesting avenues for plot and make character advancement feel more natural.

Once a character begins wielding the weapon, the weapon begins wielding them as well, pushing them forward toward their shared destiny or fate. It might do so subtly or openly, but you should have a clear idea about the weapon's agenda from the early stages of its bond with the character

to double the damage dealt by your ability modifier.

STEEL BALLAD

Starting at 10th level, your iron heart weapon's ability to communicate is enhanced during battle. Choose one of the following ballad options:

Ballad of Blood. Your iron heart weapon sings out to you of the weaknesses it finds in your common enemy during battle. After damaging a creature with a weapon attack, you can mark the creature until the end of your next turn. While a creature is marked in this way, you deal the maximum possible damage on your weapon die to it when you hit it with an attack.

You can use this feature two times and regain all expended uses of it when you finish a short or long rest.

Ballad of Hope. Your iron heart weapon's ballad in battle imbues you with hope. You can use a bonus action to ask your sword to sing inspiringly to you. Until the end of your next turn, you have advantage on Wisdom saving throws and death saving throws, and regain the maximum number of hit points possible from any healing while under this effect.

You can use this feature three times and regain all expended uses of it when you finish a short or long rest.

SHARED KEENNESS

Starting at 15th level when you use your second wind feature, you regain a number of keen strikes equal to the number you roll on the d10. Unlike when honing a weapon during a short rest, if your iron heart weapon has any remaining keen strikes, you may add the ones you gain from this feature to any you have remaining.

FORGED FATE

Starting at 18th level, your time with your iron heart weapon has helped shape you into the hero it envisioned.

Choose one of the following realized fates:

Charismatic Commander. Your Charisma score increases by 2, and your maximum for that score is now 22. Additionally, you can use an action to inspire those around you to shore up their resolve to fight by shouting encouraging

words, holding up a standard, blowing a horn, or otherwise reminding them that you are fighting beside them. When you do so, choose any number of creatures within 120 feet that can see or hear you. Each creature can gain temporary hit points equal to your level + your Charisma modifier. A creature can't gain temporary hit points from this feature again until it has finished a short or long rest.

God's Hand. Chosen to do the will of a god, your attacks in battle can be extraordinarily devastating. Once per turn, you can deal an extra 2d6 damage to one creature you hit with an attack if you have advantage on the attack roll. The attack must use your iron heart weapon. The damage type is radiant or necrotic (your choice).

Unflinching Defender. The first time you attack with your iron heart weapon on each of your turns, you can transfer some or all of the weapon's bonus to your Armor Class, instead of using the bonus on any attacks that turn. For example, you could reduce the bonus to your attack and damage rolls from +3 to +1 and gain a +2 bonus to AC. The adjusted bonuses remain in effect until the start of your next turn, although you must hold the weapon to gain a bonus to AC from it, and only the attack bonus granted by the magic weapon you are wielding as an iron fated weapon can be used for this feature.

Watchful Warden. You gain a +5 bonus to initiative and you have advantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks made to detect potential threats such as hostile creatures, traps, and approaching storms. Additionally, you have advantage on all opportunity attacks.

SCALING MAGIC ITEMS

Part of the story of an Iron Fated character is that they have a connection to a weapon that they slowly uncover over time, so it should not be often that an Iron Fated fighter lays aside their iron heart weapon. But, with magic item weapon advancement and upgrades, Iron Fated fighters should not be trapped into keeping an inferior blade.

The following section includes optional rules and examples you can use when DMing for an Iron Fated character or any character you wish to award a magic item with a scaling progression of rarity and abilities.

For either of the methods detailed in this section, consider using the Dungeon Master's Guide's rules on awarding and constructing magic items to determine when to deliver weapons of certain rarities.

PREEXISTING WEAPON "SWAP" METHOD

One of the ways you can overcome the challenges of magic item distribution to an Iron Fated character is by swapping preexisting weapons from the Dungeon Master's Guide with the character's original magic weapon, but treating such a swap as an "unlocking" of a new feature. For example, an uncommon +1 longsword becomes a rare *dragonslayer* longsword when the character spends enough levels honing their skill with it.

From there, you will need to decide if the weapon keeps its original magical properties in addition to the next one it unlocks.

For example, when there is a very rare magic item in the campaign's budget that you decide to award, you might allow the player to upgrade the *dragonslayer* longsword to a *nine lives stealer*. The upgraded weapon would now be a +2 longsword, but it would be at your discretion to decide whether it loses or keeps its *dragonslayer* properties according to the balance and story of the campaign. If the sword was used to slay the dragon it was intended to, perhaps that aspect fades. If not, perhaps the sword retains both characteristics.

In the case of combining characteristics of multiple weapons, you should determine if the rarity of the combined weapon would move it into a higher category and adjust the distribution of the weapon and your magic item budget accordingly.



SIGNATURE WEAPON METHOD

Many homebrew campaigns utilize a signature weapon method to upgrade magic items as the campaign progresses.

In this method a player starts with a low-level magic item or finds one earlier in their adventures (such as +1 warhammer) and slowly unlocks new features of the weapon as they progress through the story or as they level.

Sometimes these features are worked out in advance and are part of the character's arc or central to creating an artifact needed to propel the story forward. Sometimes the weapon gains abilities based on the way characters have acted, the gods they have pleased, or enemies that they have slayed.

When a character has progressed to the appropriate level and have magic items in your budget to award, you allow the character to unlock the next version of their signature weapon according to rarity.

SAMPLE SIGNATURE WEAPONS

The following section includes examples of signature weapons. When creating signature weapons for your own campaign, consider who you are creating them for and why. If they are themed items based on a god, the abilities should match the characteristics of that god. Alternatively, you might create them in a progression toward a specific goal for the campaign or destiny for a character. In these cases, you might build the entire signature

weapon's progression before awarding the first rarity version. If the items are based on the deeds, personality, or alignment of a player character, it might be beneficial to create the signature weapons one rarity level at a time as the character progresses and as you and the player learn about the character, their backstories, and how they act under pressure.

If the signature weapon is based on an Iron Fated character's origin, such as obtaining the sword of a king, the weapon might grant them bonuses to Charisma checks or allow for them to utilize something akin to the Battlemaster's *commander's strike*. If they received the weapon from a god that asked them to strike down a devil, it might do additional damage against fiends. If the weapon came from the tomb of a dark necromancer, it might have the ability to imbue its wielder with false life.

In most situations utilizing scalable weapons, the player will only be aware of the current abilities of their weapon, not the ones locked away inside it.

The two weapons included in this section are the polar opposites: Law bringer and Bond Breaker. Law Bringer is a weapon for an Iron Fated character that it chooses as a worthy leader, or a hero meant to restore order, protect a bastion of civilization, or carry justice to the far ends of the planarverse. Or, on the darker side of the law, Law Bringer may just as easily intertwine its fate with a character destined to rule with an iron fist, subjugating enemies into lifelong bondage. Bond breaker is Law Bringer's counterpart and represents the chaotic path. But while the breaking of a bond can mean turning away from a promise, it can just as easily mean shattering a chain. Bond Breaker is a weapon for a character fated to usurp a king, lead a revolution of slaves, or tear down systems of law. Whether the laws it helps destroy or the kings it unseats are good or evil, Bond Breaker fits either end.

Both weapons follow the same rarity progression, starting at uncommon and moving toward legendary rarity. The table shows their attack and damage bonuses, number of maximum charges, and save DCs for their effects. These progressions in rarity take place when you decide to unlock the next rarity level version of the weapon based on a plot milestone, character level, or room in the magic item budget.

When the weapon advances, it maintains the features described in the previous levels and gains the new ones for its current level. For example, when Law Bringer reaches its the rarity level of "rare" it does not lose its uncommon feature: Maintainer of Order.

Law Bringer and Bond Breaker Progression

Rarity Level	Attack & Damage Bonus	Maximum Number of Charges	Spell Save DC
Uncommon	+1	2	-
Rare	+1	6	15
Very Rare	+2	10	17
Legendary	+3	15	19

the following features: Balance of Justice or Chains of the Law.

Balance of Justice. The scales of justice depicted on the weapon glow with a radiant light when balance is called for. After rolling your damage for an attack, you can choose to use this effect to take the average damage for the dice roll (rounded up) instead of the actual roll.

Average Damage

Dice	Average Damage
1d4	3
1d6	4
1d8	5
1d10	6
1d12	8
2d6	7

LAW BRINGER

Weapon (any melee weapon that lacks the light or finesse qualities), rarity varies (requires attunement by a lawfully aligned character)

Sometimes manifesting as a longsword or great sword and other times manifesting as a great axe, pole-arm, war-hammer, or maul, Law Bringer is an imposing weapon in any of its forms. On one face of the blade or the cheek of the head of the weapon is an inlaid depiction of the scales of justice; on the other, a set of shackles attached to a thick chain.

The weapon has a number of charges determined by its rarity level and regains all of its expended charges daily at dawn.

UNCOMMON FEATURES

Maintainer of Order. When brandishing the weapon in an attempt to maintain order, you can expend 1 charge as a bonus action to gain advantage on Charisma checks until the end of your next turn. This includes intimidating a group of soldiers to hold a breaking line in battle, persuading a creature to abide by the law of the land, or other checks where your request falls on the side of law, order, or justice.

RARE FEATURES

When you hit with a melee attack using this weapon you can expend 1 charge to use one of

Chains of the Law. Black shadowy chains erupt from the ground beneath the target. If the target is a creature, it must make a Strength saving throw against the weapon's spell save DC or be restrained until the end of your next turn. If the target is an object less than 10 feet in any dimension, it is held fast among the chains until the end of your next turn or until a creature uses an action to make a successful Strength (Athletics) check against the weapon's save DC in an attempt to free it.

VERY RARE FEATURES

Champion of Order. You can use the Maintainer of Order feature without expending a charge.

Additionally, while holding this weapon, you can use an action and expend some of its charges to cast the following spells from it using the weapon's spell save DC: *command* (for 1 charge you cast the 1st level version of the spell and you can increase the spellslot level by one for each additional charge you expend up to a maximum of 5) *heroism* (2 charges), or *hold person* (2 charges).

LEGENDARY FEATURES

Authoritative Command. Creatures you target with the *command* spell have disadvantage on saving throws made to resist the effect.

Additionally while holding this weapon, you can use an action and expend some of its charges to cast the following spells from it using the weapon's spell save DC: *dominate person* (5 charges), *forcecage* (7 charges), or *hold monster* (5 charges).

BOND BREAKER

Weapon (any melee weapon that lacks the light or finesse qualities), rarity varies (requires attunement by a chaotically aligned character)

Known to change its form at will, Bond Breaker is at times a twisting silver staff, at others an glimmering great sword made of rainbow colored steel, and at others still an unassuming axe one might see in the hands of a woodsman. In all cases, it contains small depictions of a bird fleeing a cage and of a whirlwind.

The weapon has a number of charges determined by its rarity level and regains all of its expended charges daily at dawn.

UNCOMMON FEATURES

Sower of Discord. When brandishing the weapon in an attempt to sow discord, you can expend 1 charge as a bonus action to gain advantage on Charisma checks until the end of your next turn. This includes inspiring workers to riot or strike, convincing a slave to turn against their master, or other checks where your request falls on the side of chaos, freedom, or anarchy.

RARE FEATURES

You can speak the command word as a bonus action and expend 1 charge to use one of the following features: Breaker of Bonds

Breaker of Bonds. The open cage depicted on the weapon glows with a greenish light that emanates in a 5 foot cube around you. Until the end of your next turn, your movement is unaffected by difficult terrain, and spells and other magical effects can neither reduce your speed nor cause you to be paralyzed or restrained.

You can also spend 5 feet of movement to automatically escape from nonmagical restraints such as manacles or a creature that has you grappled. Finally, being underwater

imposes no penalty on your movement or attacks.

Unpredictable Storm. The whirlwind depicted on the weapon begins to twist and swirl causing a stormlike wind to emanate from your space.

Roll a d4 on the following table to determine the effect.

Unpredictable Storm

d4	Effect
1	You cast <i>gust</i> .
2	Lightning fills the area around you. All creatures within 5 feet of you must make a Dexterity saving throw or take 1d6 lightning damage on a failed save or half as much on a successful one.
3	Whirling gusts of elemental air surround you until the end of your turn, allowing you to fly up to 10 feet without provoking opportunity attacks.
4	You cast <i>thunderwave</i> .

VERY RARE FEATURES

Unfettered Form. You can use an action to transform the weapon into any of its forms. Choose any simple or martial weapon that lacks the light, finesse, or ranged properties. You may also choose to alter its color, sheen, and other cosmetic qualities. Bond Breaker now takes that form.

Additionally, while holding this weapon, you can use an action and expend some of its charges to cast the following spells from it using the weapon's spell save DC: *cause fear* (XGE) (for 1 charge you cast the 1st level version of the spell and you can increase the spellslot level by one for each additional charge you expend up to a maximum of 5) *chaos bolt* (XGE) (3rd level version, 3 charges, +9 attack bonus), or *dissonant whispers* (1 charge).

LEGENDARY FEATURES

Well of Chaos. Your attack bonus when casting *chaos bolt* (XGE) from the weapon increases to +11. You can use any number of remaining charges to empower your use of the spell, increasing its damage by 1d6 for each additional charge you expend.

Additionally, while holding this weapon, you can use an action and expend some of its charges to cast the following spells from it using the weapon's spell save DC: *confusion* (4 charges) *passwall* (5 charges), or *prismatic spray* (7 charges).