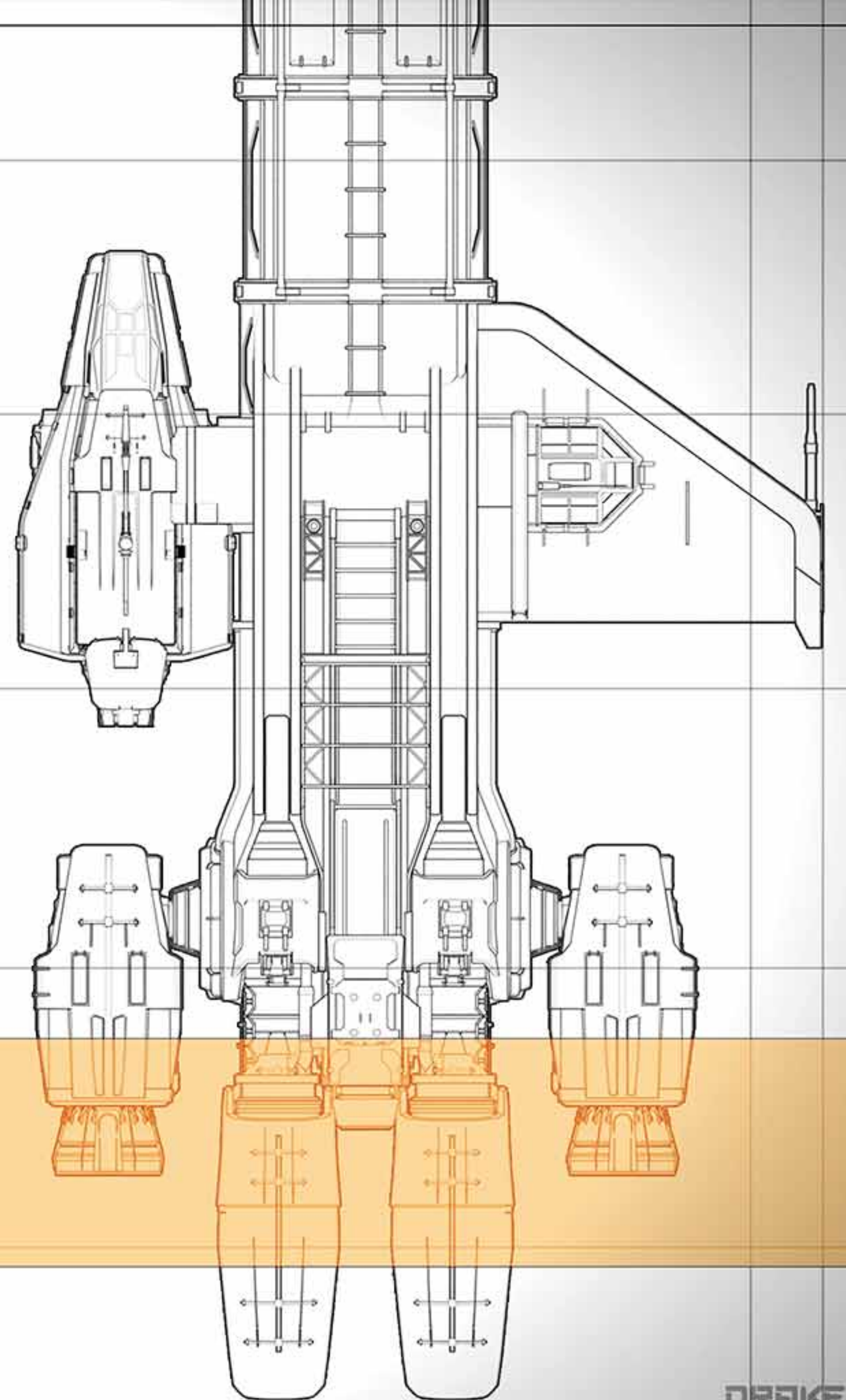


THE VISUAL GUIDE TO SPACECRAFT

CATERPILLAR EDITION

THE COMPANION TO DRAKE'S PREMIER CARGO SHIP



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Caterpillar Edition

2nd Printing

Edited by:
Janna Nosato, AFP
Alan Pulick

Special thanks to the Drake Interplanetary Design Team for all their assistance bringing this guide to life.

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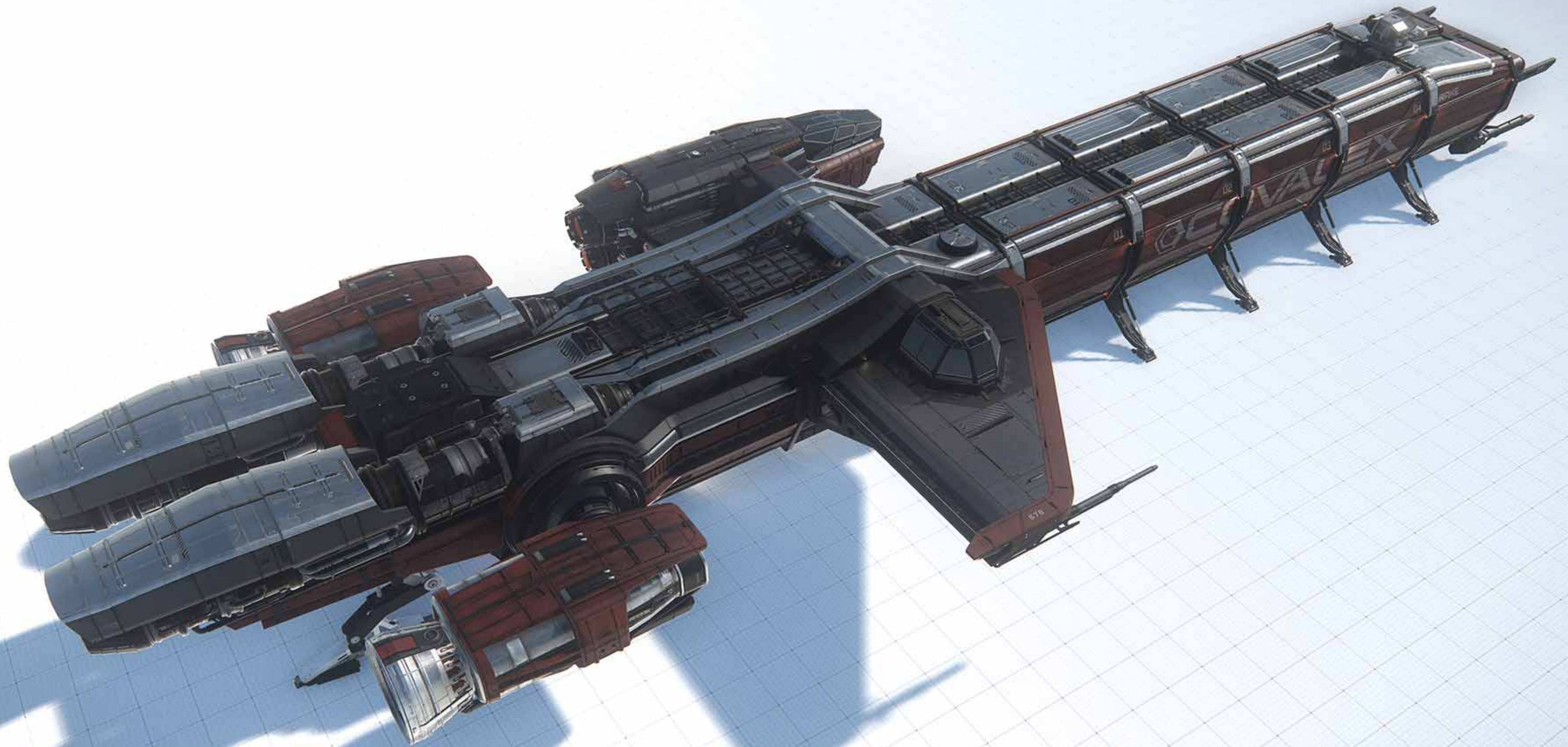
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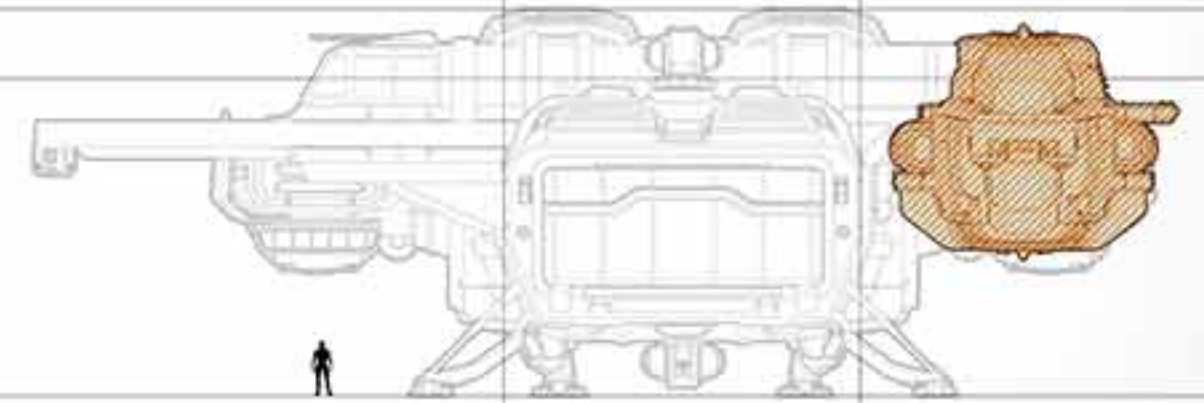
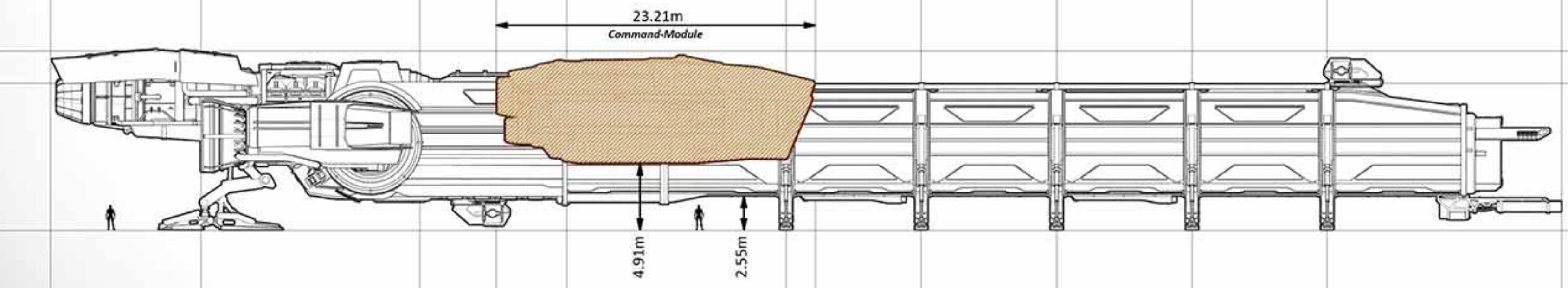
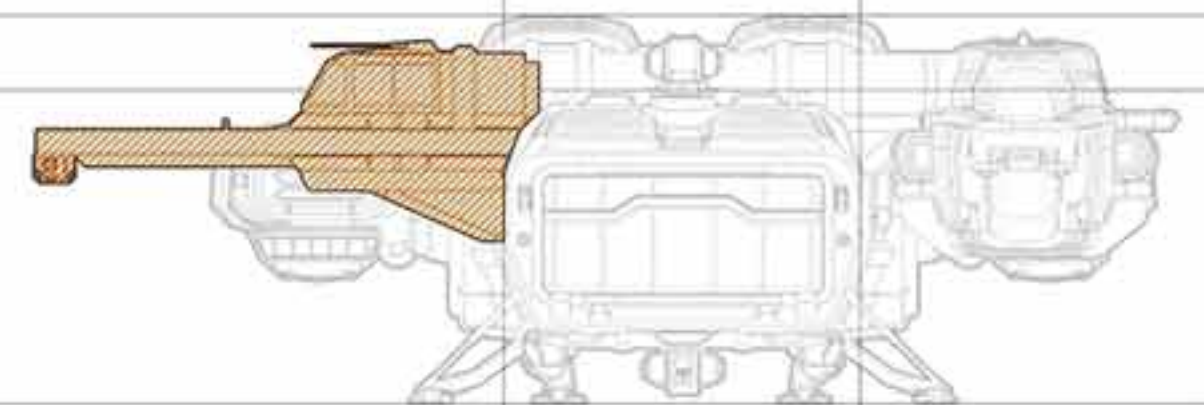
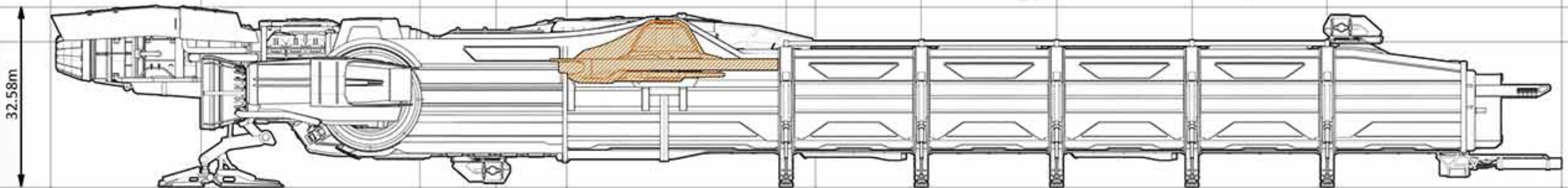
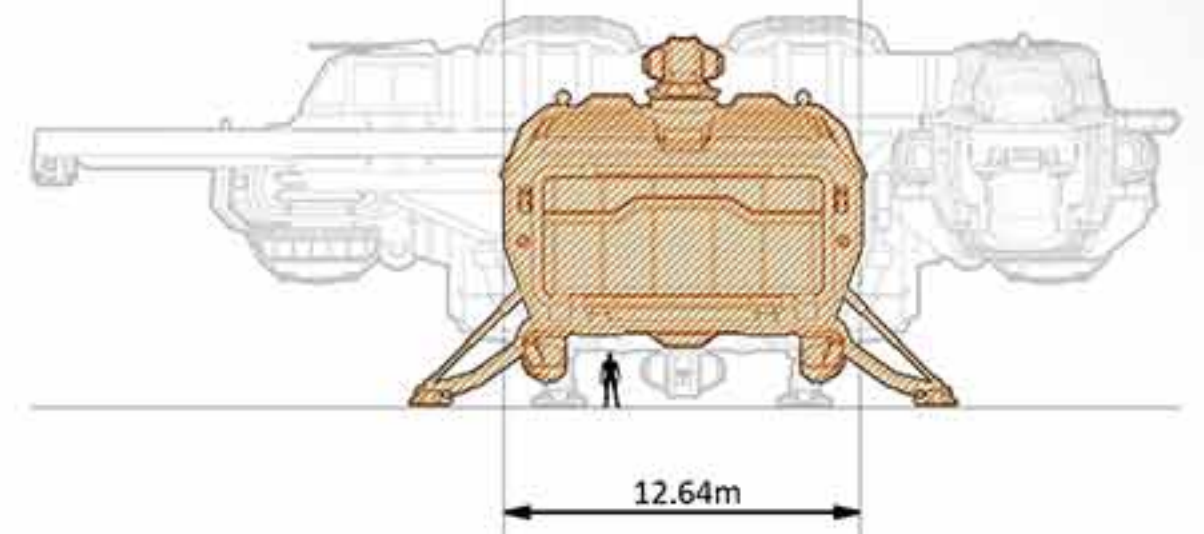
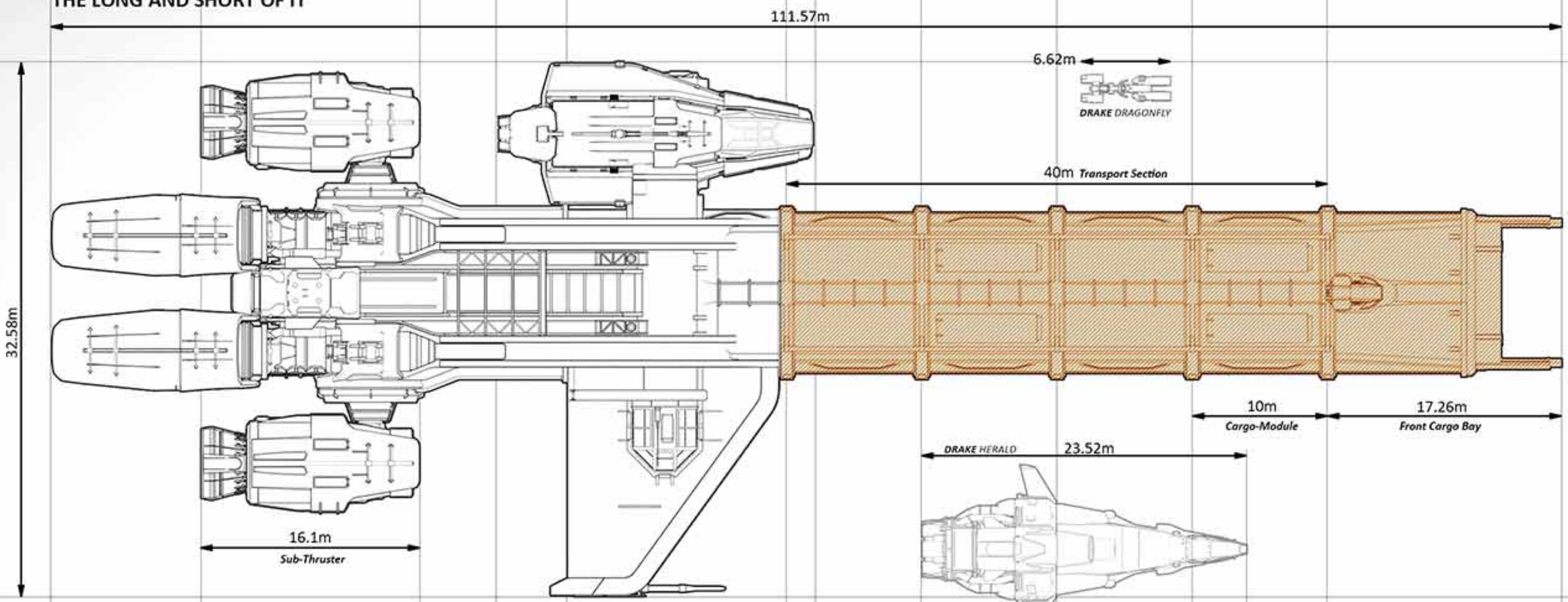
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THE LONG AND SHORT OF IT



RESCUE SHIP. TRANSPORT. SALVAGE. GETAWAY VEHICLE

Throughout its colorful history, the Caterpillar has been described as the 'perfect ship' for any number of roles, but this versatile and modular vessel almost never saw the light of day. In the wake of the Cutlass' success, Drake Interplanetary's CEO and lead designer Jan Dredge was looking for the next phase of Drake's evolution. Company analysts presented several possibilities for Drake's next project, commercial hauling. Although the Cutlass enjoyed some success as a small transport, it was more known (or notorious) for its combat abilities. Dredge knew they should take the same design principles and apply it to something bigger. Much bigger.

The public got their first glimpse of the Drake Caterpillar prototype at the 2871 Intergalactic Aerospace Expo. The ship wasn't exactly well received, with one spectator famously quoted as saying, "this is the first time I've seen a new ship that looked like it was built thirty years ago." Even though the critics cited several strengths and flashes of design ingenuity, the negativity almost threatened the whole project. It wasn't until the reports of the Caterpillar spread through the Empire, that the tide began to turn. People were floored by two things: the ability to mix and match cargo modules and the price. When outfitted with nothing but cargo modules, the Caterpillar was poised to create opportunities for smaller hauling outfits to transport large amounts of cargo.



A MATTER OF MASS

An interesting challenge unique to designers of cargo vessels is that the weight of the ship they're crafting will be shifting drastically depending on what the craft is hauling or what modules it's equipped with. This means that thrusters and engines have to cope with a wider range of masses than other vehicles. Drake engineers tackled the problem with their unique quad main thruster design that provides plenty of forward acceleration when the Caterpillar is fully laden, but still allows pilots plenty of handling when the hold is empty, in large part thanks to the pair of diffuse rings on the twin sub-thrusters which allow finer control of excess thrust.





KESSLERING HEIST

Emile Kesslering owned a small scale mining outfit that had purchased some dubious mining rights in the Tohil System. His mining efforts had proven, thus far, to be mostly useless. That changed when they discovered a small deposit of eriesium in one of the asteroids. Only weighing in at around a kilogram, this miniscule amount was the largest deposit of eriesium ever discovered in UEE space. Kesslering told anyone who would listen about the discovery and soon word had spread throughout the Empire.

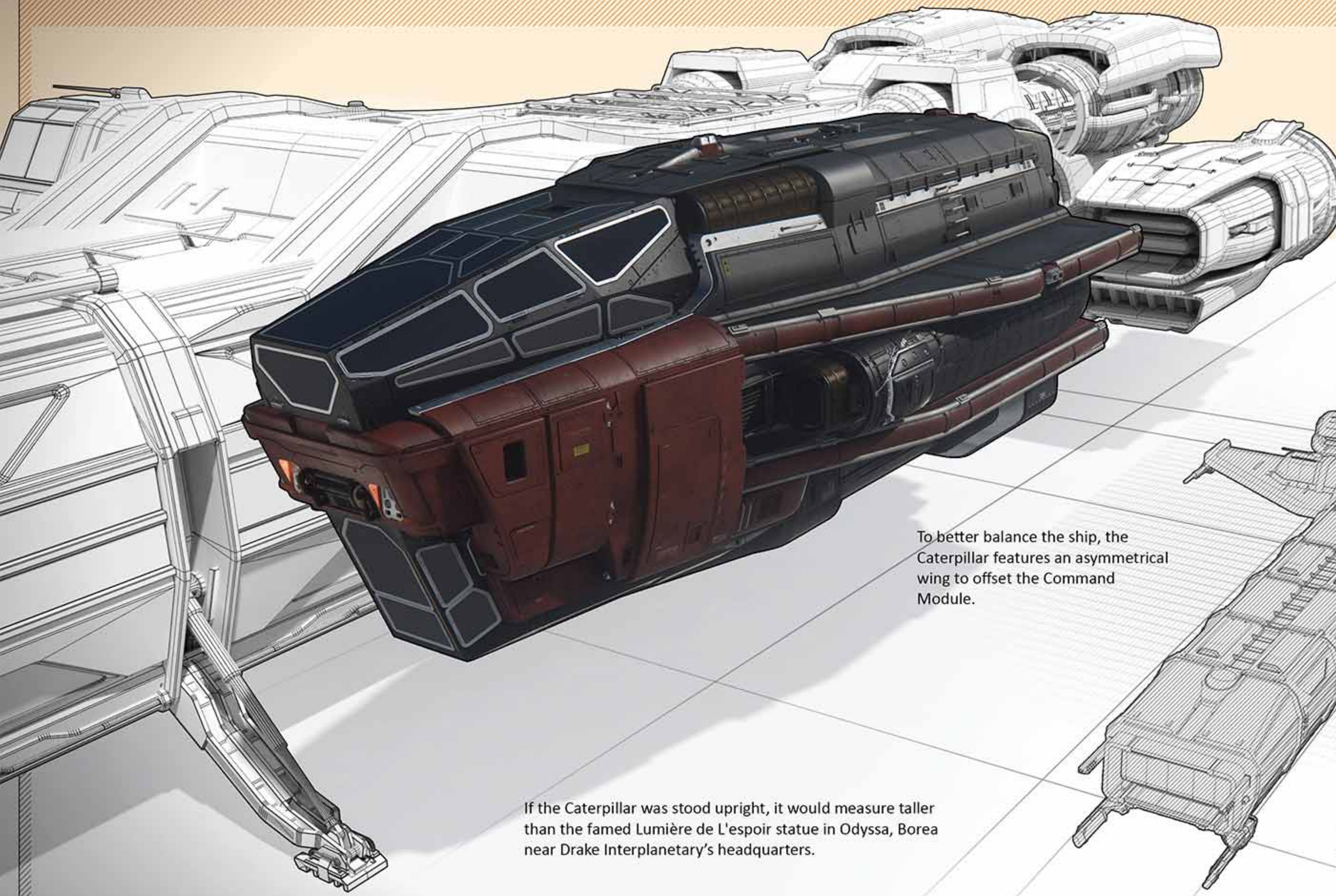
On 2903-06-21 SET, when he finally found a buyer willing to pay the vast asking price, Kesslering set out with the eriesium and a security detail. While in heavy traffic, a single Caterpillar broke from the flow of ships and headed for the Kesslering transport. Kesslering, thinking nothing of it, casually commed the incoming ship about their collision course.

The Caterpillar rammed Kesslering's transport, using the front sensor array as hooks to latch onto to the hull. The front cargo door opened and thieves leapt onto the immobilized ship and cut their way inside while the turrets engaged the shocked security detail.

Within five minutes, the security detail had been destroyed, Kesslering's transport breached and the eriesium taken. The Command Module detached from the Caterpillar and the thieves disappeared back into the spacelane with their fighter accomplices. By the time authorities arrived, they found an image that permanently seared itself into the public's consciousness, a Drake Caterpillar attached to the vented husk of a transport.

Despite an exhaustive search through all the systems, authorities never figured out who was behind the heist. The priceless eriesium and the thieves were gone.

It was only 2903 and this was the crime of the century.

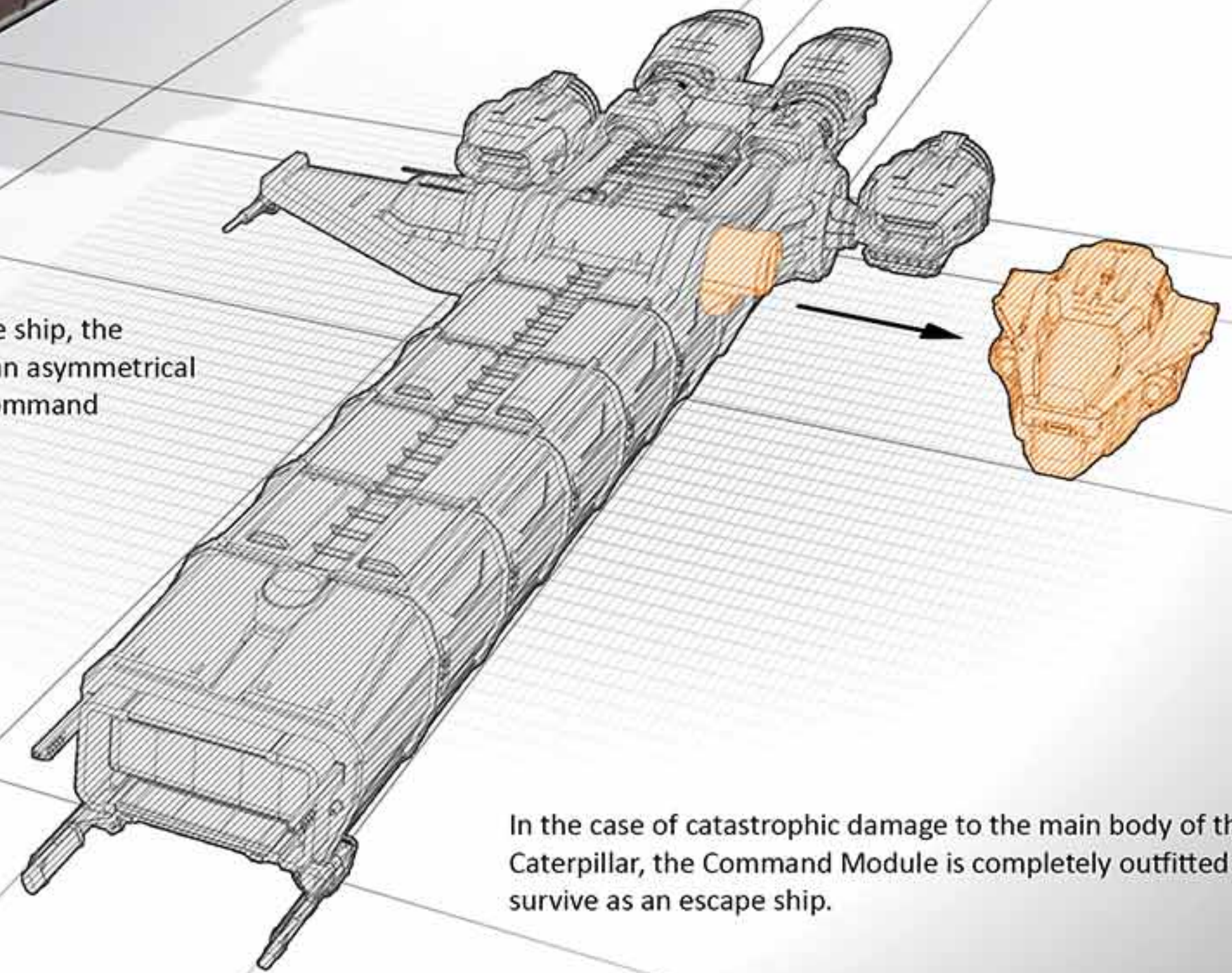


THE BRAIN OF THE BEAST

The Caterpillar's Command Module is the brain of the ship. Most Caterpillar owners consider this Module to be the 'ship within the ship' as it can detach from the body of the Caterpillar. Some pilots will even use a single Command Module to move between multiple Caterpillar hulls.

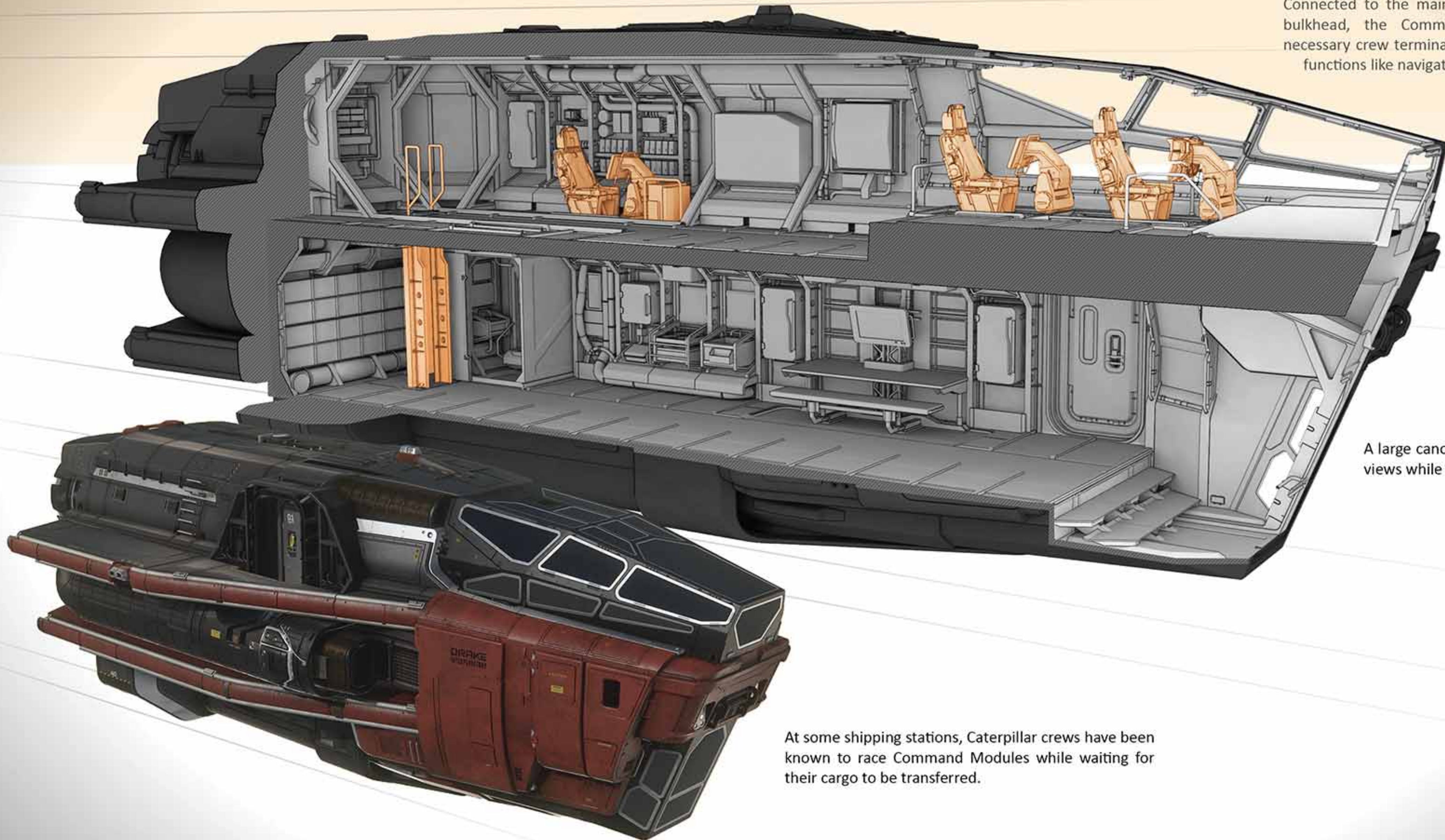
To better balance the ship, the Caterpillar features an asymmetrical wing to offset the Command Module.

If the Caterpillar was stood upright, it would measure taller than the famed Lumière de L'espoir statue in Odyssa, Borea near Drake Interplanetary's headquarters.



In the case of catastrophic damage to the main body of the Caterpillar, the Command Module is completely outfitted to survive as an escape ship.

Connected to the main hull through the primary bulkhead, the Command Module houses the necessary crew terminals to handle all major flight functions like navigation, comm and engineering.



A large canopy provides natural views while crew are off-duty.

At some shipping stations, Caterpillar crews have been known to race Command Modules while waiting for their cargo to be transferred.



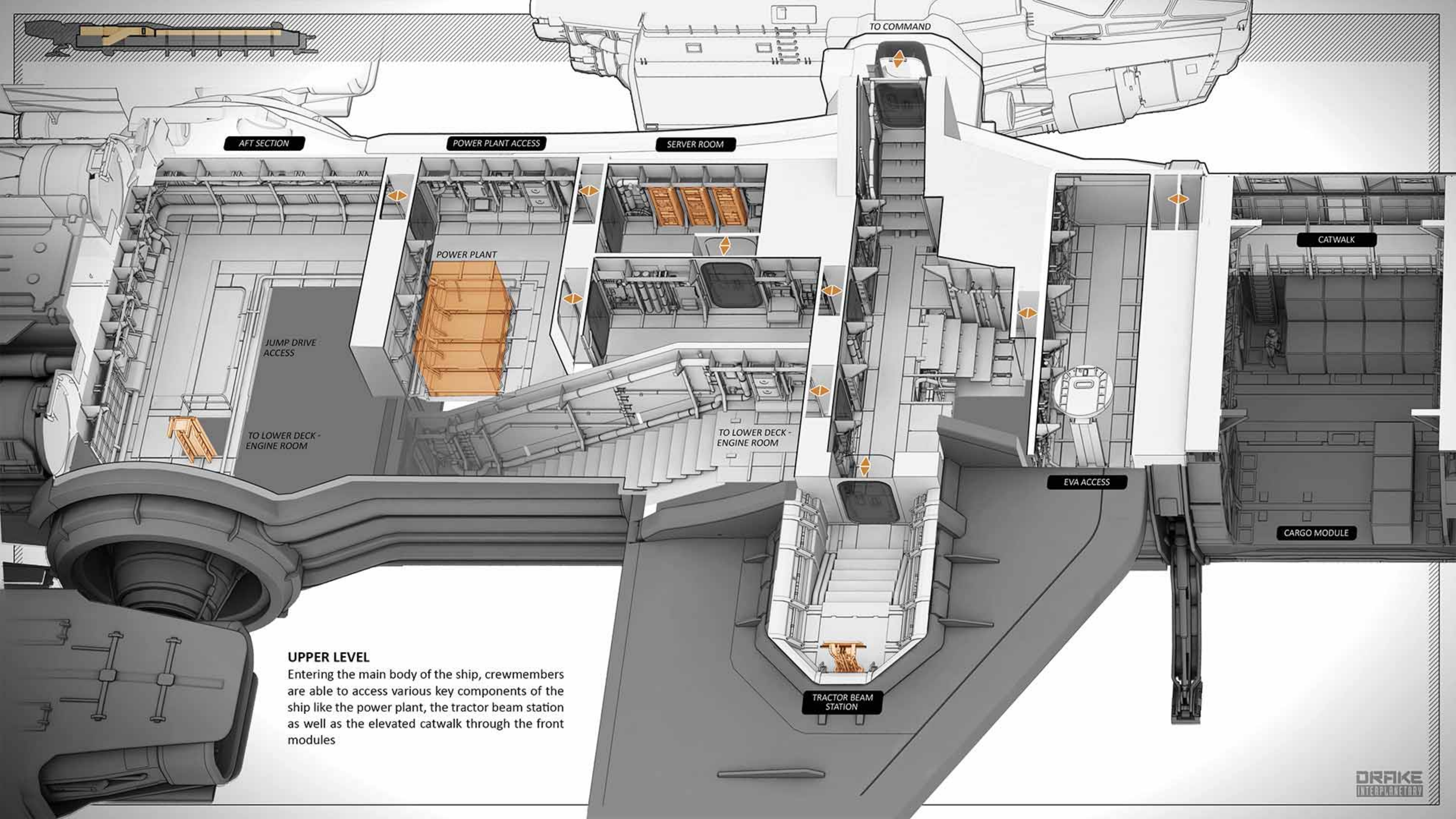
Pilot and Co-Pilot seats offer a 270° field of view for both operators increasing baseline situational awareness without the need to rely on digital systems that could be compromised.



Auxiliary terminals allow two additional crewmembers to assume bridge roles. Whether handling comms, running scans or managing defenses, the Caterpillar gives a capital ship experience for a fraction of the cost.



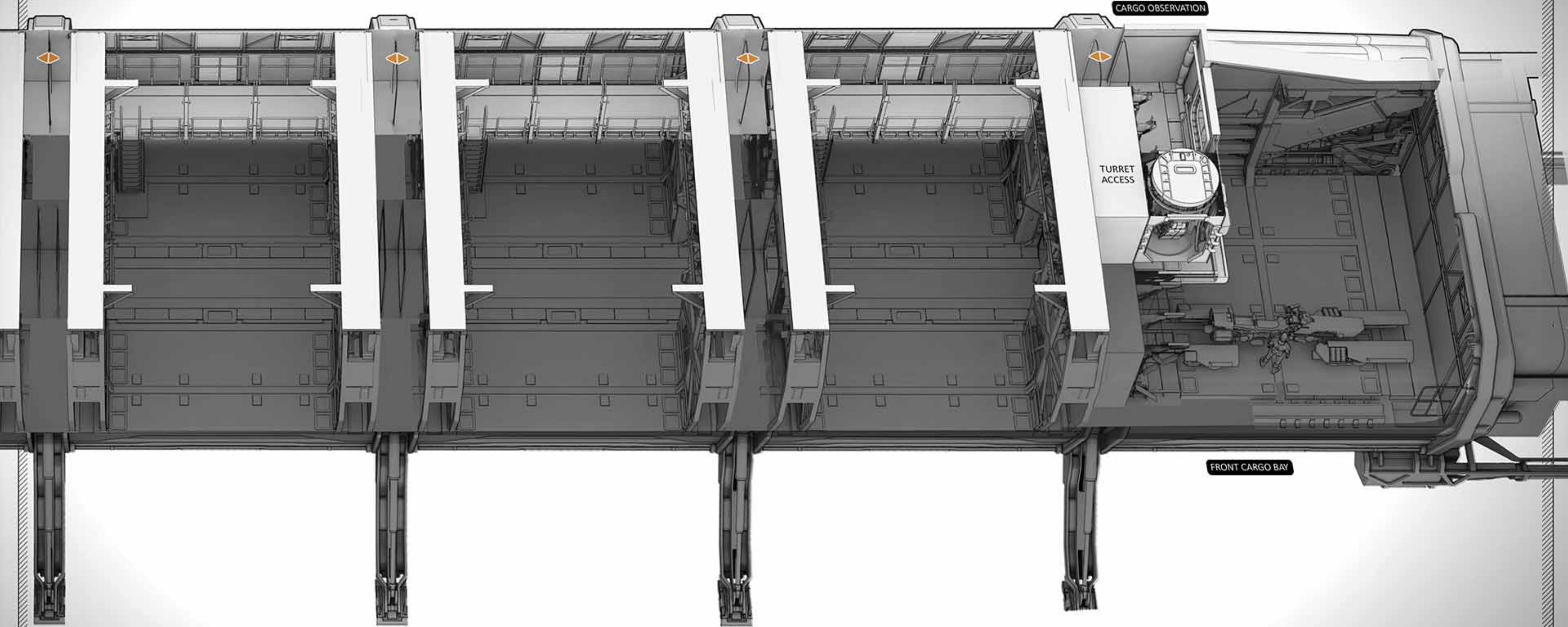
The lower deck of the Command Module is outfitted with small crew quarters and an entertainment center in case of extended periods on the drift.

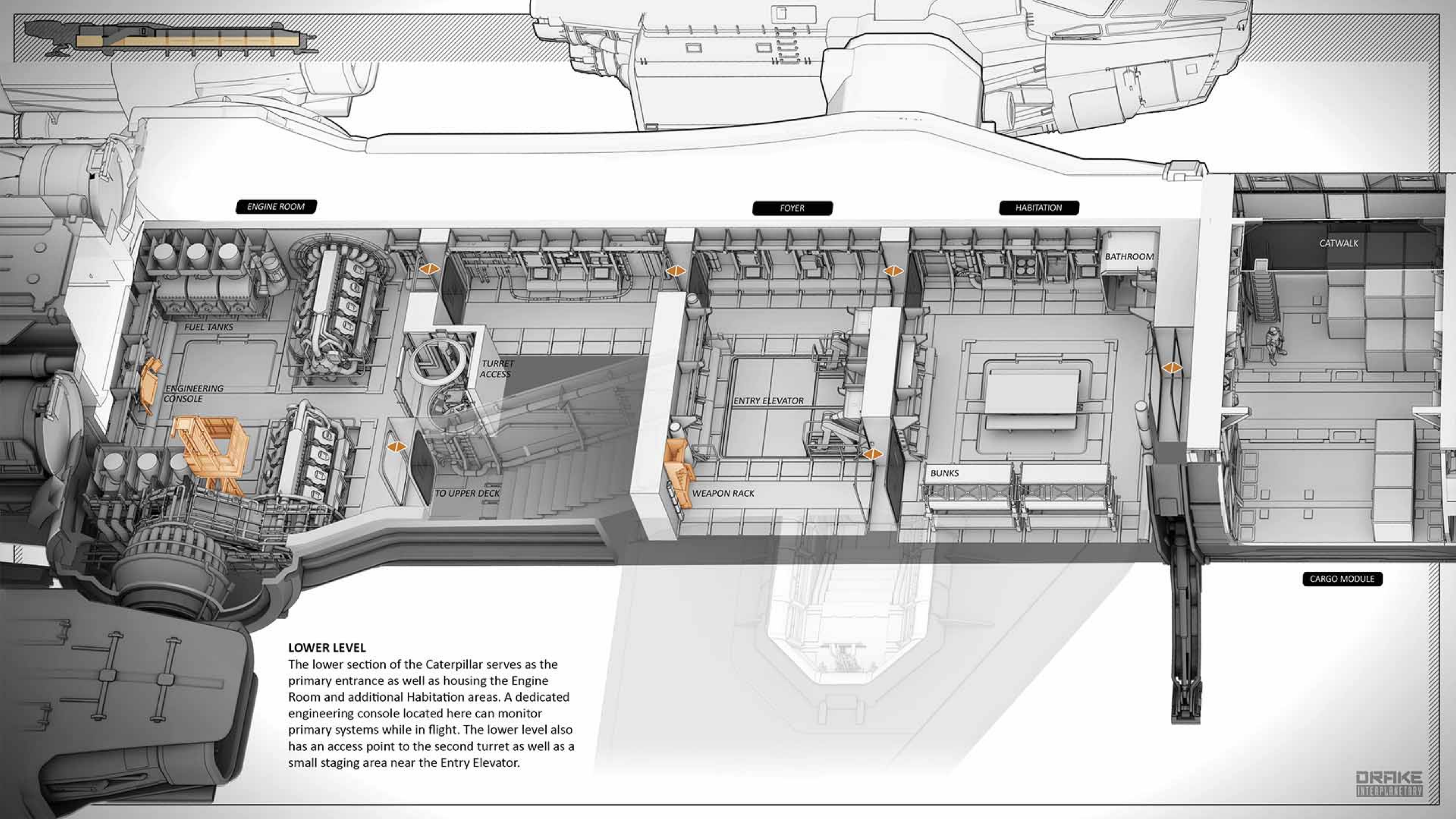


UPPER LEVEL

Entering the main body of the ship, crewmembers are able to access various key components of the ship like the power plant, the tractor beam station as well as the elevated catwalk through the front modules

The elevated catwalk allows crewmembers to move through each of the modules towards the front of the Caterpillar maximizing every SCU of cargo space while also providing quick, unfettered access to the front turret.





ENGINE ROOM

FOYER

HABITATION

CATWALK

BATHROOM

FUEL TANKS

ENGINEERING
CONSOLE

TURRET
ACCESS

ENTRY ELEVATOR

TO UPPER DECK

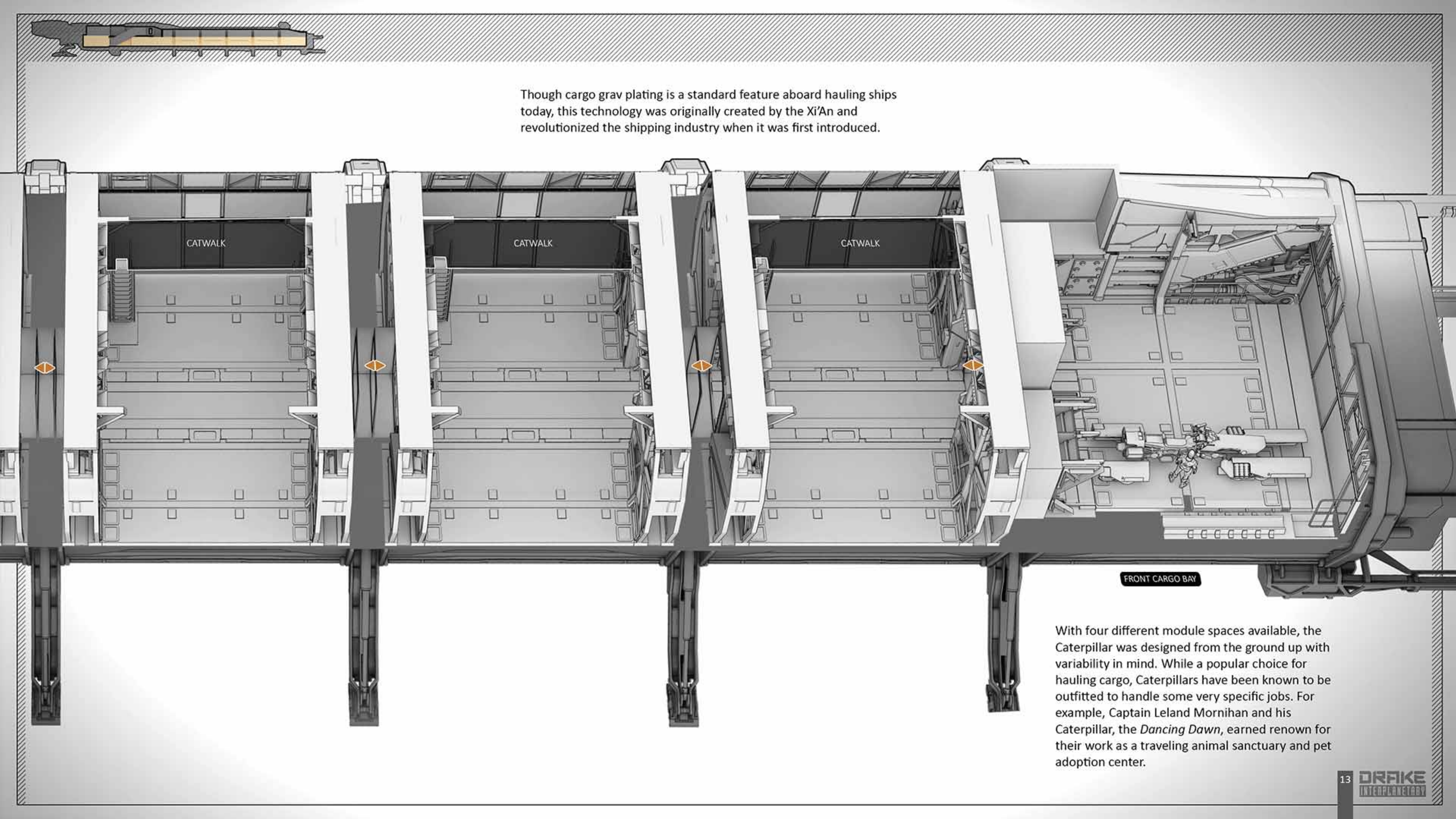
WEAPON RACK

BUNKS

CARGO MODULE

LOWER LEVEL

The lower section of the Caterpillar serves as the primary entrance as well as housing the Engine Room and additional Habitation areas. A dedicated engineering console located here can monitor primary systems while in flight. The lower level also has an access point to the second turret as well as a small staging area near the Entry Elevator.



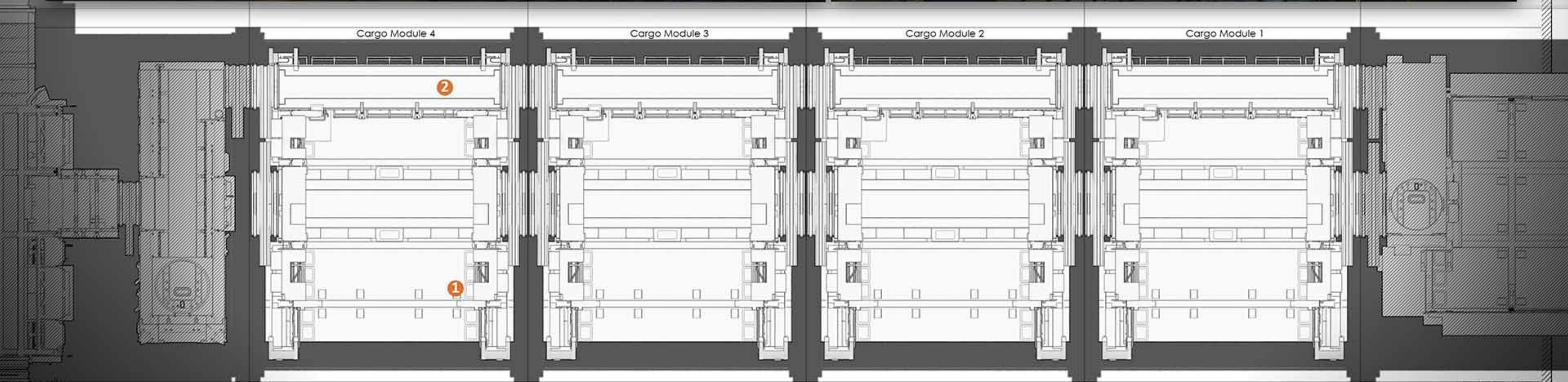
Though cargo grav plating is a standard feature aboard hauling ships today, this technology was originally created by the Xi'An and revolutionized the shipping industry when it was first introduced.

FRONT CARGO BAY

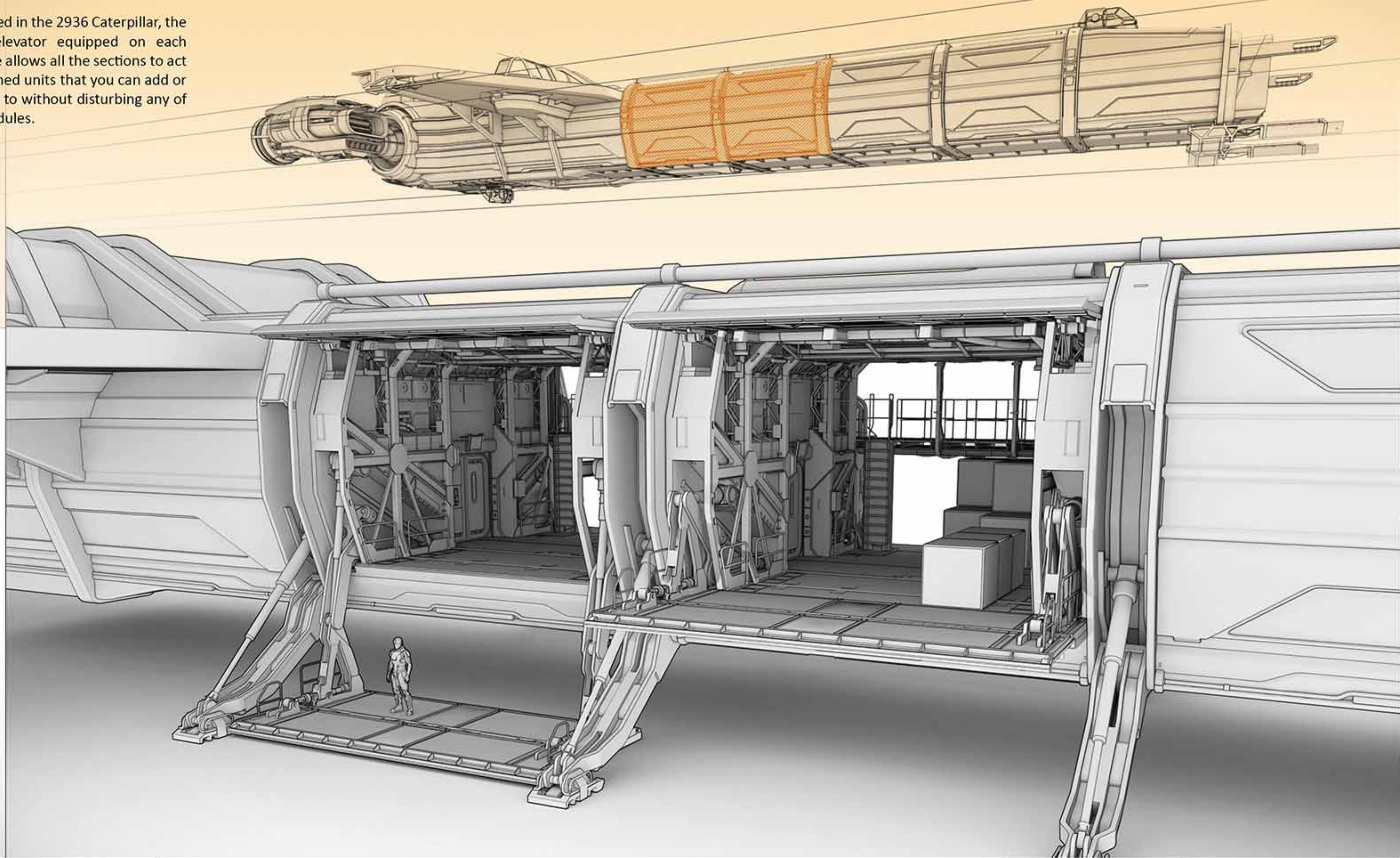
With four different module spaces available, the Caterpillar was designed from the ground up with variability in mind. While a popular choice for hauling cargo, Caterpillars have been known to be outfitted to handle some very specific jobs. For example, Captain Leland Mornihan and his Caterpillar, the *Dancing Dawn*, earned renown for their work as a traveling animal sanctuary and pet adoption center.

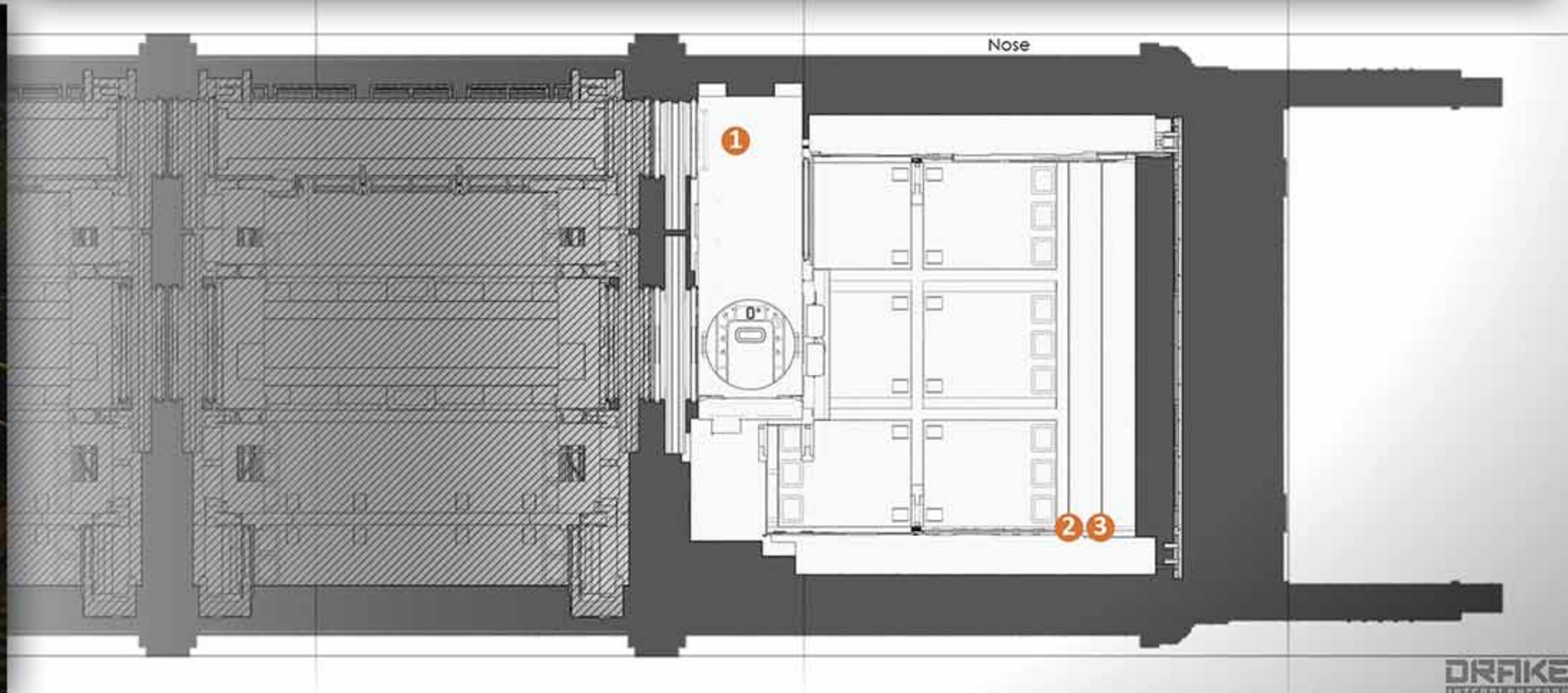


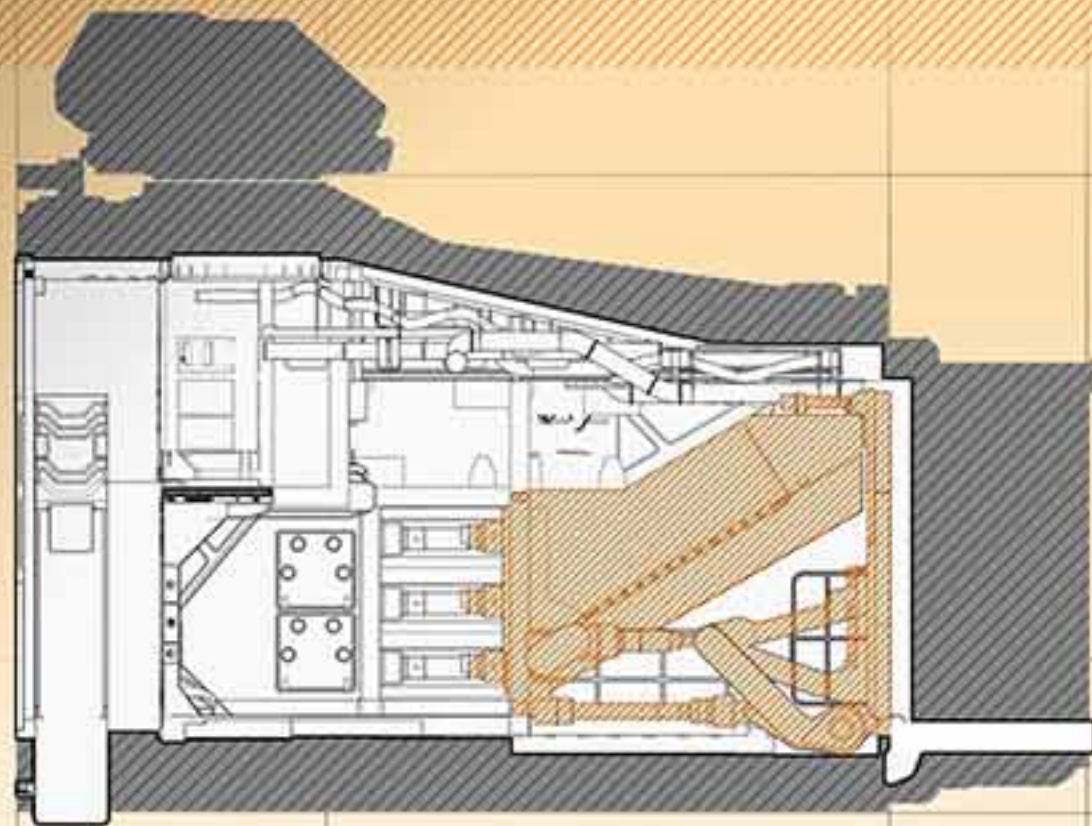
Whether you're transporting people or pallets or both, the Caterpillar's wide open cargo modules allow for almost endless arrangements. The 2938 Cargolympics featured an event where cargo handlers were challenged to fill a module as much as possible within the time limit.



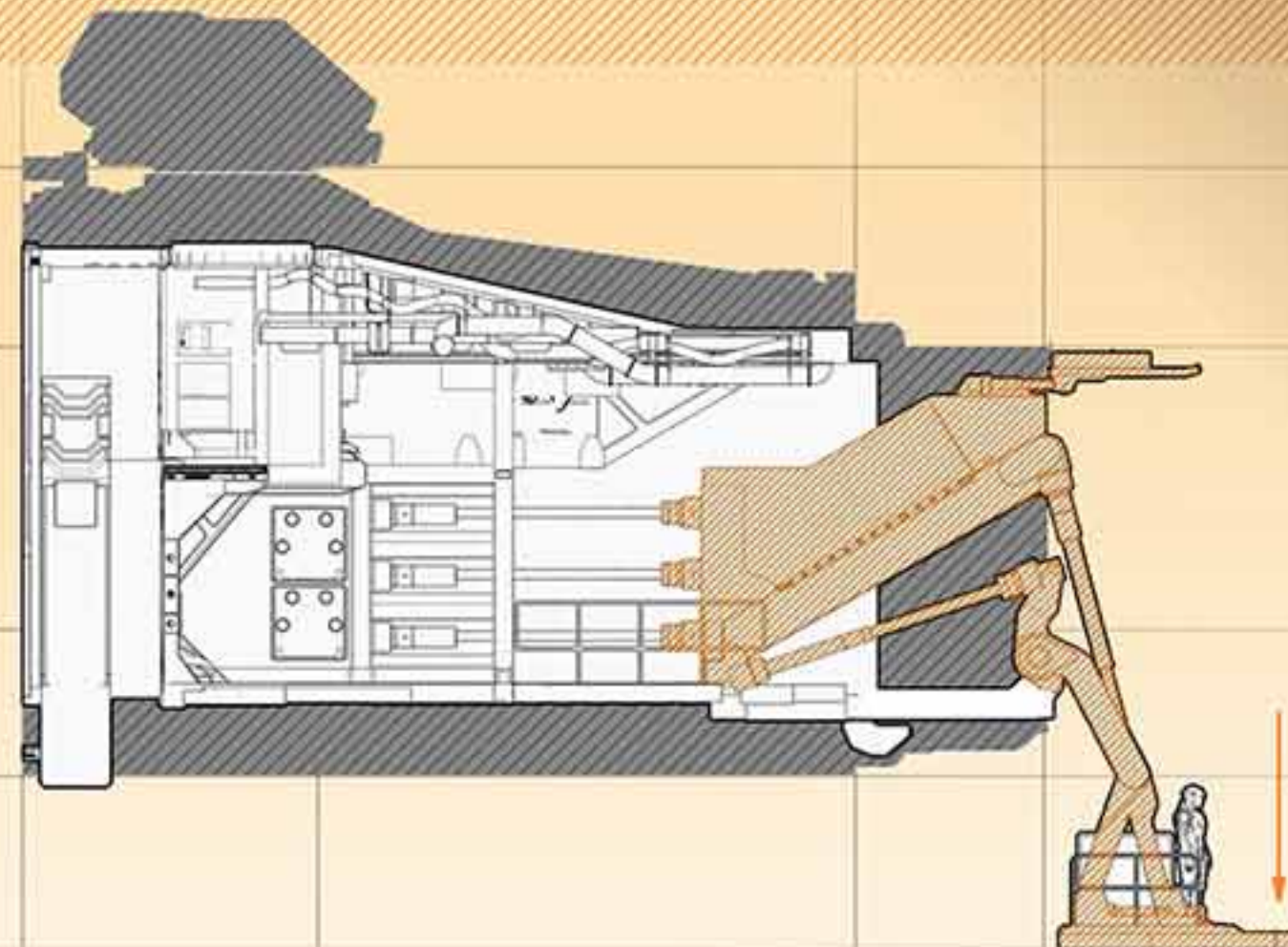
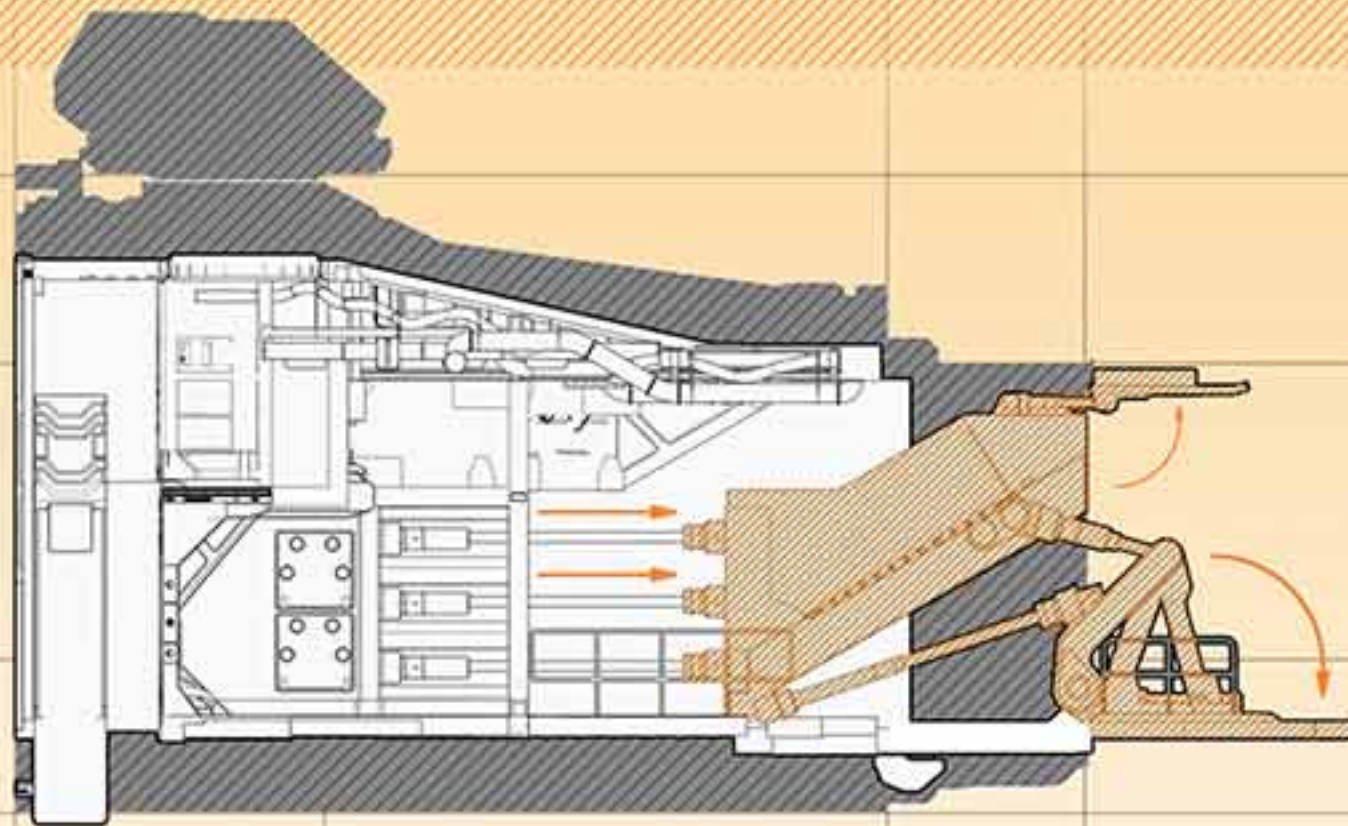
First introduced in the 2936 Caterpillar, the side-access elevator equipped on each Cargo Module allows all the sections to act as self-contained units that you can add or remove cargo to without disturbing any of the other modules.



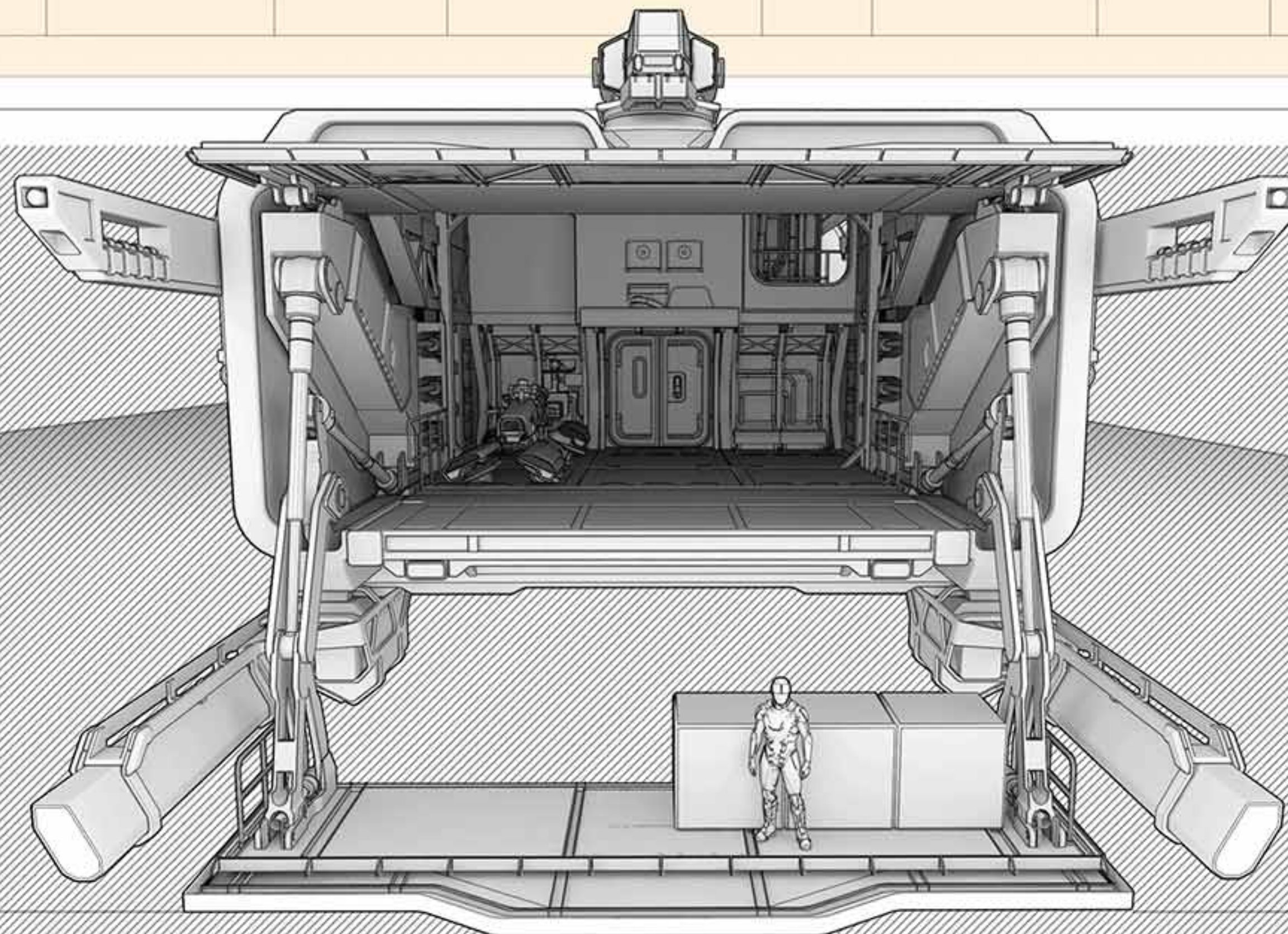




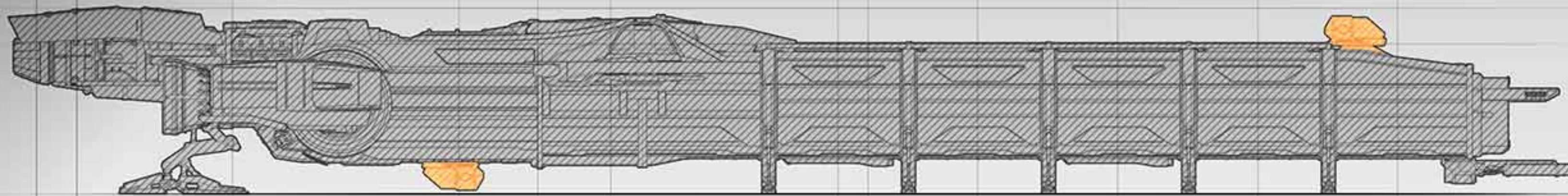
The front cargo lift actually folds inside the cargo bay for easier loading.



The Front Cargo Bay is the only area equipped with an airshield, which allows crew to transfer pallets and launch small vehicles, such as the Drake Dragonfly, without decompressing.



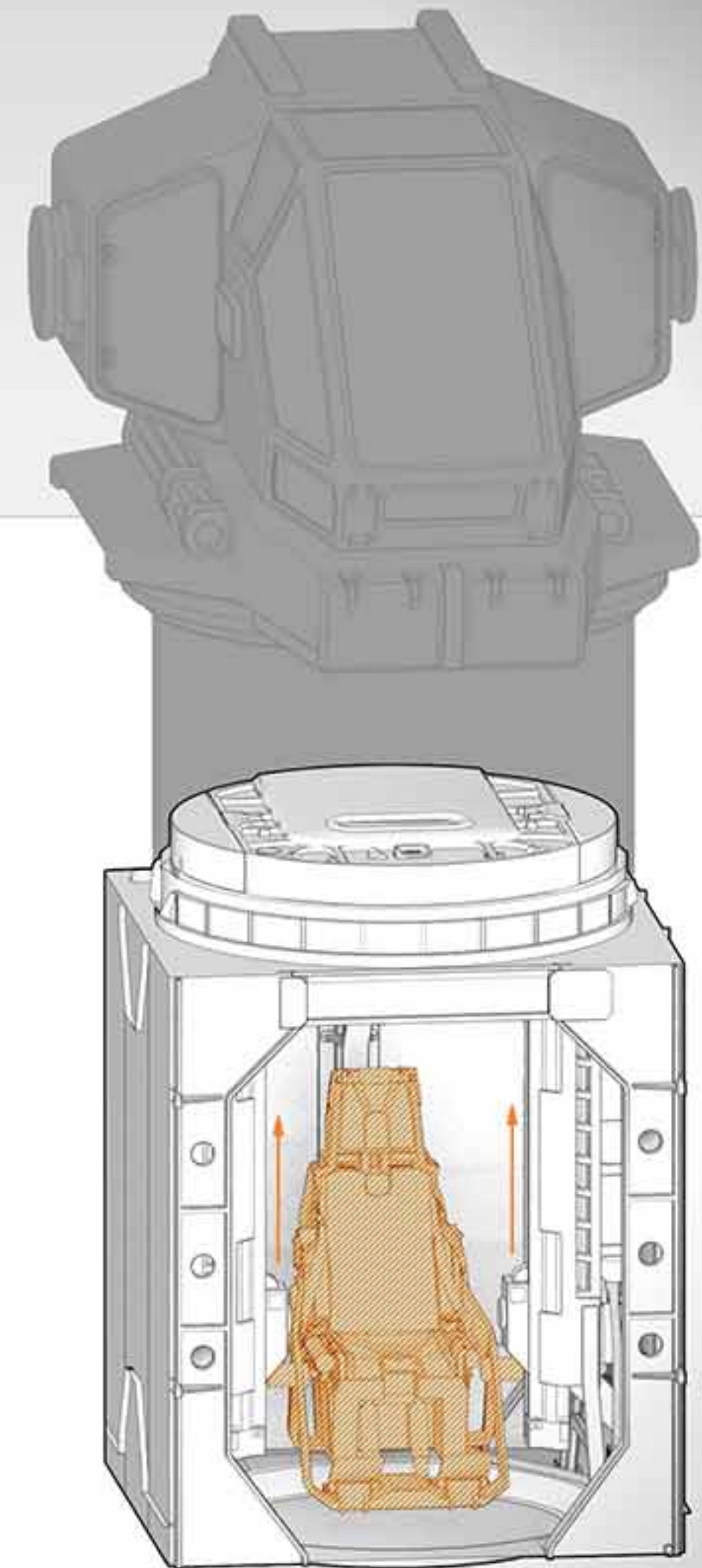
With a ship as long as the Caterpillar, one set of sensors proved not to be enough and so the distinctive "teeth" that rim the bay entrance house additional sensor equipment to assist in piloting.



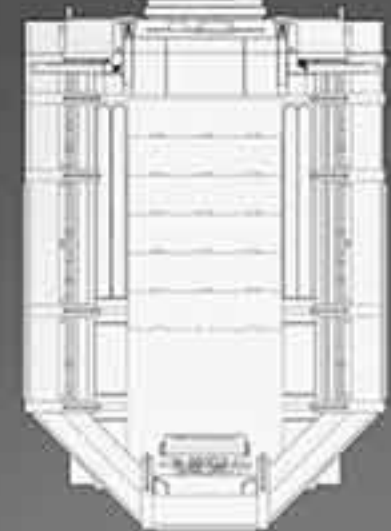
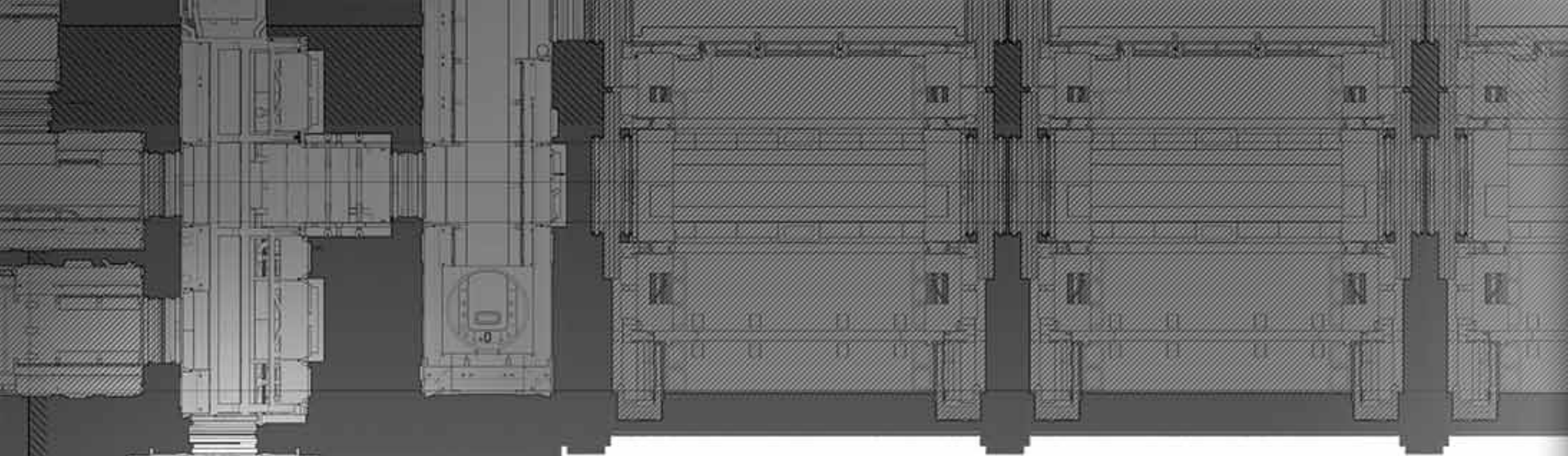
Two manned turrets placed on the dorsal and waist of the hull provide maximum field of fire against hostiles.



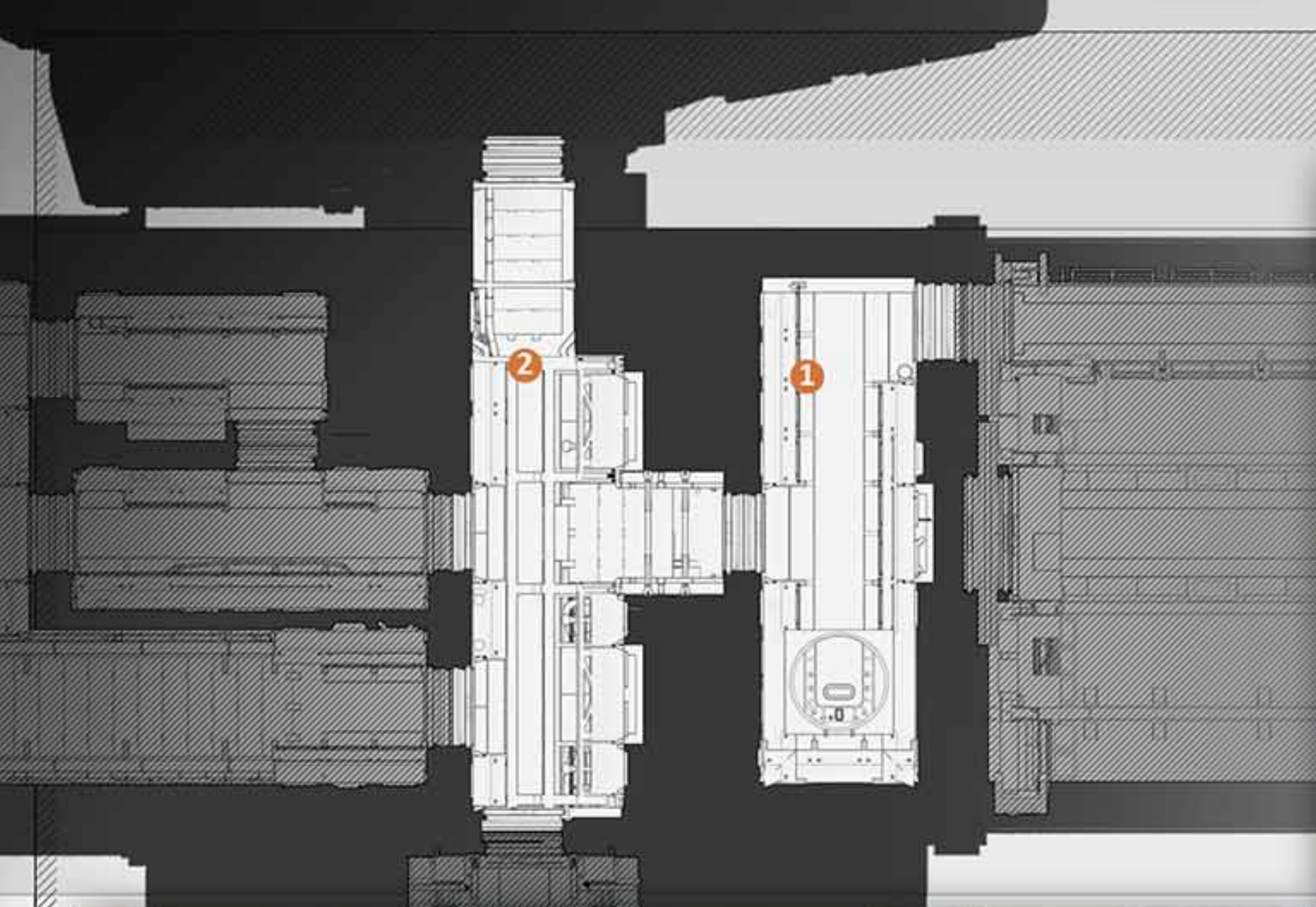
Each turret offers an advanced targeting and acquisition system along with Drake's brand new T89 precision interface, guaranteeing surgical control over your weapon system. The turret itself has been reinforced with DIVOX plating to provide maximum operator protection.



Gunner Station



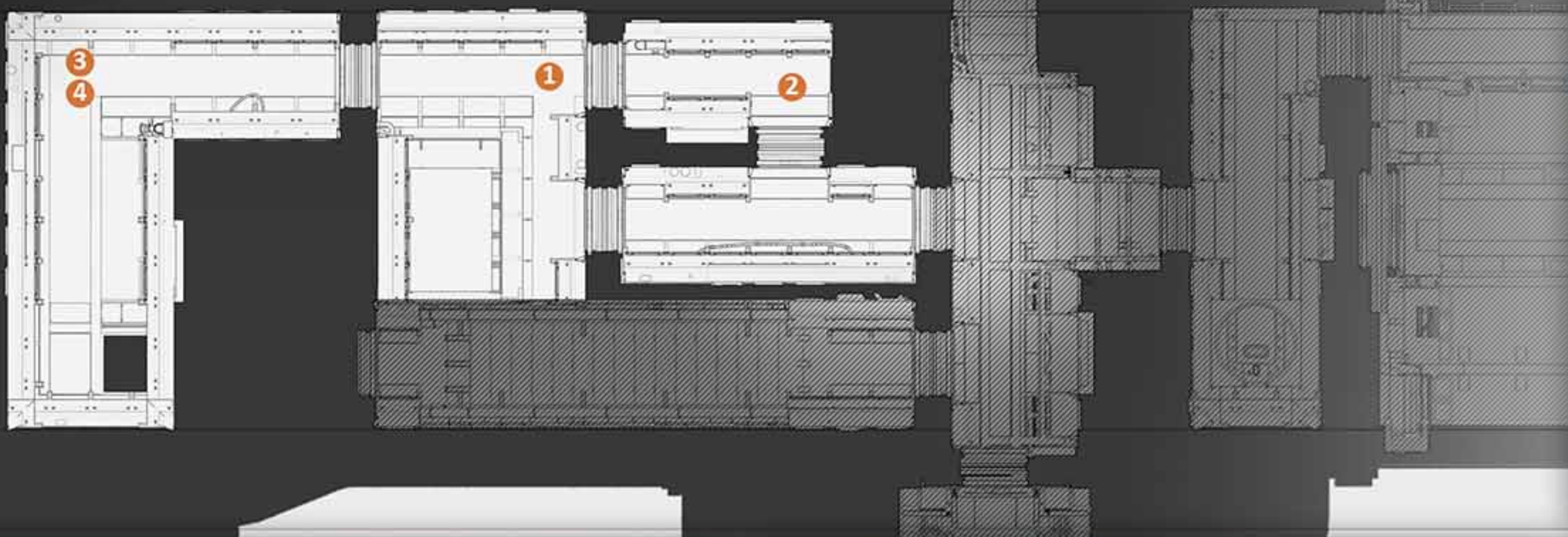
On the opposite side of the Command Module, you will find the operator's station for the tractor beams. This terminal is a key control point for salvage operations, allowing the user to safely guide debris or even errant cargo directly into the side access doors of the Cargo Modules.



EVA hatch ladder

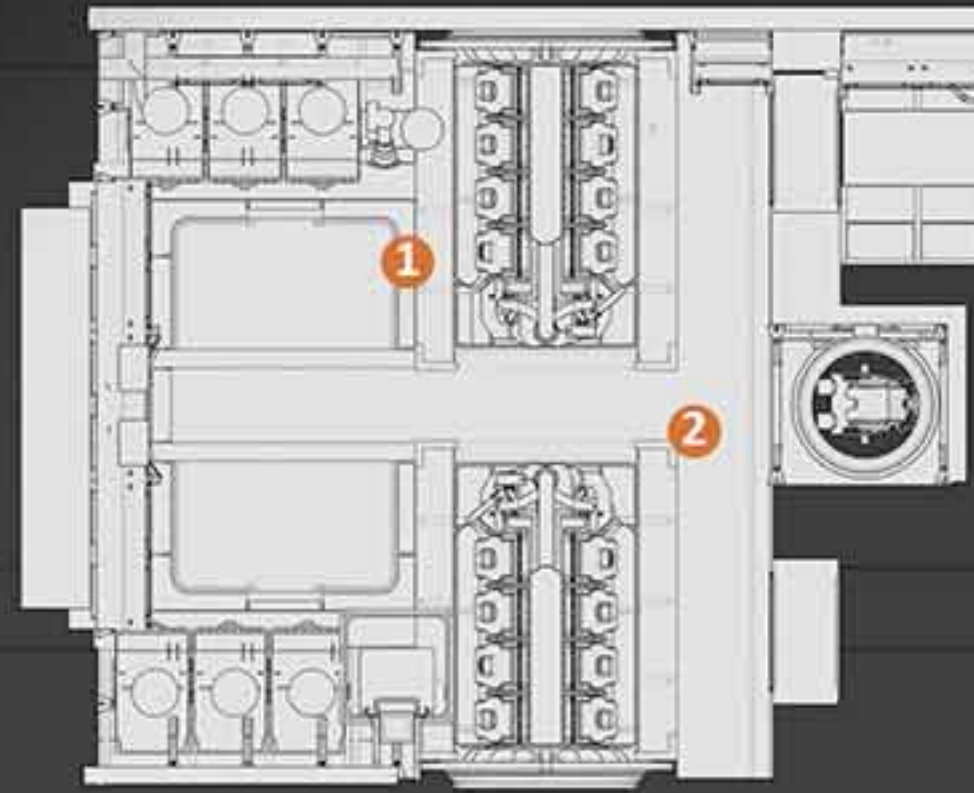


Command Module Access Hall

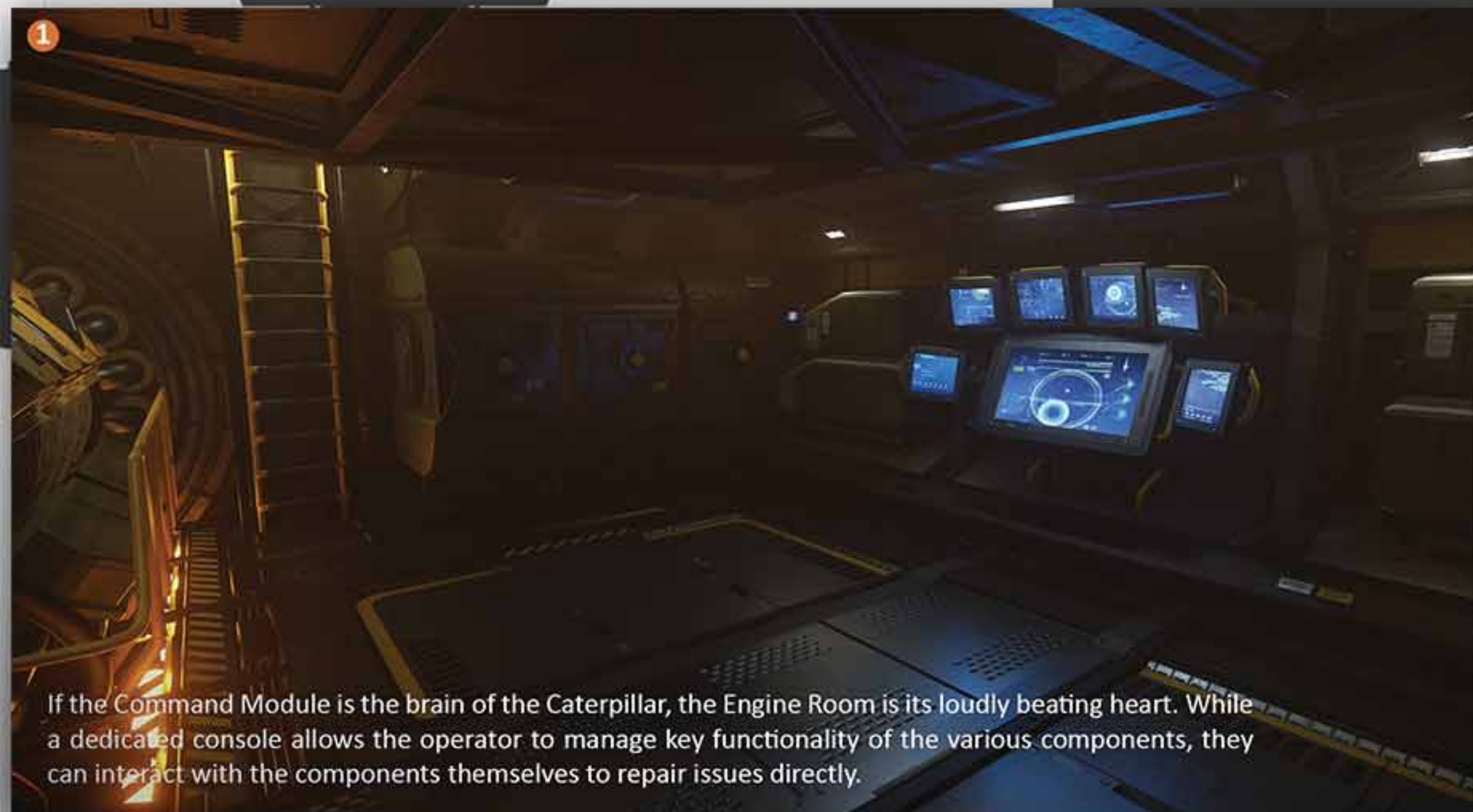


Power Plant

Server Room

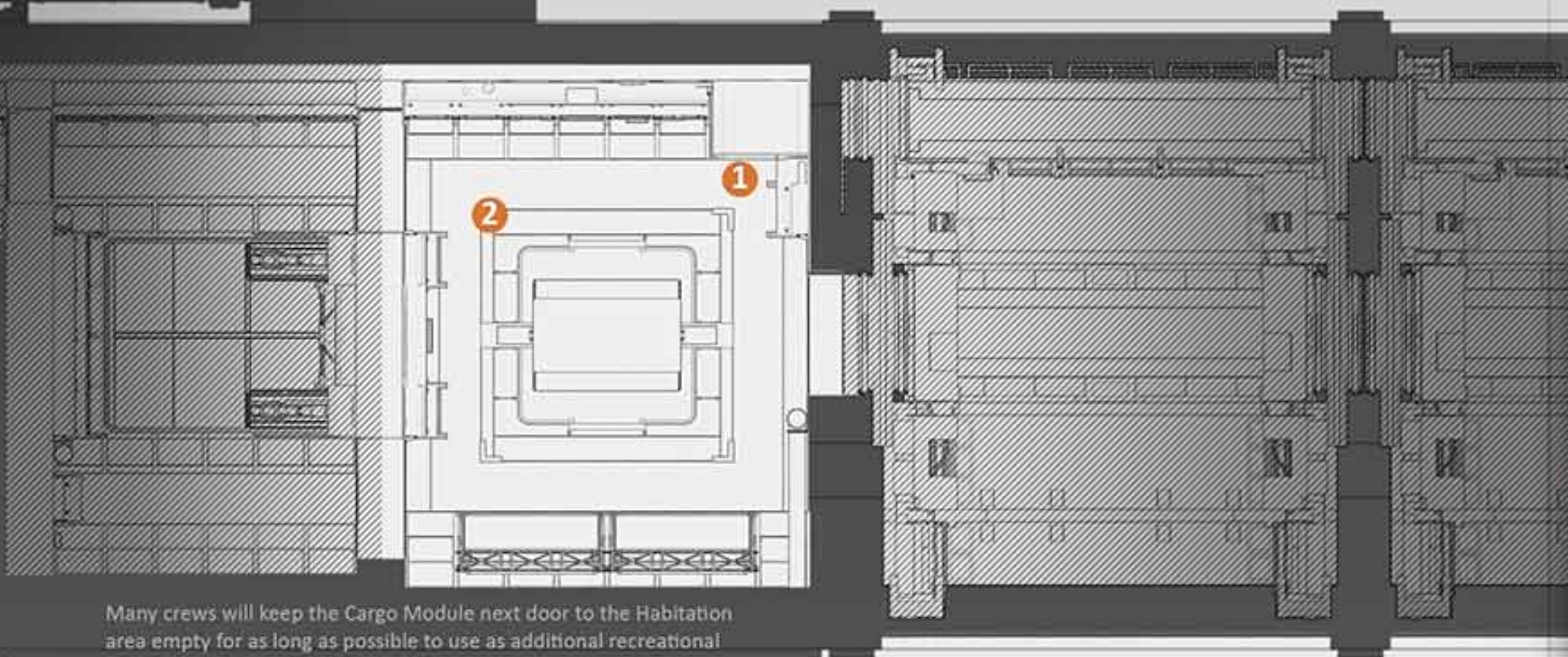


The Engine Room is kept separate from other areas for the safety and comfort of the crew.



If the Command Module is the brain of the Caterpillar, the Engine Room is its loudly beating heart. While a dedicated console allows the operator to manage key functionality of the various components, they can interact with the components themselves to repair issues directly.

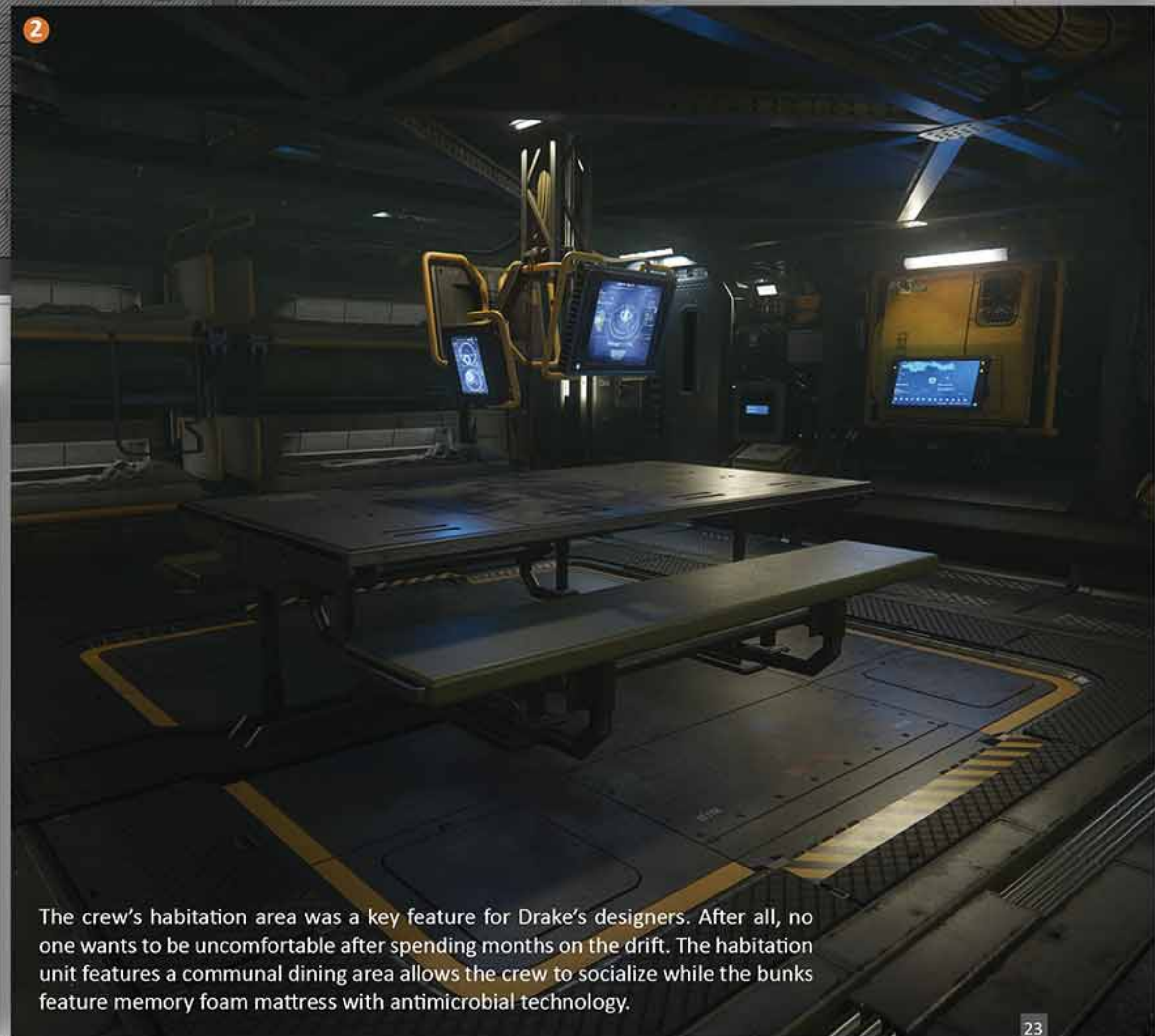




Many crews will keep the Cargo Module next door to the Habitation area empty for as long as possible to use as additional recreational space. Badminton anyone?



Habitation Storage and galley



The crew's habitation area was a key feature for Drake's designers. After all, no one wants to be uncomfortable after spending months on the drift. The habitation unit features a communal dining area allows the crew to socialize while the bunks feature memory foam mattress with antimicrobial technology.



The lyrics to the best selling song "Home Again, Ready to Go" were supposedly thought of by Daisy Crodder as she rode up a Caterpillar's entrance elevator.

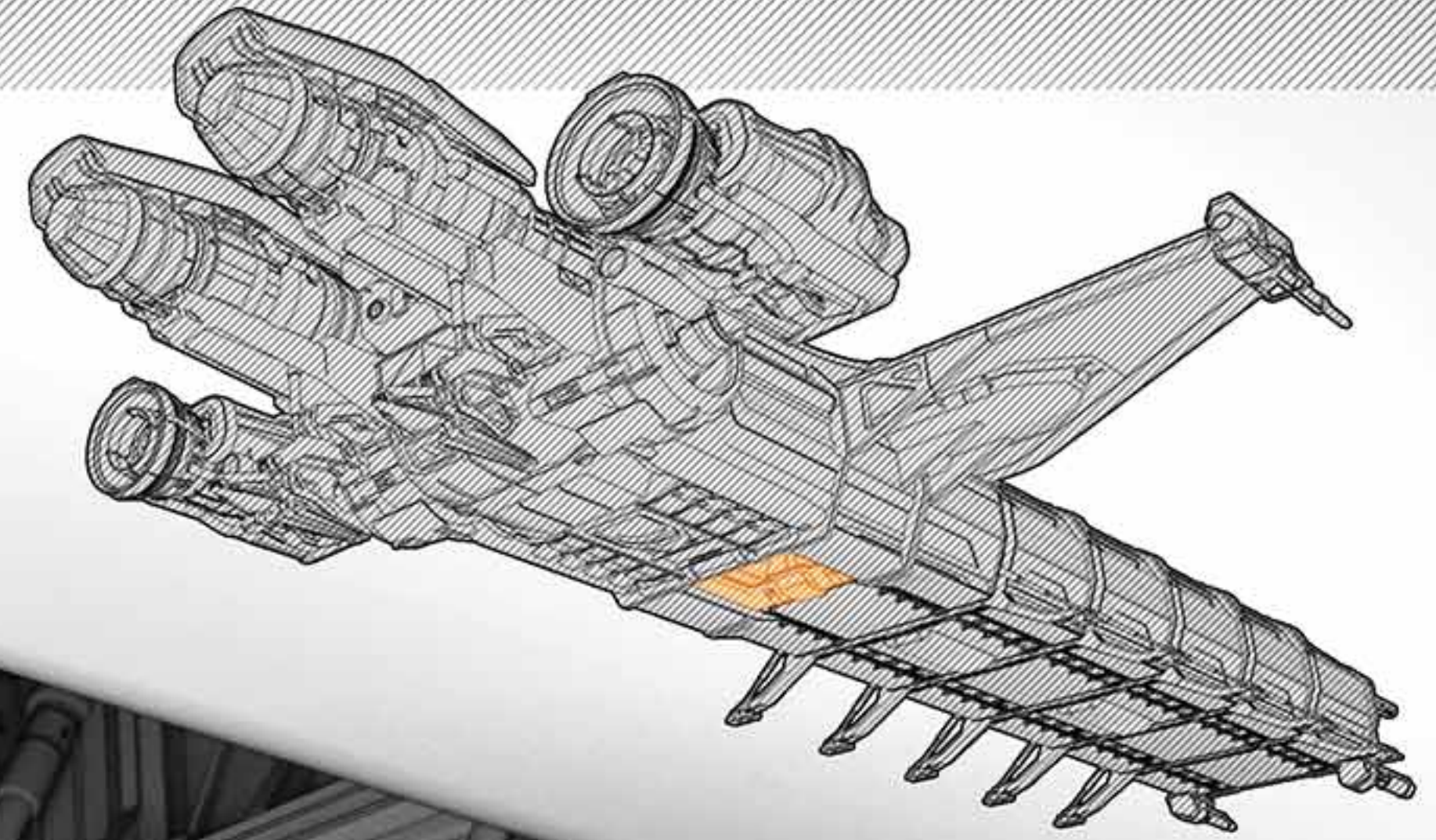


The Caterpillar comes equipped with a weapon storage locker for personal weapons. All legally purchased, of course.

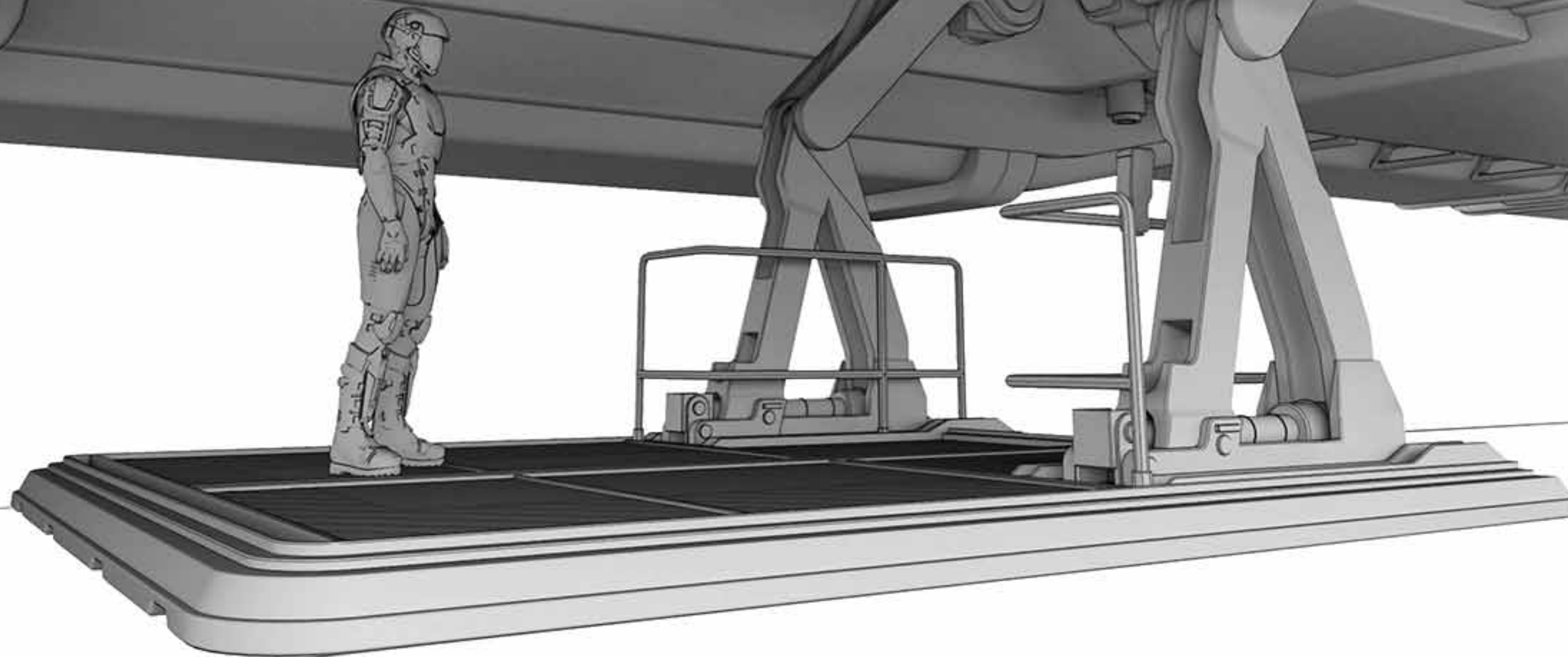


Known as the Foyer, this area of the ship acts as the primary point of entry for the crew and passengers.

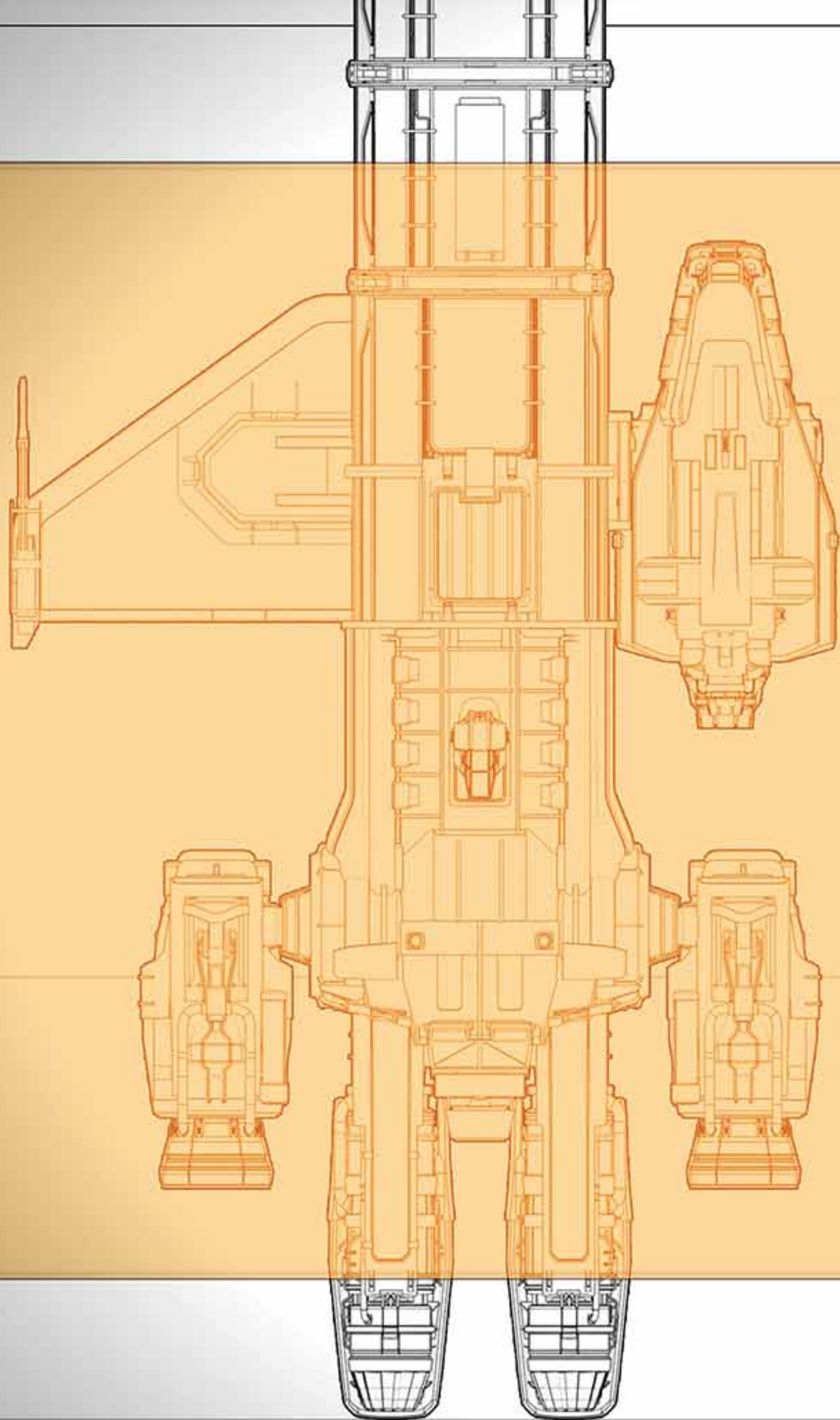
An old hauling myth says it's unlucky for crew to enter the Caterpillar through any other door but the Foyer elevator the first time they come aboard.



A dedicated elevator allows crew and smaller cargo pallets to be brought up into the middle of the ship without disturbing the cargo modules.







Easily identified by its unique asymmetrical silhouette, few spaceships have inspired as many different reactions as Drake's Caterpillar. To many, it's a versatile hauling ship. To others, it's a sign of trouble. Initially unveiled in 2871, the Caterpillar provided an affordable cargo ship in Drake Interplanetary's manufacturing division. That reputation was forever changed when the Caterpillar was used in the daring Kesslering Heist of 2903, inexorably tying the ship with the criminal element that's followed it to the present.

Today, Caterpillars can be found in all corners of the Empire and beyond, still inspiring those same varied reactions.

Have a look for yourself and see what it says to you.

The Visual Guide to Spacecraft takes you behind the scenes and under the canopy to give readers unfiltered access, first hand accounts and engineering insight into a full line of modern and historic spaceships.

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