CHAPTER ONE
ASSEMBLING A CREW

The galaxy is a rough place. Most of the once-powerful planets have been reduced to rubble, their populations decimated. Even the smaller colonies that were left untouched by the war have seen their economies collapse as necessary trade dried up. Vast pirate fleets roam between the stars, taking what they want and enforcing their own brand of law and justice. Plagues have run unchecked through many systems. Famine has turned others into wastelands. Raiding, border skirmishes, and other low-level warfare is rife.

It is against this background that the 'independent crews' operate. Generally consisting of a single ship and a small crew, these small bands travel between the systems, keeping to the shadows and out-of-sight of the pirate fleets. Some crews are freedom-fighters looking to strike against the pirates or idealists looking to rebuild civilization. Others are treasure hunters, picking through the ruins for lost technology and other valuable artefacts. Still others are bounty hunters, religious crusaders, shady merchants, pirates, or criminals on the run. In truth, there are as many causes and reasons to fly between the stars as there are spaceships.

The first step in creating your independent crew is sketching out a mental picture of the crew you want to play. Is your crew the remnants of a military unit, still desperately trying to fight the Last War? A group of nearly extinct aliens desperately seeking other survivors of their race? Or a team of art experts who 'recover' lost artworks from ruined planets in the hope of selling them for a premium to collectors amongst the pirates? While these decisions have no specific impact on your crew in terms of rules, having a few broad outlines in mind will help with the rest of the process and give you a starting point in telling the story of your crew.

Once you've got your basic idea, it is time to create your captain.

CREATING A CAPTAIN

Every independent crew is led by a **Captain**. This is not necessarily a military rank, but simply denotes that the person commands a starship, even a small one. In game terms, the captain is your most important figure. The captain is both the leader of your independent crew and your most powerful figure. Essentially, the captain represents you on the tabletop.

To create a captain, you'll want to have a copy of the Crew Sheet from the back of the book (see page 162). The sheet has space for all of the important information about your captain (and their crew) that you will need during a game.

The first decision you should make when creating a captain is their name and species. Neither of these decisions will affect the character's in-game capabilities, but they will help establish them in your mind. Some people like to find a miniature they really love and tell a story around it. Others go the opposite direction and create a character first, then find a figure to fit. Either way is fine.

In a galaxy consisting of tens of thousands of worlds, each with a unique culture, almost any name you can think of will be appropriate – so you might as well go with something that sounds cool to you. Of course, when thinking up a name, it might help to know your captain's species. There are nearly as many species in the galaxy as there are planets. Most of these are humanoid, but some are decidedly not. Feel free to have your captain be of any species, as long as that species is generally human-sized, but realize that, gamewise, any difference between that species and humans is purely cosmetic (for more information on alien species in *Stargrave*, see the text box on page 27).

BACKGROUND

Once you've established a mental picture of your captain, it is time to select your captain's background. There are eight different backgrounds open to captains, each with its own strengths and weaknesses. When choosing a background, it is best to study the capabilities of each and decide which fits best with your play style. If you like charging in and taking the fight to the enemy, you might consider a Biomorph. If you like to work from the back, manipulating people and objects, a Psionicist might be more your style.

Listed below are the backgrounds open to captains, along with a brief description of their abilities, their typical look, and their most common motivations for the adventuring life. Of course, all of these are generalizations, and it is fine to have a captain who is an outlier for their background.

Below each description is a list of stat modifications and core powers for that background. This is explained in the next section.

Biomorph

When the old empires fell, so did their laws limiting 'genetic enhancement'. A few scientists seized this opportunity to engage in radical experimentation. This involved both the genetic manipulation of naturally born individuals and the creation of wholly new 'tank-born' individuals. In either case, those that survived these experiments often had unique abilities to control their own bodies, such as realigning their skeletal structure, growing new limbs, changing their skin tones, or even growing additional organs to deal with toxic substances or alien environments. Unfortunately, many biomorphs were also left psychically scarred by their modifications. While the worst of these tend to destroy themselves quickly, almost all carry some form of phobia, psychosis, or other mental impairment.

Depending on the abilities of a biomorph, they tend to dress in loose, or very stretchy outfits, or have specialized suits of armour made that take into account their abilities. More than any other background, biomorphs tend to form independent crews because they are on the run – either from those that created them or want to do further experiments on them, or to escape the consequences of some crime (often unintended).

BIOMORPH	
Stat Modifications	+1 Health and choose two of the following: +1 Move, +1 Fight, +1 Shoot
Core Powers	Adrenaline Surge, Armour Plates, Camouflage, Fling, Regenerate, Restructure Body, Toxic Claws, Toxic Secretion

Cyborg

A fusion of man and machine, cyborgs have been a constant, if rare, feature of every war for the past several centuries. Specialist cyborgs have been created to fulfil nearly every military role including infiltration, stealth, reconnaissance, or just straight-up combat. Despite their obvious advantages, cyborgs are rarely cost effective and thus were never produced in great numbers.

With the end of the Last War, many cyborgs attempted to 'retire', but most found that it requires huge sums of money to keep their bodies working. For that reason, many have gone into business for themselves, working as mercenaries, bounty hunters, private investigators, or retrieval specialists.

Cyborgs vary greatly in appearance. Some are indistinguishable from humans, some look like humans with obvious robotic parts, and a few look completely robotic and only feature a human brain or nervous system.

CYBORG	
Stat Modifications	+1 Health and choose two of the following: +1 Move, +1 Fight, +1 Shoot
Core Powers	Camouflage, Control Robot, Data Knock, Energy Shield, Power Spike, Quick Step, Target Lock, Temporary Upgrade

Mystic

As the galaxy exploded during the Last War, many people turned to religion to try to find solace. The first, and most obvious, expression of this was the doomsday cults. Some of these grew out of ancient orders that could trace their origins back for millennia; others seemed to spontaneously germinate from the apocalyptic death-tolls. Most of these cults were quickly exterminated or destroyed themselves, but a few survived and even thrived. By mixing mysticism, alien technology, and 'dark science', these surviving cults developed strange and deadly powers. While not all of them are 'evil', most people look upon these cultists as witches and warlocks and they are rarely welcome. These cult mystics tend to travel between the stars searching for various things: ancient mystical texts, alien technology, or new secrets of dark science.

There was also a quieter reaction to the war, the flourishing of monastic orders. While these orders have wildly differing foci, from healing to research, historical preservation, even military prowess, they all believe in the establishment and maintenance of order. It is not unusual for a monastery to take the surrounding towns and villages under their protection, and because of this, these areas have often become havens in this dark time.

In order to join one of these orders, an aspirant must demonstrate a deep connectedness to the universe around them. It is unknown if this is the result of some physiological attribute or simply an open-mindedness to the possibilities beyond sight. Either way, it has allowed these mystics to develop abilities that seem to go beyond the normal bounds of physics.

Whether a cultist, monk, or even knight, these mystics generally wear loose, non-descript clothing, often robes. While armour is worn by a few of the more military focused monastic orders, it seems to interfere with the abilities of most mystics.

MYSTIC	
STAT MODIFICATIONS	+2 Will, + 1 Health, and choose one of the following: +1 Move, +1 Fight, +1 Shoot
CORE POWERS	Control Animal, Dark Energy, Heal, Life Leach, Mystic Trance, Puppet Master, Suggestion, Void Blade

Robotics Expert

Few people truly understand robots. Even those who build and repair them rarely grasp the nuances of how they think and what motivates them beyond their basic programming. The exceptions are known as Robotics Experts. These people, who are often socially awkward with their own kind, seem to share an empathy, or a fluency, with these constructs.

Robotics Experts are generally master craftsmen, building the best, most capable, and most intelligent robots. Not only that, but they are able to network these robots together in ways that other people can't even begin to understand. It is not unusual for a robotics expert captain to have more robots than people in their crew, and such crews tend to operate together with a high degree of efficiency.

Robotics Experts are always looking for new technology, and more funds, to improve their robots and push the bounds of what is possible. This leads many to become mercenaries and smugglers. Robotics Experts tend to focus on their work and are unconcerned with their appearance. They generally carry a lot of tools and spare parts for their 'children'.

ROBOTICS EXPERT	
STAT MODIFICATIONS	+1 Will and choose two of the following: +1 Move, +1 Fight, +1 Shoot, +1 Health
CORE POWERS	Control Robot, Create Robot, Drone, Electromagnetic Pulse, Remote Firing, Remote Guidance, Repair Robot, Re-wire Robot

Rogue

While law and order has broken down across most of the galaxy, rogues never paid it much attention anyway. Their only law was the law of not getting caught. This background includes such shifty characters as smugglers, gamblers, fixers, shady merchants, drug dealers, etc.

Rogues have learned to survive the horrors of the galaxy through a combination of wit, brains, and luck. While they generally don't have any mystical powers or bodily enhancements, they know when to press their luck and when to scarper when a deal goes sour. While rogues rarely appear like the most dangerous of individuals, they almost always have several back-up plans, a lucky coin in their pocket, and a powerful firearm concealed up their sleeve.

Rogues travel between the stars always searching for the deal that will make them rich.

ROGUE	
STAT MODIFICATIONS	+1 Will, +1 Health, and choose two of the following: +1 Move, +1 Fight, +1 Shoot
CORE POWERS	Bait and Switch, Bribe, Cancel Power, Concealed Firearm, Data Jump, Fortune, Haggle, Quick-Step

Psionicist

Over the last few centuries, psionics – the ability to shape and affect reality with nothing more than the mind – has become an accepted, if extremely rare, branch of science. While most of the institutions and schools set up to promote, train, and study psionically gifted individuals were deliberately targeted and destroyed in the Last War, many of the students survived.

Psionicists vary wildly in their abilities. Some can move objects or conjure fire, while others can enter people's minds and potentially control their bodies. Because of their rare abilities, psionicists are actively recruited by the pirate fleets, and those that will not join up willingly are often kidnapped. Thus, the life of a psionicist is inherently dangerous, leading many to live a life on the run, forming their own independent crews to fight against, or at least stay one step ahead of, the pirate fleets.

Psionicists tend to keep a low-profile and thus wear 'normal clothes'. That said, many shave their heads as their hair becomes itchy when using their powers. Many also feel compelled to sketch very specific, unique tattoos on their bodies, though the reasons for this have never been understood. Psionicists rarely wear armour as it can impair their abilities.

PSIONICIST	
STAT MODIFICATIONS	+2 Will, +1 Health and choose one of the following: +1 Move, +1 Fight, +1 Shoot
CORE POWERS	Break Lock, Destroy Weapon, Lift, Psionic Fire, Psychic Shield, Pull, Suggestion, Wall of Force

Tekker

Considering the size of the galaxy, it is inevitable that technology advances much faster in some corners than in others. Even with modern star travel, the spread of such technology can be slow. When the Last War destroyed most of the great civilizations of the galaxy, the average level of technology in the galaxy dropped precipitately, essentially creating a dark age in most places.

Although the means to construct most of the highest-level technology was destroyed, many examples of those technologies still exist, and a few people still have the skills to repair it. Such individuals earn a reputation as 'Tekkers', as they always seem to be fiddling with some strange and wonderful device.

While Tekkers run the gamut in terms of appearance, they all tend to carry lots of high-tech equipment and individualized tool kits.

TEKKER	
STAT MODIFICATIONS	+2 Will and choose two of the following: +1 Move, +1 Fight, +1 Shoot, +1 Health
CORE POWERS	Anti-gravity Projection, Data Jump, Data Knock, Data Skip, Drone, Electromagnetic Pulse, Holographic Wall, Transport

Veteran

The Last War saw more people take up arms than at any point in the history of the galaxy. While trillions lost their lives in the countless horrific battles, many survived to see the desolate aftermath. When the central governments of the two great empires collapsed, most of these veterans were left to their own devices. Most attempted to return home and pick up the pieces of their old lives, but many found their homes destroyed and their loved ones gone. Others knew that war had changed them so badly that they could never go home again.

In the early days after the war, it was not uncommon for veterans to band together into small armies, but most of these were wiped out by the pirate fleets. Most of the veterans that survived did so by hiding, or forming their own, small, independent crews that could move around without drawing too much attention.

Many veterans continue to fight for some lost cause: their empire, their planet, or just a sense of justice. Others have abandoned any hope of a sane galaxy and have become mercenaries, bounty-hunters, and raiders. Some are just looking for a way to use the skills they have to feed their families.

Veterans have been trained to fight and have come to realize that their survival depends on a combination of skill, luck, and good equipment. Veterans always wear the best armour and carry the best weapons they can find.

VETERAN	
STAT MODIFICATIONS	+1 Fight, +1 Health, and choose one of the following: +1 Move, +1 Fight (for a total of +2), +1 Shoot
CORE POWERS	Armoury, Command, Coordinated Fire, Energy Shield, Fortune, Power Spike, Remote Firing, Target Designation

CHOOSING POWERS

Now that your captain has a background, you must choose their starting powers. These are the special abilities that make your captain unique, and selecting them is one of the most important decisions you will make. These powers give your crew special advantages that you can hopefully use to help defeat your enemies.

Under the description of each of the backgrounds is a list of **Core Powers** for that background. Each of these powers is explained fully in Chapter Four: Powers (see pages 105–116). A starting captain gets to choose five powers. The player must choose either three or four (their choice) of these powers from the core powers for the captain's background. The other one or two must be selected from any of the powers listed in Chapter Four, so long as they are not among your core powers.

When selecting a power, write that power on the crew sheet in the appropriate space under the captain. Next to each space for writing a power is a space to write the power's activation number. The lower the activation number, the easier it is for the captain to use this power during the game. If this is one of the core powers for your captain's background, the activation number is equal to the one listed for that power. If this power is not one of your core powers, then the activation number is equal to the one listed for that power +2. This means that powers from outside of a captain's core powers are harder to use.

Once this is done, you may decrease the activation number for two different powers by 1 each, regardless of whether or not these powers are core powers.

Each of the power slots on the captain sheet also includes a column for Strain. The Strain for each power is listed in its description. This number is fixed; it doesn't matter if the power is a Core Power or not.

As a captain participates in a campaign, they will gain new powers, and become better skilled at using the powers they have. This is explained in Chapter Three: Campaigns (see page 74).

THE STAT-LINE

In *Stargrave*, every figure – be it a captain, soldier, or alien creature – has a **Stat-line**, which determines its effectiveness in the game. There are six stats, explained below.

- **Move (M):** the speed of a figure. The higher its Move, the further it can move each turn.
- **Fight (F):** the figure's skill in hand-to-hand combat, and its ability to avoid incoming fire.
- **Shoot (S):** the figure's skill with projectile weapons.
- **Armour (A):** how much physical protection a figure is wearing, including armour and energy shielding.
- **Will (W):** the figure's determination, courage, and ability to work with technology.
- **Health (H):** the physical toughness of a figure and how much Damage it can endure before it is badly wounded or killed.

Each stat has a number associated with it. Put simply, the higher the number, the better. The specific meaning of each number will be explained later. For now, it is only important to know that every captain starts with the same base stat line listed below.

STARTING CAPTAIN					
M	F	S	A	W	H
6	+3	+2	9	+3	16

Stat Modifications

Before writing your captain's stats on the Crew Sheet, refer back to the description of their background. Each background has specific 'stat modifications' listed in the table beneath its description. Some of these modifiers are fixed, and others are offered as a choice. Apply all of these stat modifications to the starting captain's base stat line, as seen above, and write them in the appropriate section on the Crew Sheet.

Split Stats

In some circumstances, it will be necessary to record two different values for one stat. This is called a **Split Stat** and will be indicated as '+2/+3'. In these cases, the first number is always the figures' **actual stat**, and the second number is its **effective stat** in the current circumstances. Split stats usually occur when a figure is using some form of advanced technology, is under the effects of a power, or suffering from some form of injury. All of these instances will be fully explained later.

LEVEL

All Captains start at Level 15. This is explained in Chapter Three: Campaigns (see).

GEAR

Captains have six slots for carrying gear. A starting captain may choose their gear from the General Equipment List (see). There is no cost for this gear beyond the number of slots they take up. During a campaign, captains are allowed to change their gear after each game, so if they find an advanced carbine, a weird bit of alien technology, or cache of grenades, they can carry them in their next game. Alternatively, they can take different items from the General Equipment List after each game.

And that's essentially it for creating a captain; they are ready to go. That said, loners don't last long on the rough edge of the galaxy. In the next section, you will learn how to assemble a crew of followers to join your captain on its missions and explorations.

CREATING A FIRST MATE

Also called first officers, XOs, lieutenants, and occasionally 'Number 1', the **First Mate** is the captain's right-hand being. It is the first mate's job to oversee the day-to-day running of the crew while the captain deals with higher-level plans.

Every crew features a first mate, and creating one follows the same system as creating a captain. First you must pick a background for the first mate. This can be the same background as the captain, but does not have to be. It is perfectly acceptable to have a Tekker captain and a Cyborg first mate, or the other way around.

Next, choose the first mate's powers. First mates have four starting powers: two or three (player's choice) must be selected from the core powers, the remainder must be selected from any listed in the Chapter Four: Powers, so long as they are not core powers. When assigning activation numbers for each power, take the activation number listed for that power and add +2 if it is a core power, +4 if it is not. Thus, not only do first mates have fewer starting powers, but they aren't quite as good at using the ones they do have. That's why they are first mates and not captains!

FIRST MATE STATS

First mates have the following base stat-line. Like captains, first mates should apply the stat modifiers from their background to get their starting stats.

Starting First Mate					
M	**F**	**S**	**A**	**W**	**H**
6	+2	+2	9	+2	14

FIRST MATE LEVEL

All first mates start out at level 0. This is explained in the Chapter Three: Campaigns (see).

FIRST MATE GEAR

First mates have five gear slots. They may choose starting gear from the General Equipment List in the same way as the captain.

RECRUITING SOLDIERS

Now that you've got your commanders in place, it is time to fill out the rest of your crew. For the sake of simplicity, all of the members of the crew who are not a captain or first mate are called soldiers. They may not actually be 'soldiers' by background, but in the tough world of the independent crews, everyone is called upon to fight sooner or later.

Every captain starts with 400 credits (cr) which can be used to recruit up to 8 soldiers to join their crew, of which a maximum of 4 can be specialists. To recruit a soldier, the captain simply pays the cost given on the tables below. This represents a combination of the cost of the soldier's gear, upkeep, pay etc. In most cases, the soldier actually follows their captain out of loyalty.

A few soldiers are 'free', meaning that no payment is necessary to recruit them. In this way, a captain should always be able field a full complement of 8 soldiers, even if funds are running a bit low!

Each soldier has fixed stats listed on the charts below. Unlike captains and first mates, the stats of a soldier are never modified, unless they are subject to some outside affect like advanced technology or a power. The Crew Sheet contains space to list all of your soldiers and their stats. You can give them all names if you wish, but in the rough galaxy of *Stargrave*, it is best not to get too attached them…

All Soldiers are equipped with the gear listed in their profile. In addition, they have 1 gear slot.

The stats given for each soldier incorporates any bonuses or penalties to their Move or Armour Stats provided by the items listed in their notes.

STANDARD SOLDIER TABLE

SOLDIER	MOVE	FIGHT	SHOOT	ARMOUR	WILL	HEALTH	COST	NOTES
Recruit	6	+2	+2	10	+0	12	Free	Pistol, Light Armour, Knife
Runner	7	+2	+1	9	+1	12	Free	Pistol, Knife
Hacker	6	+1	+1	10	+1	12	20cr	Pistol, Deck, Light Armour, Knife
Chiseler	6	+1	+1	10	+1	12	20cr	Pistol, Picks, Light Armour, Knife
Guard Dog	8	+1	+0	8	-2	10	10cr	Animal, Cannot carry gear or loot.
Sentry	5	+3	+2	11	+0	14	50cr	Carbine, Heavy Armour, Hand Weapon
Trooper	5	+2	+3	11	+0	14	50cr	Carbine, Heavy Armour, Knife
Medic	7	+2	+2	10	+3	14	100cr	Pistol, Light Armour, Medic Kit

Specialist Soldier Table

Soldier	Move	Fight	Shoot	Armour	Will	Health	Cost	Notes
Codebreaker	6	+3	+2	10	+2	14	75cr	Carbine, Deck, Light Armour, Knife
Casecracker	6	+3	+2	10	+2	14	75cr	Carbine, Picks, Light Armour, Knife
Commando	5	+3	+3	11	+1	14	75cr	Carbine, Grenades*, Heavy Armour, Hand Weapon
Pathfinder	7	+3	+3	10	+2	14	100cr	Carbine, Grenades*, Light Armour, Hand Weapon
Sniper	6	+3	+4	10	+3	14	100cr	Carbine, Light Armour, Hand Weapon
Grenadier	5	+3	+3	11	+2	14	100cr	Grenade Launcher*, Pistol, Heavy Armour, Knife
Burner	5	+3	+2	11	+1	14	100cr	Flamethrower, Pistol, Heavy Armour, Knife
Gunner	5	+3	+3	11	+1	14	100cr	Rapid-fire, Pistol, Heavy Armour, Knife
Armoured Trooper	6	+4	+4	13	+3	14	150cr	Carbine, Combat Armour

* Soldiers listed with Grenades carry both smoke and fragmentation grenades and may choose which type to use at any time. A figure carrying grenades is assumed to have as many of either type as they need for a given game.

SOLDIER GEAR

Each soldier comes with a set of standard gear listed in the notes on the soldier tables. Soldiers may not be given any additional gear from the General Equipment list, although if they lose an item listed in their notes it is replaced for free after the game.

All soldiers have one gear slot; however, soldiers may not take any additional gear from the General Equipment List; this additional gear slot can only be used for gear that is found or purchased during a campaign. See the section on Counting Loot (see page 77) for full details. In the case of weapons or armour, it must be of the same type as the weapons or armour listed in the soldier's notes. In this case, the advanced weapon or armour both replaces their mundane version and fills their one gear slot.

ROBOTS

Whenever a new soldier is recruited, a player may declare that the new soldier is a robot. This has no additional cost and does not change the soldier's stats or equipment. However, the designation 'robot' should be added to the soldier's notes. Robots are immune to the wounding and toxic rules presented in the combat section, and are never effected by gases or low oxygen levels. On the other hand, robots have other vulnerabilities and weaknesses that will become apparent later in the rules. Many of the powers available to captains and first mates can only effect robots or, conversely, have no effect on them.

In terms of appearance, robots can look like anything as long as the figure is near human-sized. Some robots are advanced androids that are only distinguishable from humans on close inspection; others look more like walking appliances.

Captains and first mates may not be robots, though if you like the idea, consider giving them the Cyborg background.

TEMPORARY CREWMEMBERS

While independent crews are limited to ten permanent members (1 captain, 1 first mate, and 8 soldiers), it is sometimes possible to gain additional 'temporary members', through the use of powers, advanced technology, or special scenario conditions. If a crew gains a temporary member, it follows all of the normal rules of a permanent member except that it will participate only in one game. After that game is over, the temporary member leaves the crew.

ALIENS IN STARGRAVE

Aliens in *Stargrave* are broken into two categories: humanoids and non-humanoids. For whatever reason, most of the highly advanced, sentient races in the galaxy are humanoid, in that they have a definable head, torso, two arms, and two legs. The exact look of these parts can vary in the extreme and can include such diverse features as scales, feathers, spines, bone-ridges, small tentacles, etc. As far as these rules are concerned, all of these aliens are treated the same, and players are free to represent all of the members of their crew as whatever humanoid, alien species they wish.

Of course, the *Stargrave* galaxy also includes numerous non-humanoid alien species. In most cases, these aliens will be included in scenarios as 'uncontrolled creatures', and a sample of these are found in Chapter Six: Bestiary (see page 139. Future supplements may include specific aliens with fixed stats and abilities that can be included in a crew.

That said, players should not feel bound by these categories. If you've got a weird alien figure that you really want to include in your crew, that is fine. Use the stats for a normal soldier (or for your captain or first mate if you wish) and make sure you inform your opponent what exactly the figure represents before you start a game. In general, players should try to get figures that roughly match the character they represent, but this should never get in the way of having fun and collecting the miniatures you want.